

## Building a Foundation for Shared Leadership with the LEA 360™ Enhanced Composite Report

### About the Organization

- **Industry:** Nonprofit Community Services
- **Location:** Australia
- **Size:** 500 employees, 300+ volunteers
- **History:** Operating for more than 40 years

### About the Group

An intact senior leadership team of 6 executive-level employees, including the CEO.

CEO had the group's buy-in for his vision, and overall, they were a group of high-performing individuals. They knew, however, that the changes he wanted to effect were very ambitious. To succeed, the team would need to be operating at peak effectiveness, with maximum clarity and accountability.

One member of the team had been certified in the LEA 360™ several months prior, and they were eager to see what the group's data might reveal about the team's potential assets and liabilities – and how to leverage the former and minimize the latter – as they lead this organization into a new era.

### The Scenario

ABC Community Services\* is a non-profit organization that has successfully delivered support services in its community for more than 40 years. Their longtime CEO retired in early 2019, and was succeeded by an internal candidate. The new CEO aspired to build upon the organization's longtime success, while also affecting a key change in ABC Community Services' mission: his vision was to evolve from a responsive, reactive approach to support services to a more proactive one, partnering with their community to support people navigating a range of challenges.

This CEO and his executive team had been working together for 18 months when they enlisted Andrew Rand, Ph.D., I/O Psychologist for MRG, to help the executive team with this organizational transition through team development work. The

### The Engagement

#### Strategic Directions

To identify the critical leadership behaviors to be successful through this transition, Strategic Directions™ was implemented. This is an LEA-based tool that allows organizations to isolate and prioritize the behaviors they feel will make the biggest impact on achieving their strategic goals.

Using the Strategic Directions process, the executive team identified priorities that fell into three primary categories: innovation and willingness to adapt; cohesion and collaboration within decision-making; and more structured clarity in communication and accountability. These priorities were identified based on both organizational history (e.g., minimal structured accountability) and the organization's strategic plan (e.g., innovative approaches to new problems).

\* The organization's name has been changed to protect participants' privacy.

## Individual Feedback

To begin the work, the six members of the senior leadership team took the LEA 360™ assessment. In the weeks preceding the group sessions, feedback was delivered to individuals in 90-minute sessions.

These sessions accomplished several important objectives:

- **Established a clear understanding of the LEA model and behaviors.** Ensuring this was well understood in advance allowed for more in-depth discussion and broad participation during the group sessions that followed.
- **Drew out the individual's story from their data.** By the end of each session, the goal was to arrive at three concrete conclusions for the individual to focus on.
- **Discovered each person's hopes and expectations for the group sessions.** While expectations for the engagement had already been established with the CEO, this was an important opportunity to capture perspectives from the individual participants.

Some themes that arose laid the groundwork for key topics in their group sessions, including the team's hesitance to make difficult decisions, particularly when consensus was not easily achieved. This decision making process had a domino effect resulting in a slowing down of organizational productivity.

## Team Development Sessions

The ABC Community Services senior leadership team participated in three 2-hour sessions of team development.

## The Tools

### LEA 360™ Individual Development Reports

This revealing assessment provides leaders with feedback from their boss(es), peers, and direct reports, contextualizing behaviors, illuminating gaps between self and observer perceptions, and leading to deep self-awareness.

### LEA Strategic Directions™

Oriented toward the future, this questionnaire is ideal for organizations who are looking to define the approach to leadership that will enable them to successfully achieve their strategic objectives.

### LEA 360™ Enhanced Composite Report

A tool kit for team development, this report compiles data from a group of individuals to shine a spotlight on areas for potential development and gives research-backed guidance for moving forward.

In advance of the first session, everyone on the team received the LEA 360™ Enhanced Composite Report to review and reflect on. The first session began with establishing a collective understanding of why the group was there, and what they want to accomplish. The group's leader – in this case, the CEO – played a critical role in this part of the work, which is why he was asked to go both first and last in this part of the discussion.

### Finding the Stories

The LEA 360™ Enhanced Composite Report acted as the foundation for a discussion

of the team's behavior from multiple perspectives: their own, their peers, and their direct reports.

A few themes emerged:

From their own perspective, they found that collectively they had fairly low scores in the area of execution: Structuring, Control, and Management Focus. However, they also had high scores in strategic behavior, and in interpersonal areas (Consensual, Empathy). They also scored themselves highly on Communication.

Once they incorporated the perspectives of their peers and direct reports, several important realizations about their work emerged.

- **As a team, they were not providing enough clarity around decision-making and strategic direction to the organization.** The agenda and priorities they felt confident in at the top of the organization were not effectively reaching other levels of ABC Community Services.
- **They were not placing enough emphasis on accountability** – both within the team and in the rest of the organization. As a result, there were areas of ABC Community Services where performance was insufficient.
- **Internally, the executive team had a tendency to be less than completely transparent with each other**, putting a brighter spin on challenging situations. For example, in presentations they might provide an update indicating that their department was on track, when in fact they felt scattered, resources were stretched thin, and performance was suffering.

## Additional Resources

In team development work, **psychological safety** is essential. Methods for creating a psychologically safe environment vary, and begin at the organizational level, but a coach can play an important role in fostering it during the engagement. To develop your psychological safety skills, consider these readings.

- **The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth** by Amy C. Edmondson
- **The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation** by Timothy R. Clark

This led to an important collective realization: this team needed to be much more honest and forthcoming about what was going on individually and within their teams, so that they could develop more effective ways to support one another.

### *Making a Plan for Action*

The transition – moving from talking about behavior patterns toward what needs to change and how you will change it – can be the most challenging part of the process. To guide the group through this process, the consultant took them through four steps. For most of these, they used breakout rooms (in this case on Zoom, as all of this work was conducted virtually) to facilitate more intimate discussions.

- **Synthesize and reflect:** The group determined that they had learned Structuring, Communication, and Management Focus were critical areas of behavior to address.
- **Define habits and patterns of behavior:** As a group, they noted that they often avoid delivering tough messages to the internal team or the organization consistently, even when those messages were extremely important.
- **Identify areas for change:** They concluded that going forward, they needed to rely upon one another to bring the truth to the table more readily, be more comfortable with disagreement, and push collaboration and accountability throughout the organization.
- **Get commitments to new habits:** Each member of the group was asked to identify a personal commitment to the group's overarching plan for change.

## The Results

When the engagement began, a handful of participants seemed to approach the work with some skepticism. They had prior experience with other assessments that had felt incomplete, and not fully reflective of them as individuals.

By the end of the engagement, the skepticism had evaporated, as all the participants fully embraced the insights and awareness that the process had raised for them. They appreciated the clarity and specificity of the behavioral approach to leadership development. By focusing on behavior, rather than personality traits or characteristics, the LEA offered a clear pathway to change.

The ABC Community Services executive team emerged from this engagement with:

- A clear understanding of the dynamics within the executive team, and how those dynamics were impacting the rest of the organization
- Awareness of the individual and collective behavior patterns that were inhibiting the achievement of their organizational goals
- A team action plan for breaking their negative behavior patterns and creating new habits that will support greater effectiveness
- An individual understanding of the behaviors they wanted to adjust to work more effectively on their own and within the team
- A greater level of openness in their communications so that they can delegate, share responsibilities when appropriate, and offer each other more support

*“I have found this process to be so immensely valuable.”*

– ABC Community Services executive