

Diageo: Teambuilding and MBTI® – a classic cocktail

Background

Diageo is a leading premium drinks manufacturer, selling some of the most well known alcoholic brands across 180 markets worldwide, including Guinness, Moët & Chandon, Smirnoff and Gordon's. Alex Smith, Marketing Manager for Diageo's Gins Team, instigated a development exercise for her new team, using the MBTI® instrument.

New team, fresh perspective

Alex took over leadership of the marketing team in early 2008, bringing together a group comprised of some longstanding employees and some new recruits. Aware of the team's very limited exposure to one another, and keen to establish a cohesive, fully functional team in a short space of time, Alex chose the MBTI tool as the preferred catalyst for the group's transformation from diverse group of strangers to efficient marketing machine.

As the MBTI instrument was already widely used across the company, Alex was convinced of its credibility and applicability as a means of kicking off the team's journey. Diageo's HR department were supportive of the intervention and recommended OPP to Alex, and so a team away day was organised in collaboration with OPP.

The objective of the team-build was to gain an understanding of each other's preferred working styles, both at the individual and team level. Several of the participants already knew their MBTI type, and so the team was generally very receptive to the idea of using the MBTI tool in this context. "We really wanted to use the away day to foster a sense of togetherness in the team, so that we would be equipped to think about and discuss how we wanted to work together, as part of the development", explains Alex.

Understanding and drawing on the team dynamic

In-depth and collaborative forward planning

In setting up the teambuilding day, Alex worked with one of OPP's consultants to put together a package of exercises that fitted Diageo's business needs. Alex tells us: "OPP's consultant spent a lot of time talking to me in order to understand the team and the individual circumstances of the people in it. This meant that when it came to setting the tone for the development, we got it just right, and everyone was made to feel very comfortable during the event. It provided a good basis for some honest and very productive conversations."

Alex's feedback about the expertise of OPP's consultants is very positive. The consultant "had a total grasp on what I wanted to get out of the session ... I felt a sense of ownership over the day and absolute confidence in the way it was facilitated." In this way OPP supported Alex's own style of management, which is focused on creating an environment of mutual support.

Using the MBTI instrument as a diagnostic tool

At its simplest, the team event was an excellent opportunity for the new team to get to know each other better. Whilst two of the team members had worked very closely together for several years, others were completely new to the team and to the company. This dynamic was something explored during the session, using an understanding of MBTI preferences as a framework. Alex explains: "Having a small number of people who know each other very well can actually be counterproductive, creating a sort of 'team-within-a-team'. Those people don't necessarily realise the impact this has on their colleagues, so using the MBTI in awareness-raising provided a useful starting point for that exploration."

Whilst this exercise showed that several of the team had a lot in common, it also highlighted areas of disagreement. As a new manager, Alex felt that the MBTI session gave her a fast track towards knowing how to motivate different people – saving her time and avoiding potential misunderstandings.

Using the MBTI instrument to set goals

Alex states that her number one objective for the session was "to come away with an appreciation of each others' strengths and weaknesses, and a collective agreement on how to support each other going forward". The MBTI intervention gave the team an accessible yet insightful framework for understanding their different preferences and individual talents.

After the event, Alex says that people were very aware of each other's working styles and ways of perceiving things. "We all learnt which were the right 'buttons' to press to access each other's strengths and perspectives, and now we consciously 'use each other' on an informal basis, ensuring that as a team we have thought about all of the different aspects of a project or task." Alex sees this as evidence that the development has accelerated productivity and effectiveness as well as trust and mutual respect in the team – hitting at the heart of her objective.

A solid foundation for success

Alex's team have made a conscious effort to maintain the impetus from the MBTI event in their daily work. They hold regular group sessions to evaluate their projects and performance, using their new-found understanding to support and coach each other through the everyday challenges they face.

Since the team event, Alex describes the demands of work as "very pressurised ... we are currently in a very intense period of planning for next year, but six months after the development we have a team able to talk openly, working brilliantly together, and as a result we've delivered some really top-quality ideas and plans." Using their complementary preferences and styles, the team is able to deliver on both the 'what's and the 'how's. Alex knows that only a team working together like this can achieve the best outcomes,- and she is convinced that this supports their ethos of being extremely success- and results-driven.

"I wouldn't hesitate to recommend this process to another team in the organisation," she concludes.

*For more information about using the MBTI instrument in your organisation for individual, team or leadership development, please contact our Sales team on **+44 (0)845 603 9958** or by email at enquiry@opp.eu.com.*

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