Using Network Mapping to Globalize an Organization
A Case Study

Situation

In 2013, a new leader was hired to transform the Public & Governmental Affairs (PGA) division into a truly global organization. PGA staffed offices on six continents, but most people stayed in regional silos. Learnings acquired at one location stayed at that location. Despite working on common issues, regions failed to coordinate, missed opportunities, and repeated work done by others. PGA had to do better.

Response

The new leader embarked on a multi-pronged strategy that included significant activities designed to build the PGA network.

Relationship Building. The leader visited every location, in person, multiple times to deepen relationships and show that corporate leadership truly cared about regional work. She recognized that PGA couldn't succeed in isolation and began expanding relationship building with critical network partners.

Network Education. Once relationships began to deepen, the leader brought together the PGA community for activities and training designed to help them see PGA as a network and recognize the challenges created by lack of connectivity.

Network Mapping. A formal network mapping study validated perceptions of PGA's networks and deepened understanding of opportunities to accelerate response times, improve knowledge sharing, and increase innovation. It highlighted just how disconnected people were, even when working on common issues.

Leadership Coaching. Each leader received a customized network diagram that depicted the sub-network that they led. These diagrams provided data-based, objective perspectives into the strengths and weaknesses of the sub-network. In individual coaching sessions, each leader examined his or her map and used it to answer the question, "What kind of leadership does this network need from you?" The responses helped set leadership imperatives for the coming year.

Talent Risk Assessment. The maps highlighted untapped experts, identified overtaxed employees at risk of burnout, and helped leaders anticipate gaps created by employee departures. Each leader conducted a talent risk assessment for their sub-network, which allowed them to create and implement mitigation plans.

Results

After only a year, PGA had already changed radically. Each region had a more developed structure and focus. Systems had been put in place to allow full, immediate, knowledge sharing. More importantly, people realized that one region's work is relevant to other markets. Unlike past experiences, when people had opportunities to come together, they engaged, used the time to learn, and share knowledge.

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partneringresources.com / innolectinc.com
617.395.8396   / 803.396.8500