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A Case Study

(For confidentiality purposes, the company name has been changed)

Keys to Success: Unique People with Unique Habits in Unique Jobs: A Shadowmatch Experience – by Guy Krige

'We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is then not an act but a habit.'

Aristotle

Company X is committed to people succeeding within the environment. As part of this years leadership programme, Company X decided to explore and understand what behaviours of successful people in Company X contribute to performance excellence. This was achieved by partnering with Shadowmatch to map the behavioural habits of people. The process involved identifying top performing Company X leaders in different divisions that had previously excelled on the leadership program and who have since gone on to achieve even greater levels of success and excellence in the workplace. Each of these individual's were asked to complete a Shadowmatch worksheet mapping the presence or absence of habits. By habits Shadowmatch means those actions of the individual that repeat themselves with no (or minimal) conscious planning. The Shadowmatch worksheets were 'matched' to each other in order to identify shared or what we term 'congruent' behaviour habits contributing to excellence. The results are termed 'benchmark shadows'.

The ultimate purpose of these benchmark shadows is to enable a business to 'match' an individual's shadow to the benchmark shadows in order that the organisation can recruit individuals with a high propensity for success, can implement personal development plans for existing employees to lift their performance relative to top performers, can undertake proper succession planning and can implement effective career paths.

The 'benchmark shadows' offer fascinating and deep insight into how the unique repeated actions of different individuals deliver excellence that contributes to Company X's as well as their ongoing success. Five unique benchmark shadows contributing to excellence in Company X as a function of the job at hand and the division were identified. These five unique approaches are: 1) the problem solver, 2) the people solver, 3) the team player, 4) the calmer and finally 5) the obsessive.

Each of these unique approaches towards excellence as mapped by Shadowmatch are discussed in turn.

The Problem Solver:

Problem solvers succeed in Company X due to an excellence in problem solving. When challenges present they are first to engage their minds and energies towards finding and implementing credible and effective solutions with speed. They do not need to motivate themselves to do it. It is part of their framework of meaning to successfully deal with the problem at hand. And it is the only acceptable way forward for them such that virtually all obstacles presented are overcome.

The People Solver:

These people have wonderful and well established behavioural habits towards equipping them

with an excellence at ensuring that people around them succeed. They continuously (and are generally first to) engage with people such that they experience high levels of meaning, fun and success in the workplace. No stone is left unturned in ensuring people will succeed. People solvers experience meaning by ensuring those around them experience success. They are always very positive towards others, investing significant amounts of time and energy into people. It comes naturally to them. We typically experience them as wonderful people.

The Team Player:

These individuals live, breath and sleep team. They can knit a group of disparate individuals into a team before you know it. They succeed in Company X off the back of their ability to create and sustain teams that deliver excellence. The team is king (or queen). They approach business with a team mindset and naturally design work such that it fits hand in glove with a team. Whenever a team approach is required, these people come to the fore. Their actions are geared towards fostering and building teams of excellence. Asking them how they do it unfortunately doesn't help. Most don't know.

The Calmer:

They calm troubled waters and find paths through forests where others cannot. These are the individual's that call for reason and a let's take a look before we leap approach to business. They do not have dominant and pre-defined habits. Rather, they naturally choose their actions based on the unique set of circumstances within which they find themselves. They can do this because of the absence of dominant behaviour patterns. Being flexible in the current situation is what is king. These individual's have an excellence at weighing up different possible approaches to a need. They can choose one way today and another tomorrow without emotional stress at the change. This results in a much broader set of options being considered and implemented than would normally be the case. It also promotes an environment with a relative lack of conflict. The calmer will find a way around the situation without turning it into an obstacle.

The Obsessive:

Finally, there are people who have such extreme habits that we call them obsessive. These individuals obsess about delivering excellence. They have a wonderful capacity for achieving outcomes in extremely efficient, quick and direct ways off the back of radical conceptual applications, high levels of resilience and nothing short of legendary problem solving skills. They have personal energy and a level of independent thought that enable them to overcome obstacles that would stump others. They flourish in environments of stress. If you bring your part in delivering success, they are wonderful. If not, we tend to experience them as very tough and direct.

The evidence is clear, Company X embraces excellence by appointing unique people with unique habits to unique jobs. These individuals come together in a way that delivers success into the market. Each individual is necessary. Company X fully embraces the diversity on offer, elevating people that solve problems naturally and efficiently, as well as people who invest their energy into ensuring people around them succeed, whilst promoting those that can create and sustain teams despite challenging circumstances and simultaneously including a mix of calm voices that will promote flexibility and proper deliberation when dealing with challenges. And let's not forget, Company X also offers a home to those who obsess all the time about Company X's excellence.

What a wonderfully diverse organisation, full of unique jobs, staffed by unique people with unique habits – the keys to excellence.

