

T-Mobile

Building a high performing leadership team



Leading roles

Executive summary

T-Mobile is a subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom, one of the world's largest fixed and mobile telecommunications companies. At the time of this engagement, the organisation was faced with defining and agreeing a new strategic direction in an extremely tough market. However, perhaps as important was the need to build a high performance culture within the organisation, starting with a high performing leadership team able to work side by side to construct and deliver a programme of change to execute the strategy.

Deloitte had worked with T-Mobile for some time, delivering work in customer experience design and organisation structure. This new challenge required a different consulting approach. A highly tailored programme of development designed to bring the leadership team members closer together, to help them gain an appreciation of each others' leadership styles and to apply the learning real time to genuine business problems and tasks.

As a result of the programme, the Senior Leadership Team has markedly improved the quality of interaction between the individual members and also with others within the business. The team is now role modelling the behaviours necessary for the development of a high performing organisation and has achieved a clarity of role and accountabilities that is resulting in fast and clear decision-making – critical to the execution of the strategy.

Our knowledge of the business, pragmatic approach and the depth of relationship the team were able to develop in such a short space of time were instrumental to the success of the programme.

Client issue

T-Mobile had reached a turning point. The recently appointed chief executive and his new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) were faced with a daunting set of choices to secure long-term performance of the business. They had to quickly translate the organisational vision in to a detailed, executable set of actions that could be delivered by the business. But the SLT also had its own leadership challenge. Whilst some of the team had worked with each other at T-Mobile for some years, others had only recently joined and a number were newly promoted. New projects and programmes had been devised and launched in the past, but they had often not delivered their full value. It was clear that this time something had to change and the success of the programme would be inextricably linked with the success of the leadership working together as a high performing team.

Leading roles

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Project overview

T-Mobile engaged us in two phases of work. The first took place over a 10 week period and focused on facilitating the completion of the strategic choices T-Mobile needed to make and analysed existing programmes and projects, their progress and value and finally looked at the organisation's governance structures. Phase 1 ended with a 2-day workshop that began to build consensus around each of these areas and started to explore some of the SLT's behavioural styles and preferences.

Having established an appetite for more in-depth work on leadership styles and behaviours, phase 2 involved us designing a 12-week programme culminating in a 3-day workshop and the development of a plan for making the change stick.

Our approach

Our starting point for the design of the programme was pivotal. We worked on the basis that the SLT was a relatively well functioning team. However, perhaps 30% of how they worked and interacted together could be better "tuned" to lift performance.

Activities were guided by our leadership development methodology that contends leaders can build the performance of their management team through a deliberate process of:

- Self-discovery within the context of collaborating on business goals.
- Doing 'real work' together, interspersed with structured 'reflection' on how they work as a team.

The programme began with an initial 10 week intensive interviewing and data gathering activity to establish the SLT members' views on the strategic choices facing the business and existing internal governance arrangements. Using the Deloitte Value Map™ tool current projects and programmes were mapped out to determine where the business was currently focusing its people and money in relation to the proposed strategic direction.

A 2-day workshop was then held where the team were tasked with working on the strategic plan and identifying steps they needed to take to reach high performance as a team. This involved open discussions on behavioural styles and perceived areas of conflict as well as the development of a plan to clarify each member's accountabilities within the SLT. Importantly, the team agreed further work on behaviours was required.

T-Mobile re-engaged us to move into phase two of the programme. This phase was explicitly focused on team interactions and individual styles and required a considerable time investment from each SLT member.

The first step was a scene setting meeting with each of the SLT members. We had developed an introductory guide to the programme and this was an opportunity to review it face-to-face and to discuss any concerns or questions about the programme such as confidentiality.

A two-hour semi-structured interview and psychometric assessment followed. This identified trends in the SLT behaviour and provided insight into the individual and group leadership styles. In parallel, working together with the HR team, We developed a 360 feedback tool based on T-Mobile's values. The 360 was distributed to participants and responses incorporated into a feedback booklet which captured the output from each of the activities.

In a subsequent individual feedback meeting, SLT members were handed a copy of their detailed and personal report and taken through each step in the process with careful attention being paid to development and their day to day business context.

Once each SLT member had received feedback and had had an opportunity to reflect and discuss it with their own teams, a discussion between the CEO and the individual took place to explore implications for their role and to build an appreciation of each other's leadership styles. We observed each of these sessions and ensured a set of clear actions were driven out of each discussion.

Finally, the programme culminated in a three day offsite workshop held in Glasgow. The workshop was designed to achieve four outcomes:

1. a shared understanding of functional and leadership roles;
2. creating an environment for open dialogue between individuals;
3. creating an environment for open dialogue amongst the group;
4. establishing personal commitments to each other and the team.

Throughout the programme, we were given access to the weekly SLT meetings to observe at first hand the team working and interacting on real business problems. This was instrumental in creating a thread between the set piece activities of the programme and the reality of leadership in open play. One further area of support saw the Deloitte team involved in continual informal coaching sessions with SLT members. These sessions helped establish a close working relationship and a deep level of trust between the SLT and Deloitte teams. We continue to support the SLT on an ad hoc basis.

Success factors

The project was highly successful in meeting the planned objectives:

- **A shared understanding of T-Mobile's strategic vision** – SLT members were encouraged to consider the strategic vision and interpret what it meant for their own part of the business and their personal goals. A common understanding was achieved through a series of facilitated discussions in the SLT meetings and the off-site sessions.
- **Clarity of individual SLT roles and accountabilities** – Clear accountability is critical to building high performance teams and we successfully designed and facilitated a process to achieve this resulting in faster and clearer decision-making. In addition, the concept of a "team role" was developed which gave each SLT member permission to work outside of their functional remit for the benefit of the wider team.

- **An improved SLT meeting process** – With access to the weekly SLT meetings, we were well positioned to advise on the structure of the meeting as well as to ensure the behavioural developments being achieved outside were also being trialled.
- **An improved quality and frequency of SLT interactions** – We encouraged SLT members to increase the number of bilateral conversations that took place outside of the weekly meetings.
- **Transfer of knowledge** – We designed and handed over a 360 feedback tool to T-Mobile to enable the business to repeat the process on an annual basis. We also worked with the head of leadership development to share appropriate lessons and feedback.

Challenges faced

A number of challenges were overcome during the course of this project:

- **Accessibility** – The programme required a significant investment of time on behalf of the SLT. Numerous team members had local and international roles requiring significant travel which threatened their availability and accessibility – critical to the success of the programme. We ensured that all communications were clear and concise and displayed flexibility in planning the activities with the SLT members. This achieved early buy-in and engagement and encouraged the SLT to prioritise the programme in their schedules.
- **Difficult conversations** – Leadership development requires conversations of a very sensitive and personal nature. If not handled well they can be both damaging and difficult to conduct. We brought the right skills and experience to the project including two organisational psychologists and two senior level consultants who had worked with T-Mobile for several years to ensure that the SLT felt that they were operating in an environment of trust and support.
- **Tight timescales** – The project required 48 separate meetings of at least one hour each over the course of the 12 week programme. Gaining access to and managing diaries of the SLT was a hugely complex task. We brought an advanced level of organisation to the project and worked seamlessly with T-Mobile's executive support staff to manage this process successfully.

Our working relationship

The SLT Leadership Development Programme was a sensitive programme requiring a great deal of trust. We managed to achieve this quickly by engaging a broad range of people to build consensus during the project, including senior management, the board, membership and staff. Open consultation was achieved through numerous informal and formal meetings, an offsite workshop and regular coaching with all team members. In addition, the Deloitte team not only made themselves available for questions and feedback but ensured that confidentiality was maintained at all times. By not over processing the approach with a rigid methodology and by bringing consistency and the right skill set to the engagement, Deloitte ensured that the client was kept engaged and made to feel at ease throughout.

Jim Hyde (CEO)

“Following success in the first quarter we worked with Deloitte to step up the leadership and organisational development work. We planned and delivered another off site in Glasgow focused on the behavioural development of the SLT. Deloitte developed a bespoke 360' process and used other tools to provide all the leaders with a clear understanding of who they were and how they needed to work with the rest of the SLT. In particular their work on developing 'team roles', has added considerable value.”

Mark Martin (HR Director)

“It is difficult to sum up their support on such a large and complex project but I would highly recommend Deloitte, and in particular Nick Owen and Will Gosling, to any organisation requiring transformational change. Their USP is their ability to actually deliver sustainable results.”

Ashley Rickayzen (Director of Enterprise and Programme Delivery)

“I just wanted to say I think you guys have made a real difference and that your intervention was extremely well constructed, thought through and delivered. I feel you have really helped us a lot and I hope you saw evidence of that during our discussions at the senior leadership team meeting today. I know we have a lot further to go and there are some big open items but I really feel we are on a much sounder footing than we were a while ago. I enjoyed working with you and your teams, thank you.”

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