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## **Case Study: Leadership Development at SFCAPC**

**By Dr. Sarita Bhakuni**

When Katie Albright became the new executive director of the San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center (SFCAPC) four-and-a-half years ago, she knew the first step toward getting the organization to function more effectively was implementing a major restructuring initiative. She formed a new leadership team composed of members with various levels of tenure and experience and positioned them to help the formerly small grassroots organization, which had transformed into a larger, more complex entity, perform in a more efficient manner.

With the leadership team in place, Albright then turned to CPP, publisher of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment, and myself to help hone the team's management skills, increase cohesion between employees, and enable the SFCAPC to enhance services for the San Francisco families who rely on its programs.

### **The Solution**

Over the course of a year-and-a-half, I led the SFCAPC team through a leadership development program that included individual and team coaching, as well as an executive retreat. By utilizing four of CPP's assessments, I helped members gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of their interpersonal needs, strengths, and areas of potential improvement; a clearer articulation and communication of the organization's vision; and improved conflict management.

What I initially helped each team member understand is that interpersonal needs differ for each person. By each member understanding their own style through the use of the FIRO-B assessment in comparison to their coworkers', it brought to light the need for greater patience and the ability to communicate in ways other people can relate to. Team members also were able to realize that while some people like to be informed about everything that is going on in the organization, others only want to know information pertinent to their specific job. Having

clear communication channels is the key to a successful organization, and this laid the groundwork to further examine the building blocks of what was needed to help the San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center thrive.

Along with developing greater patience and a better understanding of themselves came the ability to examine each member's strengths and potential areas for improvement through the use of the MBTI assessment. Being aware of personality preferences allowed the individuals to realize which areas came less naturally to them and to their coworkers, and gave them the foundation to improve on those to increase their overall performance.

Another factor that became clear through the assessments was that this leadership team was made up of a group of high performers who each put the needs of the organization and the families they serve before their own. Due to the nature of their jobs, they were always dealing with families in crisis and high-stress situations, leading them to work long hours and not take any time for themselves. Over time, if not addressed, this can lead to burnout and hinder performance abilities. It was, therefore, crucial to teach the leadership team how to integrate self-care into their culture and establish a system in which team members "watch out" for each other. This builds strength within the organization and gives the SFCAPC employees a system of support.

## **The Results**

Throughout the training program, I watched the six-person leadership team go through an incredible transformation. A group of people who initially struggled to communicate effectively with each other now work cohesively and collaboratively, and foster conversations on their own that drive continuous innovation at all levels of operation within the organization.

"Instead of working with only our own issues and positions in mind, we are looking at others' individual work styles, throwing everything on the table, and collaborating to find solutions that work for everyone," says Malcolm Gaines, clinical director at the SFCAPC.

By better understanding themselves and their colleagues, the team members were able to build trust within the organization and instill confidence in all of the employees that the leadership team can solve any issue, at any time. The team also gained greater assurance that Executive Director Albright would be made aware of situations in a timely manner by those handling them.

In the end, the intensive self-examination paid dividends that can be seen in the nonprofit's operations, performance, and morale.

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