



Growing strength through difference

Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF) is a voluntary sector charity that supports individuals, communities and organisations across the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, UK. FVAF is connected to hundreds of voluntary and community organisations working in and with local communities.

Since forming in 1994, FVAF's reputation has grown – it's seen as a vibrant infrastructure organisation that encourages and enhances community action to support resilient and connected communities.

Opportunity

FVAF is three teams in one - Community Building, Youth Association and Senior Leadership - which have grown significantly in a short period of time.

This phase of rapid growth has brought with it the need to focus in different ways on both collective and individual learning & development.

As an organisation, FVAF are passionate about nurturing talented, compassionate, community-minded team players. So, the Senior Leadership Team recognised this as a key time to celebrate and build on the team's

understanding of individual work preferences and how these link to their team values.

Approach

Experienced consultant Anne Brinkhoff, who works with teams, organisations and leaders, was brought in to support the development of FVAF's already highly self-aware, but still forming, team.

Basing the team events around the Team Management Profile (TMP), Anne led two-half day sessions where the team explored their individual Profiles, reflecting on their own work preferences and using a combined team map to look at the spread of preferences across the whole team. She also encouraged everyone to identify some strengthening actions to take forward.

FVAF were delighted to discover that, as a whole, the team was well-balanced, collectively covering all the work preferences that make for a successful team.

So how could they leverage that balance to build on their achievements for continued success?

Exploring their individual Profiles gave each team member a structured framework for understanding their own communication preferences and working styles, and what that meant for the wider team.

The approach facilitated some thoughtful and constructive experience sharing around what it means to have a

strong extrovert or introvert preference. Consequently this awareness has been incorporated into daily interactions, making them much more effective.

Exploring preferences also helped the team review the composition of project teams, to make best use of complimentary differences to achieve their objectives.

Outcome

FVAF continue to build on the work they've done by embedding their learning in their day-to-day activities. Line managers have initiated on-going development conversations with team members, acknowledging different approaches to work, preferred communication styles and shared values.

The hope is that as new staff join, they'll also complete the TMP to support their development and growth as a valued member of the team – ensuring FVAF continue to nurture their most precious asset, their people.

“Thanks again for the sessions with the team profiles... they've helped us really celebrate that our differences are the greatest strength of our team.”

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