



DNA CONSULTING

Supporting change leadership

Case studies

The following summaries of DNA client challenges and scenarios showcase some of the non-profit situations we have worked with clients to address.

1. Envisioning the future and inspiring action

A local NGO has been experiencing a decline in donations for the past few years. The reserves are becoming depleted but there seems to be little urgency amongst the staff or Board to try and turn things around. A new Director has recently been appointed and is disturbed by the unwillingness of both the staff and Board to take things seriously. She is looking to set a new course for the organisation but does not know where to begin.

DNA worked with the new Director to craft a plan to tackle these challenges. Our work included:

- Facilitating a change management process with the staff and Board in order to get them to engage with their realities and establish a sense of urgency
- Helping them work together to create a clear and realistic plan of action

2. Navigating founder's syndrome

The Director of a well-known non-profit is one of the founding members of the organisation and has been the leader since it first started. From humble beginnings, the organisation now has 25 staff and many volunteers. The Director would like to step back from leadership and hand over to a younger person but it is proving difficult to find someone she can trust to preserve the ethos and vision. Some of her Board are very supportive and want her to stay on but the newer members are putting pressure on her to hand over as soon as possible. She would like to find a way to stay involved but not lead, but does not know how this can be achieved or whether it is even desirable.

DNA worked with the Director to craft a plan to tackle these challenges. Our work included:

- Confidential interviews with key role-players to understand the deeper issues at stake
- Working through a change management process as well as helping them create an inspiring and updated vision, mission and strategy for the future
- Helping them determine the structure and leadership needed going forward
- Providing support both to the restructuring process and the recruitment of a new director

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3. Building momentum for major change

A 40-year-old International NGO headquartered in the USA has country programmes with national offices across the globe, including South Africa. The international body has undergone a review process and has decided to change their model of operation from service delivery to community development and empowerment. They expect all national organisations to make the same shift within the next three years. The Director is supportive of the new approach but is encountering significant resistance from her staff. Most staff have been with the organisation for more than five years and have been trained up to deliver the present model. They are not convinced that the new model will work and they fear it will affect their ability to raise funds. Tensions have emerged between staff and this has affected morale and performance. The Director is determined to push forward with the changes but is struggling to get any momentum.

DNA worked with the Director to craft a plan to tackle these challenges. Our work included:

- Designing a trust-building process to lay a solid foundation and build initial consensus
- Working with senior management to create a change management plan and new strategy
- Large gatherings with all the staff are facilitated to enable vision to be cast, inspiration to be given and stories to be told about how the change is impacting lives
- Supporting various follow-up processes (including team change workshops and conflict resolution) that were conducted over the ensuing five-year period
- Insights Discovery personal profiles, individual coaching and team-building workshops for the senior management team to help them better navigate and lead the change
- Facilitated team effectiveness processes and 360 assessments with all staff

4. Successful succession

The Director of a 25-year-old NGO, who had led the organisation from inception, retired at the end of last year and has taken up a position on the Board. The new Director has lots of new ideas but finds that he is often undermined by some of the staff who have been around for a long time. Cliques have started forming, with the new Director and newer and younger members of staff on the one hand, and older and more long-standing staff on the other. There is no obvious conflict yet but tensions are building and Board members have started to be drawn into the cliques. The Chairperson of the Board is concerned about what is happening but is not sure how to intervene.

DNA worked with the Board Chair to craft a plan to tackle these challenges. Our work included:

- Facilitating a timeline story wall process where all staff are able to participate in developing a shared story of the organization over the past 25 years
- Following this up with a similar process to map the future of the organization that builds on the golden threads (values) that have helped the organization to succeed in the past

5. Shaping high-performing teams

A young, vibrant organisation with about twenty staff is doing great work in the communities that they serve, but every now and then serious tensions develop between members of staff over the way in which things are being done. Some staff are highly energetic and resourceful, but they often offend other staff members with their brash behaviour. Others are very caring and well liked in the community but often miss their deadlines for reporting. Some of the leadership team are full of ideas but are exhausting the staff with all of the changes they are introducing. The Director wants everyone to work together as a team but sometimes feels like he's trying to herd cats.

DNA worked with the Director to craft a plan to tackle these challenges. Our work included:

- Helping each staff member complete an Insights Discovery personal profile
- Planning and facilitating a 'working with difference' workshop which creates a safe space where these profiles are used to enable honest conversations around management style, working environment and communication to take place

6. Crafting a compelling vision together

A well-run non-profit organisation has strong leadership and a competent, cohesive Board. They have been in existence for twelve years and feel that it is time to step up to the next level. There is no shortage of ideas but what they lack is a clear strategy and cohesive plan to put these ideas into action. There have been several attempts to have planning meetings but the day-to-day pressure of running the organisation means these haven't come to anything as yet.

DNA worked with the Director and his Board to craft a plan to tackle these challenges. Our work included:

- Meeting with the Board Chair and the Director to understand the context and to build a sense of urgency around the need for a structured strategic planning process
- Leading a consultation process with all staff and Board where key strategic issues are identified
- Facilitating a strategic planning process with senior management and the Board to develop a strategic plan
- Running a follow-up workshop with management to develop an operational plan to implement the strategy