

Ascend National Cohort: Leadership and Strategic Thinking

Quick recap

The meeting began with introductions and discussions about onboarding experiences, followed by preparations for an upcoming session with business owners that included plans for breakout groups and logistics. The team then shared various business updates and introduced new members before delving into topics of leadership, development readiness, and team dynamics using different models and approaches. The session concluded with discussions about managing virtual discussions, addressing challenges related to the government shutdown, and exploring strategies for improving team collaboration and communication.

Next steps

- All participants: Complete the session survey
- All participants: Fill out the assessment sheet that Martha sends in weekly emails
- Foster Hub participants: Attend Fostering Community session next Friday
- All participants: Attend next session on November 21st with RSM

Summary

Client Wins and Leadership Insights

The meeting began with Countifi sharing updates on new clients in the aviation sector and potential opportunities in Morocco. Rachelle from HCL Engineering and Surveying announced winning a contract with the Denver Broncos for stadium surveying work, emphasizing the importance of relationship building. Priya discussed her successful business meetings in Miami, highlighting the value of maintaining relationships with clients even after they sign contracts with competitors. Alicia shared her use of AI prompts to streamline the hiring process. The conversation ended with Elizabeth introducing Bruce Avolio, a renowned leadership expert, who was scheduled to present on leadership and strategic thinking.

Authentic Leadership and Personal Engagement

The meeting focused on authentic leadership, drawing inspiration from Indra Nooyi's approach at PepsiCo, who wrote personalized letters to 400 employees to emphasize individual importance. The discussion explored how authentic leadership can be maintained as organizations grow, with emphasis on personalized engagement and building trust through consistent practices. Participants were encouraged to set a specific

goal and consider their leadership coaching practices, with a poll conducted to gauge participants' mindset and engagement levels.

Leadership Development and Claiming

The meeting focused on leadership and development readiness, with UW- emphasizing the importance of emotional regulation and motivation in leadership. Participants discussed different perspectives on who grants leadership, with responses ranging from the board to the team led. Priya highlighted the importance of self-leadership as a prerequisite for team leadership, while Dr. Stephanie shared an example of claiming leadership in the Air Force. The discussion touched on the balance between claiming leadership and waiting for it to be granted, with UW- noting that claiming leadership can be beneficial in certain situations.

Enhancing Employee Well-being Through Leadership

The discussion focused on leadership challenges, employee well-being, and organizational culture. UW shared insights from Gallup polls highlighting declining employee engagement and well-being over the past five years, emphasizing the importance of leaders demonstrating care for their teams. Participants discussed strategies for showing leadership through intentional actions and creating a supportive work environment. The session concluded with participants breaking into groups to share their current challenges and needs, with a focus on identifying ways to better support employees.

Virtual Discussion Session Planning

The meeting focused on managing a virtual discussion session with multiple breakout rooms. The facilitators discussed logistics, including timing, breaks, and technical issues with Zoom screen sharing. They agreed to schedule an 8-minute break at 10:20 AM and addressed concerns about video quality and lighting. The session involved participants describing their organizational challenges, with the facilitators planning to collect responses in a Google Doc and follow up with specific questions.

Government Shutdown Impact on Workforce

The group discussed challenges related to the government shutdown, including its impact on businesses, remote work dynamics, and employee motivation. They explored strategies for maintaining employee engagement, such as providing structure, transparency, and clear role expectations, while addressing concerns about work ethic and generational differences in the workforce. The importance of peer coaching and the need for a unified message to Washington, D.C., were also highlighted, with plans to potentially collaborate on sending a collective message to policymakers.

Generational Differences in Workplace Dynamics

The discussion focused on generational differences in the workplace, with participants sharing experiences about Gen Z employees. Priya and others discussed their positive experiences with Gen Z hires, while UW- expressed caution about overgeneralizing based on age groups. The conversation highlighted the importance of individual differences over generational labels, with Ascend/UW emphasizing that assumptions about people based on their generation can be harmful and unproductive. The group agreed to take an 8-minute break before continuing with the next topic.

Apiso Model for Team Dynamics

The meeting focused on discussing team dynamics and leadership using the Apiso model, which outlines the sequence of inputs, processes, emergent states, and outputs in team development. UW- introduced the model, explaining how inputs (assets and opportunities) drive processes, which in turn create emergent states and lead to team outcomes. The discussion included a case study of Team D, for which participants were asked to analyze using the Apiso model to identify areas for development and coaching. The conversation concluded with instructions for breakout discussions focusing on coaching strategies for Team D, specifically regarding vision alignment, collaboration, and execution effectiveness.

Enhancing Team Communication Strategies

The meeting focused on team collaboration and communication challenges. Participants discussed strategies for improving alignment among experts, including building commonalities and understanding different communication styles. Al Turner highlighted the need for a mediator or consultant to address communication issues within his organization. The group also touched on the importance of recognizing the value of each team member's contributions, even if they feel they can work independently.

Enhancing Team Structure and Trust

The team discussed challenges with their current structure and leadership, with a particular focus on Casey's role as a moderator and the need to foster trust and psychological safety among team members. They explored the importance of intentional team-building and conflict management, with Jamie suggesting reframing conflict as a positive space for discussion and growth. The group also discussed the need for clearer role definitions and the potential benefits of bringing team members together physically to improve collaboration. UW emphasized the importance of collecting more data before making assumptions about the team's issues and proposed a five-step process for addressing team challenges.

Red Teaming and Leadership Development

The discussion focused on red teaming, fault lines in teams, and individual leadership development. Sealth explained red teaming as a military concept of simulating enemy tactics to improve competitiveness. The conversation then shifted to fault lines in teams, including generational and philosophical differences, and ways to address them, such as naming the fault line and seeking different perspectives. Finally, the group discussed vertical and horizontal development in leadership, with Avolio sharing personal experiences of transformative growth and emphasizing the importance of pivotal experiences in leadership development.

Leadership, Reflection, and Coaching Insights

The meeting focused on leadership, self-awareness, and coaching. Bruce shared his personal experience of navigating racial challenges in a manufacturing plant, which led to improved team dynamics and productivity. He emphasized the importance of reflection, sharing experiences, and using open-ended questions for coaching. The group discussed the concept of leadership narratives and how companies like Mayo Clinic and Alaska Airlines have developed theirs. Bruce mentioned sending out additional materials, including a video on peer coaching, and requested the group to complete a survey. The next session was scheduled for November 21st with RSM, and the Foster Hub meeting was set for the following Friday.