

# Life sciences business consultancy: Helping a start-up leadership team play to their strengths and define their roles.



*In our assessments, we:*

## **Discover** →

A newly created start-up consultancy was struggling to differentiate roles on their partnership team. They were all billing 100 per cent of their hours to their client and despite comprising four highly capable leaders, they had not been able to step back sufficiently to define roles and truly play to their natural strengths & abilities. The partners tended to get caught up in discussing all operating decisions, limiting further the precious time that they had devoted to leadership outside their billed client work.

## **Define** →

We suggested to the partners that a full diagnostic would really help them understand themselves at a deeper level, building self-awareness, trust, and authenticity; and help them truly understand each other's unique skills and abilities. So, we leadership-assessed all four leaders using a combination of in-depth 360-feedback and psychometrics which measured personality, entrepreneurial spirit and learning agility. The results were highly informative. We found that of the four partners, one was clearly the most visionary with excellent ideas for business development, but struggled to find time to put his ideas into action and as a result felt frustration at a lack of progress. Another of the partners encompassed the all-round personality traits typical of an MD, showing the strong ability to drive decisions and manage others. The two other partners displayed highly capable specialist traits, underlining their excellent execution capabilities (coupled with a high emotional intelligence in the case of one of them) and an overall desire to operate in concrete facts, systems, and processes, rather than engaging extensively in new business concepts.

## **Deliver**

Centred on our findings, we delivered a series of individual feedback sessions and group workshops to the partner team, allowing them to own their strengths as well as areas for development. The team could then also collectively define their roles & responsibilities, as well as to co-create some informal names for their functions (for example, the 'Driver', the 'Connector', the 'Humanistic Entrepreneur,' etc.). This gave the team a common language to recognise their strengths and more confidently define their roles, accountabilities & responsibilities.

The group already had extremely high trust and affiliation with each other, but the risk was that a fear of conflict would hold them back from becoming a truly high performing team. So in collaboration with the team, we developed a number of operating rules for their meetings to ensure that everyone's contributions were recognised & maximised (bearing in mind they comprised four very different personality types!) Defining clearer roles and recognising individual strengths allowed the team to build greater psychological safety and therefore the ability to sensitively challenge each other, and at times make decisions without consensus. As a result of their discussions, the partner with the strong ability for visionary business development was able to step back entirely from his day-to-day client responsibilities for a period, so that he could develop this aspect of the business. This in turn allowed the other partners to more clearly define their roles, while carving out time for leadership responsibilities and cutting down the proportion of billable hours. And three years later, the rewards are abundant. The business is thriving: the partnership group is strong and clearly defined with strong operational leadership, and both pipeline & delivered business is growing with successful diversification into new clients.