



CASE STUDY



Creating Leadership Capacity

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is the world's leading conservation organization, working throughout the United States and in 30 countries to protect the world's most ecologically important places. On the eve of its 50th anniversary, the Washington chapter needed to bring in a new leader who could create bigger and longer lasting impacts on the world's environment. Here's the story of how Sage Ways helped the new leader create an innovative and cohesive senior management team dynamic, central to long-term success.

Challenge

The Nature Conservancy in Washington was an organization that had spread itself too wide and too thin, which resulted in declining revenues, low staff morale, and minimal board member involvement. The board hired a new Executive Director (ED) to be a change agent and rejuvenate the organization.

After conducting interviews with every board member, major donor, staff member and key partners, the ED found that there was no real sense of focus at TNC Washington, which made the task of raising funds challenging – especially in the midst of an economic recession.

The ED knew she had the right people on staff to help her create a new strategy, but needed to make a profound shift in how the organization operated. To begin with, her eight-person management team didn't work together. She engaged Sage Ways to help her build a cohesive management team that could maximize the impact of the organization's work.

Capability

Sage Ways focuses on collaboration as a means to lasting change, and worked with the ED on a roadmap for how she could build a strong management team that could efficiently execute a new strategic plan.

The roadmap steps included a phase of discovery, defining a new organizational culture, and activities to ensure the new team dynamic lasted. Sage Ways interviewed each manager on the leadership team and distributed a survey asking questions about the dynamic of the senior management team. Then Sage Ways designed a retreat to dissolve barriers between individuals, create new forms of transparent communication, and shape the trust needed for a high-functioning team.

Sage Ways then asked the management team to assess their current culture. The question: was their culture the one they wanted? After a unanimous answer of “no”, Sage Ways helped the team define a new collaborative, market- driven culture, and the steps each manager needed to take, to create a new way of operating.



The process was designed to build trust, create a sense of team, and establish honesty and transparency as the norm for communications.



The challenge was not only to change the culture, but grow the capacity of each manager to sustain and grow that new culture. Sage Ways followed up with individual, targeted development activities with several team members including:

- Coaching using the **Identity Mapping Framework**
- Personal leadership development by participating in the **Triple Impact Program**
- Building powerful partnerships using the **Change Lab Experience**
- Developing new problem solving methodologies through **Action Learning**



Change

TNC's bottom line was positively affected as the leadership team took over more decision making, which freed the ED to focus more time on donor relationships and fundraising. The newly-empowered management team developed the capacity to operate as a unified leadership body.

“Sage Ways built, in such a short period of time, a team dynamic that took down defenses and built up individual confidence in the group. This made things transparent...we, as a team, had a new way of operating.”

They came to trust each other, and take accountability for themselves as part of a greater whole. And they made a cultural shift to a learning organization that was willing to be curious, grow, and innovate. From challenge, they created the capability to change.



Create the capability to change.

Sage Ways helps people and businesses create a dynamic capability to change, so they can adapt to today's ever-increasing demands and complexities with ease and creativity.

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