

Performance Education

Education & Training, Plateauing Growth, Dysfunctional Leadership, and Welcomed External Perspective



THE CHALLENGE

Performance Education Group changes lives by giving postgraduate students vital employability skills. Launched in 2006, the company experienced rapid growth but then found itself plateauing and beginning to come off the boil.

Worse, according to CEO and founder Owen Firth, the group's leadership team seemed unable to have the necessary conversations needed to arrest any backwards slide.

Budgets were not being made, sales numbers were not quite there.

"Once I realized that what we had wasn't high-performing, then the kind of perfectionist, goal-focused person in me came through and went: 'Okay, so how do we get there?'"

The first big question was: 'Do we have the right team to go deep down that path?'"

There was dysfunction in the way the company's leadership group was working, as one of its team members explains: "We weren't operating optimally. We wanted to change that, so we had to make some commitments."

"We started to feel a rhythm"

THE APPROACH

Two years ago, the team chose to roll out

The Leadership Circle Profile – and use insights from Verne Harnish's book, *The Rockefeller Habits* – to instigate changes to how they operated as leaders. As one leader recalls: *"That first meeting two years ago was quite an emotional time. We had been through changes in the leadership team. There was a big issue with regards to trust. We weren't sure we all had the same intent. Being able to be vulnerable, open and honest with Owen, and with our colleagues, was really a breakthrough."*

The leaders made commitments to themselves and as a team, choosing to focus on three areas: controlling, authenticity and relating.

Those three things helped guide their team development. As Owen recalls: *"We quickly got to this place of progress over perfection, and we just tried stuff. I think that worked really well. We started to feel a rhythm. We were in daily communication with one another."*

THE IMPACT

Since working with the Leadership Circle, Performance Education Group has delivered 40 percent year-on-year growth.

For Owen, the transition in his leaders and the business has been remarkable.

"We've been on this journey for two years now and, as a result, we've really seen that there have been some positive changes and a turnaround in business success.

What's been really interesting for me is that these leaders have actively stepped up to act like owners.

As a result, we've just launched a management equity program."

As one leader recalls: *"The conversations are a lot more constructive. We are definitely being brave enough to question, and poke, and make sure that we've considered all the possibilities before we change or implement something."*

Owen credits The Leadership Circle's ability to provide an external perspective, expert coaching and to create a safe, independent space for everyone to drive profound changes in the way they approach their work.

"Certainly, what I have experienced in our business – by embracing a process of change, by embracing the scaling-up concepts – it has absolutely worked."

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