



EXECUTIVE ARTS

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CASE STUDY: STUCCO

UNSTICKING BUSINESS TO ENABLE NEW DIRECTION

Sometimes things get stuck, and can stay that way for years. The harder we try, the less we get the results we want. One such circumstance occurred for a major oil company implementing a new strategy in the North Sea. The executives had endorsed the new strategy and senior management were behind it, but what was happening on the ground was not consistent.

The new strategy called for fields in decline to be considered for disposal to new entrants. Trade-offs between teams in different parts of the business were necessary, but they were still creating investment cases and competing. Several months into the strategy nothing was changing.

A meeting of key players was called and facilitated using the Stucco framework to uncover the cause of the difficulty.

Examining external forces and influences revealed where some actions were insufficient to produce the desired result, but the real surprises lay in the unspoken and underlying assumptions and beliefs that were shaping the actions.

People were unconsciously defending themselves from their worst fears with hidden assumptions such as “We can never work as a team”, “The strategy is wrong”, and “We have to fight for our asset”.

Although no-one consciously held these beliefs, an examination of their actions showed that they were consistent with these surprising statements.

Having revealed the unconscious assumptions and beliefs it was then relatively easy to create a set of actions from a new, consciously chosen, set of beliefs (often simply the opposites!). In turn, the new actions were then tested against the external forces and tuned to ensure they would produce the desired result.

The unspoken assumptions and beliefs had been revealed, discussed and discarded, the strategy became unstuck and progress began to be made in the desired direction. After the event it seemed so easy to change our minds with just a few hours talking together as a team. Stucco had done its job and got a major multi-national company back on track.