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| Approach: **Uniting around a Shared Vision** |
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| My role was as part of a team whose task was to lead the University's top team through the process of developing a new strategy for the organisation.This also involved consulting with other leaders across the university to bring in their ideas.The aim was to get a joint understanding of where we are now. What is working well/not so well, risks and threats.We presented data/evidence of where we were and sought to understand impressions from around the University on the current state. To be successful I had to be open about the failure of the last strategy and encouraged people to put their cards on the table and give their views on why the previous strategy had failed. Understanding this would provide pointers to what needed to be done /avoided in the development of the new strategy and its implementation. (The reason it failed was the implementation was never followed through).A key driver in the process was that the new VC had a clear reason for developing the new strategy and provided top level support. Once an understanding of the present state was complete the next stage was to identify where we wanted to be by 2030. I recognised that although the ideal would be to consult widely across all issues the reality was that the top team had very clear ideas on some areas and in reality these were non-negotiable. Rather than risk building up frustration by consulting on every issue we focussed on those areas that could be influenced. An outcome from this was the definition which became the vision statement of the University "The best applied University". What were the specific attributes that made the development of the strategy was successful?• Communicating to the right people, the right information, in the right amount at the right time.• Setting out clearly what this all meant and sticking to it.• Ensuring that all resulting plans etc. were aligned with the strategy. We did have some difficult meetings with the top team. Things that we were presenting were getting a muted response, or small issues were getting picked up. *We soon realised that we had to engage with members in different ways in order to appeal their differing styles and preferences.*For example, we recognised that if we simply presented something at a meeting some members were less engaged because they would have preferred advance notice in order to prepare and better understand the issue.Being adaptable in approach was very important as we wanted key people to be comfortable with the strategy. This was also important because they were the people that would be selling it to the wider organisation so it was essential that they were committed to it.We also recognised that creating an emotional connection was important. Not everyone was engaged purely by evidence and facts. Some wanted to understand how it might impact on their parts of the organisation - for example, would a History department fit in the 'leading applied University'? The next stage was to develop key Performance Indicators and develop plans.We did this by asking what the strategy would mean for various parts of the organisation and how it could be progressed. We consulted far more widely on this to ensure people were comfortable with the resultant KPIs. One specific difficulty that we faced when we were working to develop the vision was changes in the top team. (An example of where things like this do not follow a linear process.) This had the potential to slow down the process and we worked hard to get them fully attuned to the strategy through extensive communications and consultations.By the end of the whole process I felt drained but a huge sense of satisfaction that the strategy document and KPIs were approved and that the job had been done well.Some key reflections on what helped achieve this outcome.The team and I personally had a very clear goal which gave us clear direction.It helped us as a team to unite around a shared vision This ensured we were working towards tangible outcomes. |