

Antartic Commonwealth ladies expedition team 2009

Reaching for the Pole - Building a high performance team



[Using mission's model of high performance team work CCI© and the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI) Standard edition – programme delivered in Norway March 2009)

Performing in extreme environments demands excellence in all respects. The operational and logistical planning and fore thought needs to be first class; communication and sponsorship management need to be precise along with the physical preparation of each person embarking on the endeavour need to be exemplary. All of these pre-requisites get you into the theatre of operations whether it be 600 km from one of the poles or at Everest base camp.

Performing and winning in extreme environments, however, takes a lot more than just good logistics and good individual preparation. At Mission Performance we have experience of winning in a wide variety of extremes. The secret of our success is not logistical, physical nor the slickness of our communication campaigns.

The secret is our simple approach to building people and teams encapsulated in the pneumatic of CCI©

We have been sharing the lessons of CCI© with our clients for the past 10 years.

Put simply teams have essential elements that underpin their level of success. As with the physical endurance preparation needed for one of these events the size of your training base (time & quality of your training) is proportional to your level of physical readiness and your potential for success.

The **force multiplier** as we call it is all about the mental and behavioural preparation needed to perform in extremes.

Mission's CCI© concentrates on the mental or behavioural preparation that aligns to the physical. It is just as rigorous and at times can be more painful but when achieved it can propel you to even greater heights and distances.

So what has this to do with the first all commonwealth ladies expedition to the South Pole?

Felicty Aston aims to lead the first all women common wealth team to the South Pole in 2009. Having led expeditions all over the world in cold climates and having been trained by Mission in 2005 for her successful expedition to the magnetic North Pole she enlisted Mission to help once again.

As with most assignments of this nature we only had 8 hours to deliver the first part of the programme. Back in March Mission travelled to Norway and the **Hardanger Vidda** to augment a two week basic winter skills package put together by Felicity. Borrowing a very comfortable wooden cabin called **Dyranut Fjellstova** the team went through a series of lectures and practicals aimed to develop their expeditionary skills. These included: tent drills, skiing and pulk drills, navigation and cold weather injuries.

Mission arrived mid way through the second week to cover the team's CCI© over one 8 hour period and specifically the **Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI)** and how it could help them in the development of their culture.

Mission's approach to building high performing teams starts with developing the first and most important C of CCI.

Culture is the performance limiter for most teams. Get it right and you will open up levels of performance otherwise denied to you. Get it wrong and you can fail quietly or die in the context of this team.

This is where we started with the team. Using the SDI we delivered Mission's curriculum on developing personal and collective awareness of motivation and behaviour.

(Simon Gallon of Personal Strengths in the UK kindly provided the reports free of charge.)

Understanding how to get it right for each person on the team, how to appreciate their inputs and unique contributions, how to prevent them from going into conflict and how to deal with conflict once it arises formed some of the key modules in the curriculum.

We spent two 4 hours sessions running through each part of the programme. A mixture of theory and practical activation of conflict scenarios fused with their experiences of one another gleaned thus far helped to build a compelling and valuable experience for the team.

“.....I can't tell you how beneficial it has been. We finished the final task which then led on to a general discussion and everyone agreed that the sessions with you had accelerated the team bonding process and that we all felt that we understood what we had seen of each other a little more and that we felt more confident moving forward as a group.

I personally found the system fascinating and would love to do more. Several members of the team would like to make a list of things that drive them to conflict etc which I think might be the sort of thing covered by the 'dashboard' you mentioned?

Felicity Aston

We had tears and periods of self-reflection, which contributed to an intense and valuable programme for the team.

The programme finished with a look forward to future personal and team actions that would help cement the culture and behaviours necessary for success on and off the ice. This for them was the beginning, permanent and meaningful behavioural change has to be owned by the team otherwise it will fail.

As with many global remoted teams Felicity does not have the luxury of the team all being in one place at the same time. They are split across 5 countries and time zones making communication very difficult indeed. The culture they decide to develop will help shrink these distances enabling them to communicate far more effectively as December 2009 approaches.

Mission Performance will be working with the team on an ongoing basis to help them develop their (C) Culture and then their (C) Clarity and (I) Interdependence to a level where they can reach for the Pole with more confidence.

More details can be found at www.mission-performance.com & www.mission-blog.com

For more details of the SDI tool please visit www.personalstrengths.com