

Interface Events

What is an Interface Event?

An Interface Event involves two or more teams that need to improve or develop the way they work together. Sometimes this is necessary when 'finger pointing' between teams has reached an unacceptable level, on other occasions when a need for improvement has been recognised. The exact content will depend upon the situation. An Interface Event will identify issues, blockages and actions required for improvement.

Interface Events can be run for teams from within the same organisation or teams from different organisations that need to work closely together. In the latter scenario, this might be the Executive Team from both organisations.

The process

We start off by meeting with the leaders of the teams involved and sometimes speak to other key players. Next we put together a proposal to meet the needs identified. On the day itself we run the event, provide the structure and facilitate any tricky situations. Finally, we meet with the leaders to review the event, evaluate progress made since the event and discuss any next steps.

Occasionally, in very tricky or complex situations, we might recommend diagnostic 1-1s with key individuals prior to the event.

Typical contents and duration

The exact content of an Interface Event will be designed around the situation and teams involved. The following are some typical contents, all of which are tried-and-tested:

Getting to know each other better

There are several options for this and we will select the most appropriate. The purpose is for the individuals in the teams concerned to find out a bit about each other as people rather than just a job title in one of the teams.

Leaders Speak

This is an opportunity for the leaders of the teams concerned to say what they see as the important issues for the teams and is followed by a structured question and answer session. We provide a checklist of topics to cover so the leaders don't have to start from scratch.

'This is what we think of you'/scoping session

This is the 'cards on the table' session where each team says what it really thinks of the other, both good and bad. This is where good facilitation is absolutely essential as it has the potential to degenerate into a mud-slinging exercise. On the other hand, if a real opportunity is not given for people to express their true opinions, the event is wasted.

During this exercise, the teams will also scope the issues they need to work on and resolve.

Roles and responsibilities clarification

This is an interactive exercise to clarify who does what in each team.

Real Work as required

If there is some Real Work the team needs to get on with, we will put together a structure to help you do this. This often involves examining in some detail the processes that exist between the teams concerned.

Not only does Real Work get things done - it has also been proven time-after-time that the most effective way to get people working well together is to give them tasks to carry out together.

Meetings structure review

A review of what meetings there are that involve the teams concerned, the purpose, attendees and logistics of each.

Action planning

Finally we will pull together the outputs of the above sessions. We will help you to prioritise and allocate an individual to lead on each action. We will also agree how progress will be monitored and reviewed.

Duration

One day is the minimum amount of time needed to get anything sensible accomplished. Other options are lunchtime-to-lunchtime or a late afternoon start and then a full day. An overnight stay can provide a good opportunity for the teams to socialise and get to know each other.

Two factors that lead to success

- (1) It takes two to tango. Both parties need to be committed to improving the relationship.
- (2) *"The most useful product of an Interface Event is an ongoing meetings structure. This enables you to enact all the good intentions of the rarefied atmosphere in real life. If you don't, you're stuffed."* - Peter Strachan