

## HOW TO USE PERILL IN DISCOVERY AND PREPARATION

The purpose of the discovery phase is to understand the “big picture” of the team – its context, purpose (to the extent that the purpose is clear) and the challenges it faces. PERILL provides a framework for constructing interviews with team members and stakeholders. Key questions to be addressed at this stage are:

- How do the team and its stakeholders perceive the team under each of the PERILL headings?
- What beliefs does the team have under each of those headings?
- What examples can they give of those beliefs in action?
- What incongruences and inconsistencies appear in the team narratives?
- What constraints does the team operate under?
- What are the team’s USPs and underused strengths?
- What *kind* of team is this and how does that affect what is possible?
- How did they come to be in the same team?
- What is the *general climate* in the team?

Useful questions to address the PERILL elements at this stage in interviewing members of the team include:

### Purpose and motivation

- What is this team here for?
- If this team were not here, what would not happen that needs to happen?
- What is the value this team creates and who for?
- How does this team’s purpose fit in with the purpose of the organisation as a whole?
- What does it mean to you personally to be in this team?
- How does the team purpose align with your own personal purpose?
- What gives this team its energy? What drains its energy?

### External systems and processes

- Who are your stakeholders?
- Which stakeholders carry most and least weight? What are the implications of this?
- What do your stakeholders most need and value from you?
- How often and how do you listen to your stakeholders?
- To what extent do you have the resources (people, money, support) to do the job?
- What are your biggest externally generated challenges as a team?
- How would your stakeholders describe this team?

### Relationships

- What does it *feel like* to be in this team?
- If you were to start this team from scratch today, would you include all the same people?
- When did you last feel truly *listened to* by your team colleagues?
- How much *honesty* is there in conversations between team members?
- If you wanted to talk through an embarrassing mistake, would you choose first to discuss it with a team colleague or an outsider?
- What sub-groups and factions are there in this team?
- How diverse is this team?

### **Internal systems and processes**

- What quality controls do you have?
- How do you make sure people have the information they need?
- What's the balance between vertical and horizontal communication?
- Can you give me some examples of process successes and failures?
- What do you do as a team that could be described as best practice? How do you know?
- What are the biggest internally generated challenges for this team?
- How often do you review the team's processes and systems?

### **Learning**

- How rapidly are you adapting to change compared with your competitors? With your key stakeholders?
- What are your collective learning goals this year?
- How often do learning objectives appear in your meeting agendas?
- Can you give me an example of how the team responds to change in its environment?
- How do you ensure a balance between doing and learning?
- How adaptive and agile does the team need to be?
- What are the biggest challenges to the team's continuous learning?

### **Leadership**

- How much leadership does this team need to perform at its best?
- How would you describe the team leader's leadership style?
- How does this influence the team's behaviour? Your behaviour?
- What is the leadership culture in this organisation? How does that affect the team?
- How and when do you and other team members show leadership?
- What is the *leadership contract* in this team? (The psychological contract about who leads in what situations?)
- How is *moral leadership* exhibited by and in this team?

Questions to stakeholders might include:

### **Purpose**

- What is this team there for?
- How does it add value for you?
- How would you like it to add value for you?

### **External systems and processes**

- What would a great working relationship with this team look like?
- How does that compare with what you have now?
- When is it at its best and worst?

### **Relationships**

- Do you like working with this team?
- Do you trust them to deliver?
- What one thing would improve the quality of the relationship between you and the team?

### **Internal systems and processes**

- How would you describe the team in terms of the quality of its processes?

- How well does it communicate with you?
- How transparent are its systems and processes to you?

### Learning

- What are the biggest challenges you see for this team in keeping up with change?
- How innovative is it?
- How innovative does it need to be?

### Leadership

- How would you describe the *formal* leadership of this team?
- How would you describe the *informal* leadership?
- How would you like to see the team as a whole taking a lead for the benefit of the organization and its stakeholders?

### How to use PERILL in diagnostic mode

The purpose of diagnosis is to dig deeper into the interdependencies of the forces that drive the team towards more effective or less effective collective performance. A typical approach to using PERILL in this way at the early stages of a team coaching assignment is to ask the team to identify at least five examples, where it has performed very well and five, where its performance has been disappointing. Using the PERILL matrix and taking the issues one by one, the team identifies as many factors as they can – both positive and negative – about the example. For example, “the customer was upset we hadn’t told them that their main contact in the team had left” or “the customer thanked us for how efficiently and positively we corrected the mistake”. The team discusses each box in the matrix and what was happening there. It then looks for any links between boxes – again both positive and negative in outcome.

The exercise is repeated for at least two more examples. Now, the team can step back and look for patterns or systems *between* examples.

Having established these systems, the team lists these and decides which are the most important and the most urgent. They rate each up to 10 in urgency and up to 20 in importance and multiply the scores to achieve a ranking order. They may also rank them in order of “quick wins” to “tough nuts”. This allows them to select the systems they want to focus on immediately.

Throughout this process, the collective scores of the PERILL diagnostic provide clues to strengths to leverage and weaknesses to address. It is important that the team puts those scores into the context of real examples and the patterns that emerge from those examples. Otherwise, they will tend to move too soon into solutions mode, addressing individual symptoms rather than the system as a whole.