Build a *Leadership Fraternity* at your peer level to succeed faster

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I was in a series of conversations with some leaders recently, and we were discussing how some senior and middle level professionals are more successful than others. Our conversations were centring around, what made these leaders more successful than the others!

We looked at a variety of reasons: from education, to experience, to attitudes, to the quality of their team members and even who they were reporting into. None of these factors, gave us a consistent and reliable pattern. So, we were struggling to pin down something and say, this is the reason why these leaders are more successful than others! We found this situation, against all common wisdom, and popular literature about successful leadership profile etc. We were indeed baffled. Not that, at this point we had concluded from our enquiry that success profiles were not important. But we couldn't just find how they were consistently creating success.

Then we started looking at how these leaders were spending their days and weeks at work. This was when, suddenly we found one thing which was common to all these consistent high performing leaders. *All of them were heading or a part of large projects - mostly CFTs (Cross Functional Teams) with people from most functions of the organization, if not all functions. And they had overseen or a been a part of such successful projects in the past too.* Many of these leaders were also regular contributors to COPs(Community of Practitioners) where they were sharing and learning from people of similar domain or skills.

We dug a little deeper and found that all these successful leaders, had developed and almost perfected key skills:

- **Managing a CFT or large working groups as owners or leads**
- **Contributing and playing a key role in CFTs where they were members**
- **Signing-up and being a part of collective success**
- **Practicing psychological safety and inclusive behaviours**
- **Completely avoiding and eliminating politics and silos**
- **Role model others were willing to follow**

In fact, we found that these leaders did not have to influence at all; people got influenced by their thoughts, presence, ways of working and inclusive nature.

What this also revealed to us was that:
- If there are certain or all goals of a function that are linked to other functions, and these functions work together:
  - The probability of success for the organization significantly went up
- Similarly, if there are certain goals of a senior or middle level individual that are linked to other senior and middle level people in the organization, and these individuals work together:
  - The probability of success for the organization and the individuals significantly went up

This wasn't an uncommon knowledge. Just that this came out as a glaring truth. What we also realized was that working as a CFT or fraternity had become even more important in the last 5 to 6 years.

Taking a step further, **the essence of the cross functional team** is:
- To take an organizational problem and put a multi-functional team around it, to solve the problem faster
- To have a representative from each function of the organization required to achieve the outcomes better
- Facilitate work to be done effectively and efficiently, without whoever is the owner of the goals, having to sit and write mails, call for

meetings etc.

- To create a soft structure that allows for a natural work charter and agreement of goals.
- To facilitate a required quality of deliverables, and common timelines using which the entire group can *cooperate and coordinate*
- *Hence, making decision making a faster process, and preventing the hoarding of power by anyone in the name of functional priorities*
- To eventually help multiple people succeed in doing what they're supposed to do at work, in a collective well timed and supportive fashion

This is where a thought emerged, that why wait for a problem or a project to be presented to form a CFT? *Why can't all organizational goals be worked upon by / with a CFT structure?*

A few facts we ignore in almost all organizations:
- *The strategy of the organization, and the functional strategy derived from there are all a need of the organization to succeed*
- Then it is natural that people from every function or most function will have to contribute to every other function for the strategy of the organization to be completely achieved
- Like it takes a village to raise a child; to achieve strategic goals of an organization, in time and with the right quality, multiple people across horizontals and verticals have to behave like a fraternity all through the year
- Competing internally, may get some limited brownie points for individuals, but the organization really doesn't succeed to its full potential
- Leaders themselves develop fully, only when they participate in the organization's development and success

So, my invitation to all of you leaders and managers out there:
- Build a fraternity at your level to succeed collectively
- The CXO team exists at the top, and they need to be the first to work tightly together on this concept
- Then the N-1 level below it, and so on need to be tightly knit fraternities at their level
- Each of these horizontals should regularly meet
  - Starting from the strategy crafting of the organization
  - Then be jointed-up at goal setting
  - Thereafter keep meeting purposefully once in 15 days or once a month to keep reviewing progress
  - This should lead to course correction for that particular level of the organization to achieve

its strategic outcomes

- This is how at every level; we will align and behave life a true CFT lead organization. *This is what it means to organise ourselves as a fraternity in the organization and get things done.*

Acting as a fraternity:
- At the time of strategy crafting and goal setting will mean that all the goals of functions and individuals within the functions will have clear cross linkages
- Acting as a fraternity at all levels, L-1 and below will ensure the value chains or the processes that run through the organization are well connected and no balls are getting dropped
- Acting as a fraternity at mid-manager level will ensure that operations and revenue realization is smooth
- Acting as a fraternity at the individual contributor and front-line levels, will enhance community learning and collaborative problem solving

This is a practical and purposeful way to achieve alignment and get things done in the organization. Also, like the enquiry we began with, performing as a fraternity also helps leaders develop the 6 aspects of being successful. These are simple, yet powerful steps. Yet ignored in most organizations. Many of us will have to undoubtedly learn how to work like this. It will take a change of mindset and definite skills to connect, and work together. But it's worth the investment of time and effort. 3 – 6 months into this, and success will be yours to stay. (It is even more worth your while, especially in the rapidly evolving times we are living in)

Often, the only teams that meet in an organization, for the sake of the organization, is the CXOs or at most the proj^{e}ct teams. Hence, the rest of the organization keeps doing what it does, often working against each other, in the name of their individual goals.

Remember, when we create an organization, we create an institution for achieving success. In this organization, we build functions, levels and teams for a specific purpose: success of the organization. Now come to think about it, shouldn't these functions, levels and teams be working with each other, and not against, or separately.

Hence the call to action: Build fraternities, build success.

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