

# Breaking new ground, building for success

OFID's first ever leadership retreat at the end of October has ushered in a new era of openness, collaboration, understanding and fellowship.

by Audrey Haylins

Twenty participants, comprising senior management and selected officers, gathered October 30–31 at Burgenland's St Martin's Therme and Lodge for two days of intensive teamwork, problem solving and reflection.

The landmark retreat was led by Dr Tony Daloisio, an expert in organizational transformation from the University of North Carolina Kenan-Flagler Business School.

The interactive training included a number of role plays, lively discus-

sions, case studies, exercises and working groups. Dr Daloisio managed to engage all participants and provided a stimulating and relaxed environment for learning. He himself was very impressed by OFID's work and its talented pool of staff.

Said head of HR Abdulwahab Al-Abbas: "Bringing people together outside the regular workplace provided an excellent opportunity to reinforce leadership skills, brainstorm ideas and work on improving communication and team-building."

He continued: "We were encouraged by the success of the retreat and envisage that it will become a regular feature of OFID's leadership development program. This will give other colleagues a chance to benefit from the experience."

At the closing "graduation" dinner, all participants received a certificate handed to them by the Director-General.



## The sessions

### Leadership models

This session looked into leadership areas such as network/stakeholder leadership, strategic leadership, and areas of collaboration between leaders to create value for the overall organization. The purpose was to provide principles, tools, concepts, and actionable items that allowed participants to improve leadership and understand their stakeholders.

### Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

This session focused on differences in work style, employee engagement and personality styles using the MBTI. This assessment was completed by all participants before the program and the results provided during the session. The purpose was to identify personality types, strengths, weaknesses and preferences, and to explore the differences in the ways individuals use perception and judgement.

### Building high performance teams

This focused on teams and utilized the Team Coaching International framework. Participants received results from their team assessments, and explored the elements of great teams and how they as leaders can create a great culture and climate of both productivity and positivity in order to get good results. The goal was to learn how to build a high performance business team, improve delegation, execute team goals and boost team positivity and productivity.

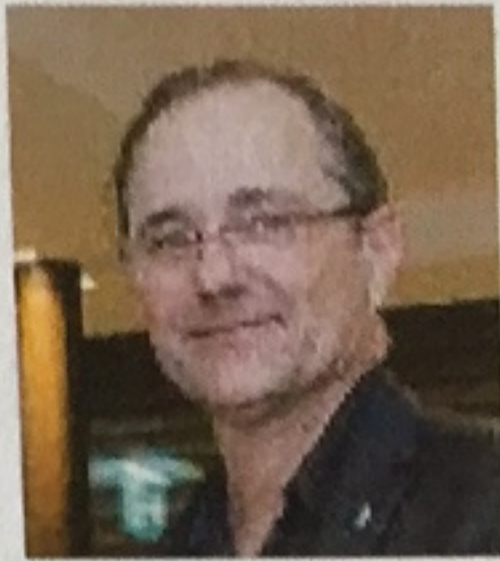
### Communication skills as leaders

This session explored basic communication skills, problem solving, coaching/performance management and conflict skills, which are all critical to leadership. The exercises aimed at improving coaching skills and better feedback, as well as dealing with employee performance issues. Action plans were also put in place to address improvement areas as a leader.



# Reflections

"I appreciated how revealing the outcome of my MBTI assessment was, as it made me see myself in a new way. I learnt, for example, that I have a tendency to give out mixed messages. People see me as a friendly, soft-hearted type, but actually I can be pretty tough in certain situations. I realize now that this can be confusing and that I need to be more consistent in my approach. Another big takeaway for me was the value of tactical as opposed to spontaneous connections. Networking, both inside and outside OFID, is an important way of being effective in my job."



*Jorge Goncalves*

"I admit to being a bit skeptical beforehand, but I couldn't have been more wrong. The level of interaction, participation and collaboration was outstanding, and as the groups were repeatedly mixed up we got to engage with everyone. We need to take these new dynamics and apply them to the workplace. My personal takeaway was recognizing that leadership is a two-way process. It's not all about giving instructions. It's about encouraging your team to speak their mind and challenge ideas. I would say there has been a fundamental change in the way I think—like a switch has been flicked in my head."



*Khaled Alsaadi*

"One of the key wisdoms I took away from this experience was the difference between a team and a working group. In the latter, the members may not share common values, understanding and objectives. As a result, they perform their function with no real integration or loyalty. Team play is about bringing on board different views, positive participation, clear communication, accountability and collaboration towards a specific goal. A good leader creates a feeling of usefulness and positivity among the team members, who need to see and feel that their contributions result in achieving common goals. It is the responsibility of all those who participated in the retreat to spread these principles among the team members they work with."



*Saeid Niazi*



"The experience far exceeded my expectations. For me, much of its success was down to the way the facilitator created a level playing field right from the beginning. He made it clear there was no room for hierarchy or ego; that everyone's voice carried the same weight. This encouraged a free and open discussion. I found my MBTI profile very revealing. It has inspired me to listen more to my inner voice instead of making decisions based purely on facts. Probably the biggest thing I took away was a recognition of areas for improvement both at an individual and an organizational level."

*German Deffit*



"I actually wrote down my expectations ahead of the retreat and can honestly say that they were all met—and some! The content was very well crafted; it was more about the application than the theory, which made the messages much easier to understand and absorb. The MBTI profiling was very enlightening and made me realize that I need to be more strategic in approach and delivery of objectives—by setting deadlines for team projects, for example. Engaging with colleagues under these conditions has helped me understand what makes people tick and what buttons to press to make our working partnership most effective"

*Olanrewaju Fagbodun*

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"For me, this initiative not only achieved the objective of acknowledging areas that require improvement—which is a big step forward and already constitutes 50 percent of the solution—it also strengthened team building, corporate culture and the sense of belonging. I think OFID could gain by duplicating the exercise at department level. At a more personal level, the experience gave me a better understanding of the different personalities and work styles. I had understood these intuitively before, but the sessions showed how they are based on scientific research and statistics. This knowledge is definitely something I'll be tapping in to."

*Scherazade Deneuve-Ikour*