

COMPANY CASE STUDY. HIGHER EDUCATION

WOMEN LEADING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

Our client, a department within a leading University in QLD employing highly credentialed academics, contacted Dattner Group seeking support to develop a specific program to empower and encourage a core group of women leaders to steer themselves and others through challenging times. The program also served to recognise the ongoing contribution of these women across the group and within the organisation.

THE CHALLENGE

The global COVID pandemic has impacted everyone, but particularly women, who, it has been widely reported, have been significantly more impacted than men. Many indicators show that employers in Australia, the UK and a multitude of other countries around the world are contending with The Great Resignation* - swathes of women resigning from their positions because they are not being offered the flexibility, opportunities or support they need after an unprecedented 2 years.

With this in mind, it has never been more important to support, empower and encourage women to step into their full potential and unlock their unique leadership capabilities to lead themselves and others through these challenging times. The Head of a school within the University recognised the need for external support to bring together a group of women leaders, and give them the best support possible to set them up for success in the new year.

The challenges ranged from long-term, systemic bias evident in many higher education institutions, to the specific struggles of this University and the changes in teaching through the pandemic, to the women's individual and personal challenges in managing full and complex workloads and personal lives. It was also evident that although the group worked well together, true cohesion and connection was lacking. In a time of great stress and uncertainty, the Head of the School sought to create a more connected and trusting group of leaders, who were clear on their goals and capabilities, with the ability to back themselves and their decisions.

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THE SOLUTION

Over the course of three days (spread across three months) Dattner Group worked with the group of women leaders to dig deep into what really drives them, to help them understand their sense of purpose, and to examine why and when they might hold themselves back.

Working with the cohort, Dattner Group ran a series of activities to help unpack and resolve some of the challenges faced by the group of women including:

- A session to build trust, understanding and compassion within the group. Women work better in collaboration with one another
- An in-depth values elicitation process– asking leaders to explore what underpins their behaviour and choices at work, at home and in relationships
- An examination of their own true sense of purpose – what drives these leaders to do what they do within the work context, as well as for themselves
- A session to recognise and manage unhelpful stories
- A guided process to put all the learnings into a clear and succinct strategy map to help guide and support the women into the future, together

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The pandemic has exasperated the work life balance with women around the world particularly in Education. In light of this I reached out to the Dattner Group to create a custom Compass program for the women in our School to support them through the challenges we were facing. The program has been a wonderful way for us to reset our perspective, support each other and to focus our goals as a team. I highly recommend this program to teams that are looking to develop women at all levels.”

-Head of School

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Dattner Group's programs for women focus on building self-knowledge and deep insight on the premise that women shine when they work in line with their values, and in collaboration with others. As a result of over twenty years, working with thousands of women, in Australia and internationally through Compass and Homeward Bound Projects, we know what we do has impact.

RESULTS

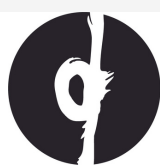
As with any transformational change, the results will continue to evolve and deepen over the coming year, however some initial and clear impacts which have been reported include:

- Deeper trust and connection within the group
- A renewed sense of energy and clarity for the year ahead
- A shared language within the group to describe values and trigger points
- Personal strategy maps that bring together a sense of purpose, values and future possible
- A sense of control in a complex and ever-changing world.

CONCLUSION

The outcomes from this short internal program continue to develop and improve the functionality and effectiveness of this group of leaders. We note that the challenges of systemic bias and gender inequality are deeply ingrained and long standing, and are unlikely to be solved within a 3-day workshop. We can however make headway by giving women space, time, and guidance to explore what truly drives them, to critically examine the stories that hold them back, and to build open, honest and lasting relationships with their colleagues and peers.

Note: We acknowledge this is a journey. Substantive and enduring change to our behaviour and the cultures of which we are a part, takes time and leadership intention.



Dattner Group