

THE COLLECTIVE

Case Study: *Tennessee State Soccer Association*



The Collective achieved with us **in months** what we've been trying to do on our own **for years!**

John, President, Board of Directors



ORGANIZATION PROFILE



PLAYERS IN STATE

55,000+



COACHES

1,000+



THEY SERVE

**KIDS,
ADULTS &
FAMILIES**



BUDGET

2 MILLION



CLUBS

120+

THE CHALLENGE

Among non-profit organizations, one of the most noted pain points is friction between staff leadership and the board of directors. Differing perspectives on vision, suspicion of motives, competing leadership styles, lack of trust. Some combination of these and other characteristics tend to hinder progress at least...or result in disbandment at worst.

The Tennessee State Soccer Association (TSSA) was no different.

TSSA is the governing organization for youth and adult soccer across the state. It provides supportive services to 120 associations (clubs) that comprise 2,000+ teams and more than 55,000 players.

For x years TSSA has had oversight of a y-member Board. Hans, the executive director, described the Board as "highly dysfunctional" and observed that they too often got bogged down in the minutia of TSSA rather than provide strategic guidance.

Hans admitted, "we just couldn't seem to make progress working through our Board. Our team felt constrained in a difficult situation because it was hard to know where we were going." In fact, when asked in a meeting, not one Board member could answer the question, "what is our mission?".

Compounding these issues when he took over the role seven years ago was a divided staff; some members were driven by personal agendas. There was a vision statement on the wall, but it was so convoluted and chocked full of corporate jargon that no one in the organization could repeat. Worse, they didn't really understand how what they did individually connected to that vision. Needless to say there wasn't much unity among the staff.

TSSA's challenges weighed heavily on Hans, who began to think he was going to be the next executive director in an increasingly long line of executive directors to get tossed on the scrap heap in a very short period of time.

WE WANT TO IMPROVE, BUT...

TSSA was constrained by self-made boundaries. The team knew it had to change, but hurdles stood in the way.

Stress

Failure to consistently act as a unified Leadership team with clear priorities elevated stress levels. Cross-functional communications were inconsistent and repercussions were feared.

Coaches Needed

The team could not meet business objectives with a "Player-Coach" mentality. The Leadership team realized they could no longer operate as "managers". Only Coaches - or leaders - could advance them forward.

Learning Not Impactful

Prior attempts at training the Leadership team only saw small shifts in behavior without getting to the heart. What was required was a culture transformation; a new approach.



FROM DISENGAGEMENT TO UNITY TO COMMITMENT TO TRANSFORMATION

There's no one detailed procedure to lead an organization through a complicated and often undefined journey. The Collective does not prescribe a specific model. Instead, they lead teams through a flexible four-phase transition. The approach is below.

Authentic sharing and understanding set the foundation for credibility and mutual trust. Each individual had the opportunity to reveal personal goals, aspirations and concerns.

TSSA worked through pressing issues before becoming empowered. The Collective encouraged a natural evolution of team cohesion through vulnerable dialogue and relationship building.

Pursuing leadership, the team needed to know what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. The Collective guided; individuals made their own decisions.

This final phase culminates the journey in a powerful demonstration of unified excellence. It is the exclamation point of a changed culture that celebrates shared benefit to all.

OBSERVATION → HEART + ACTIONS = TRANSFORMATION

Observe. Listen. Really listen. A structured 8-week journey to capture both team and individual real "stories".

- 20 Interviews
- 2 Team Surveys
- 15 Leadership meetings

The most volatile segment of the journey. Team and individual dynamics ran the full spectrum from negative to positive. From superficial to meaningful. From baggage-laden to freedom of expression. From disengaged to emotional.

The Retreat, staff meetings, 1:1s, and small group discussions provided the platform for significant progress toward "places they wanted [needed] to go".

The critical stage in the journey where small culture shifts proved the process worked. Confidence grew to embrace genuine dialogue and open sharing.

The Collective provided frameworks and outlines to build on this surge of team unity. Accountability was introduced and encouraged as team members began to live out the mission and vision. In short, the leaders became empowered... and their teams wanted it.

Embed "living out the mission and vision" into the company culture. Consistently engage as a caring organization.

Model desired Leadership behaviors. Cascade these principles and associated accountability throughout divisional teams.

Narrow scope of priorities to do a few things exceedingly well.



CULTURE CHANGE REQUIRES HONESTY & TIME



BE THE BUFFALO

It is said on the plains of Montana that cows & buffalos react differently when they see a storm in the distance. Cows see the storm & run from it. Buffalos see the storm and proceed directly toward it, because they know if they face it head on, they will get through the storm faster.

The Collective introduced the metaphor to the Leadership team to spur willing and healthy confrontation. Quickly adopted, the phrase “be the buffalo” is now a rallying cry of the team when crucial conversations or important decisions are imminent.

They understand true leaders embrace challenges and often take the rough road ahead. Why? Because that alternative typically leads to an optimal outcome.

OUTCOMES

The tangible results of the process are still unfolding. Yet it is evident none of the outcomes would be possible without the team championing, supporting, and trusting the process The Collective lead.

While the journey for the TSSA will continue through 2017, indicators of cultural transformation are already clearly visible. The Collective’s collaboration is yielding tangible positive results in the following ways:

Created Mission and Vision: This process helped focus the team and align priorities. The lower level teams also created their own Mission and Vision.

Productive meetings: Team gatherings are more selective, purposeful and constructive.

Enhanced collaboration: The leaders are connecting with each other; 1-on-1 interaction is much more intentional and meaningful.

Enjoyable workplace: The team is learning to have fun, to be real and to enjoy leading their teams. The Leadership team is showing they care through their meaningful and intentional action.

Mutual inspiration: Shared communications throughout the organization is inspiring all levels to support each other.

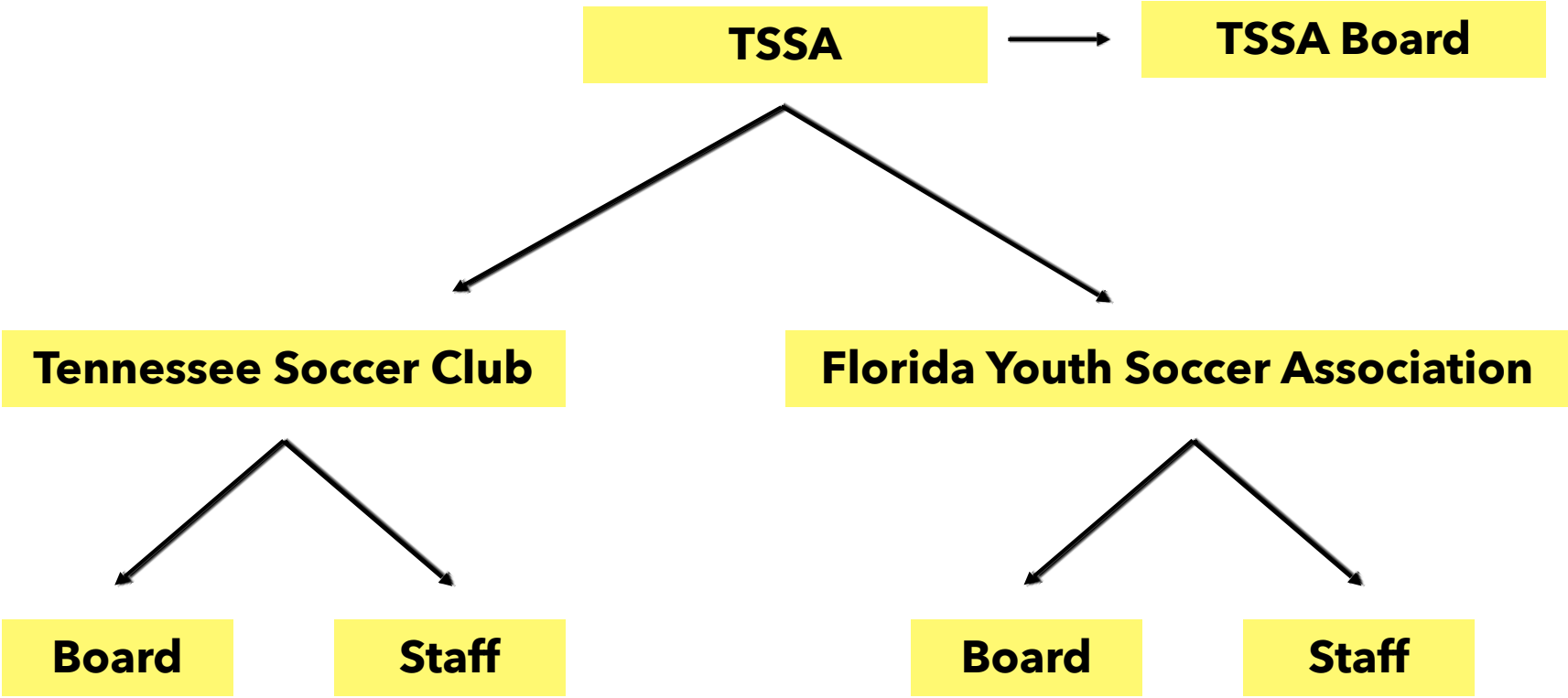
Increased candor: Team members have learned to interact genuinely and more actively in team meetings, leading to enhanced unity.

Failure is OK: Missing the mark is considered a learning opportunity and not duly punished. We embrace the opportunity to learn.

Influence is being noticed: Not only are enhancements being made within the TSSA, other state organizations are beginning to notice something is different. The opportunity is significant for positive change in the region and across the country.



HOW THE ENGAGEMENT WORKED

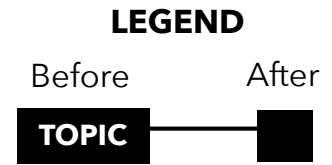


TOTAL PEOPLE IMPACTED: ???



SIGNIFICANT MINDSET AND HEART SHIFTS

During the TSSA engagement The Collective worked with both the Staff & Board. There were incredible shifts in mindset and heart from the beginning of our engagement to the end. At the beginning of the engagement, we presented each group with a survey that they created based on topics they wanted to ask each other ranging across many topics so that a baseline was established. Then, at the end of the engagement we had each team take the same survey again and the results were compared. Below are a few of those significant shifts that took place over a 6 month period.

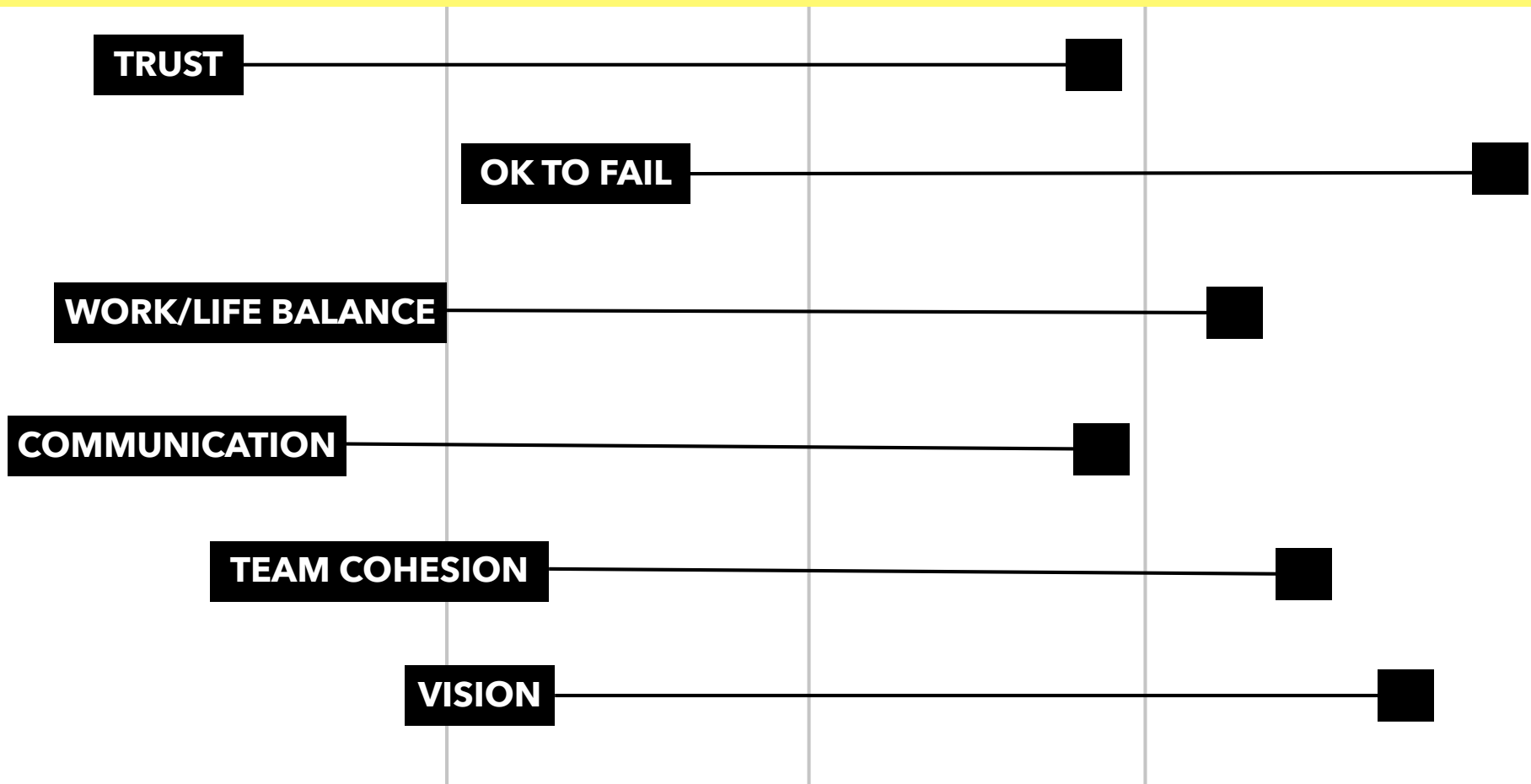


STRONGLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

AGREE

STRONGLY AGREE



“THE MOST IMPACTFUL THING WE DID ALL YEAR”

“They were different from most groups that we could have worked with. The Collective came in during a very tough situation and helped mediate with dramatic tangible improvements. And perhaps the most important addition was trust.”

- Hans, executive director

Two parallel areas of focus produced the desired unified improvements across two groups. First, the staff realized significant increases in productivity. As a clearly defined vision emerged, it became clear that some of the staff didn't fit. A few moved on, opening the door for new team members who saw and embraced the vision. The group started moving in one unified motion.

But there was another strategic outcome. The clear vision laid the foundation for a better relationship between the Board and the organization. Board members understood where Hans wanted to go and what the most important things were that the organization wanted to accomplish. Unity began to materialize between the two groups and they started working together to reach common milestones.

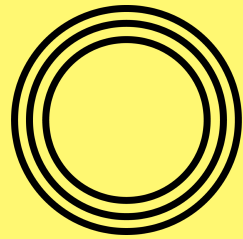
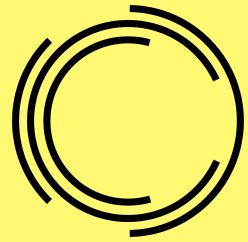
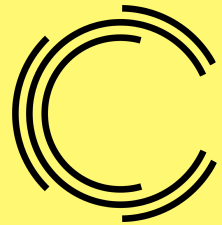
“The Board wasn't very enthusiastic about the changes I wanted to make until we got our act together and developed a clear vision for them to see,” said Hans. “That clarified who we needed on staff and we started becoming more effective as a group. We took the vision to the Board and they got excited about it and have become extremely supportive of the direction we're going. There's clarity and from that has come unity. I truly believe our best days are ahead and that we will reach the vision we've set for ourselves.”



Our routine was guided by fear
and distractions.
The Collective shifted our culture
to lead, serve, and inspire.

Hans, Executive Director





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