

Developing a high performance culture: Canterbury Crusaders



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Overview

1. The story of the CRFU
2. The birth of the Crusaders
3. Organisational culture
4. CC leadership and strategy
5. CC organisational culture
6. Conclusions



2

The story of the CRFU

- 1 of 27 Provincial rugby unions in NZ
- Established 1879 in Christchurch, NZ
- Competitions for 52 clubs
- Sport development role
- Asset management – Rugby Park
- Traditional representative governance structure
- Representative National Provincial Championship (NPC) team



3

The story of the CRFU

- Secure finances
- Large volunteer base in 1995
- Moderate success in NPC
- Talent provider to All Blacks
- Well placed to move to professionalism



4

The birth of the Crusaders

- 1995 - IRB decision to abolish amateurism
- 1996 - SANZAR Super 12 created
- CRFU granted one of 5 NZ licences
- Resource implications – revenue, personnel, structure
- Early days – CEO Steve Tew



5

Crusaders 1996 to 2008

- 1996 – last
- 1997 – middle
- 1998 – Championship
- 1999 – Championship
- 2000 – Championship
- 2001 – finals
- 2002 - Championship
- 2003 – Second
- 2004 – Second
- 2005 – Championship
- 2006 – Championship
- 2007 – Third
- 2008 - Championship



6

Organisational culture

- Observable artefacts
 - Traditional red and black colours, Scottish heritage, new icons
- Values
 - hard work, selflessness, family values, humility, modesty, pride
- Underlying assumptions
 - "No one individual is greater than the team"



7

Organisational culture

- Not artificially created – based on current behaviour and beliefs from CRFU base
- Divide between player group and management in professional sport not evident
- Extremely low level of player transgressions
- "Risk averse" to "investment for success"



8

Strategic management

- Strategy formulation
 - evaluate external and internal environment and develop plans
- Strategy content
 - Actions and business tactics at the corporate, business and functional level
- Strategy implementation
 - Contextual factors of leadership, human resource management, industrial relations and culture



9

Strategy formulation

- 1996 results prompted a strategic plan
- Crusaders board and CEO, Steve Tew
- "Risk averse" to "investment for success"
- Balancing community rugby vs needs of the professional franchise



10

Strategy formulation

- Stakeholders:
 - CRFU and Crusaders boards
 - NZRFU
 - SANZAR
 - Sponsors and commercial suppliers
 - CRFU members clubs
 - On field staff and player group
 - Off field management and admin team



11

Strategy content

- 3 central ideas in mid 1996:
 1. Professional approach
 2. Playing talent
 3. Use existing CRFU culture



12

Strategy content

- On field investments:
 1. Coaching – full time
 2. Pre season
 3. Video analysis
 4. Support services
 5. Talent – e.g. Captain Todd Blackadder
 6. Facilities – refurbish Rugby Park



13

Strategy content



- Off field investments:
 1. Marketing – income 706K (1996) to 1.4M (1997)
 2. Team focus – created media liaison position, player welfare program, family involvement
 3. Appointing the “right people with leadership ability”



14

Strategy implementation

- Primary embedding mechanisms
 - Measuring and controlling activities
 - Leader’s reactions to critical incidents
 - Role modelling and coaching
 - Criteria for rewards



15

Strategy implementation

- Secondary embedding mechanisms
 - Organisation structure
 - Systems and procedures
 - Physical space
 - Stories, legends, myths and symbols
 - Organisational philosophy



16

Strategy implementation

- Strategic plan plus opportunities created by success
- Coach driven initiatives
- Luck played its part – bounce of the ball could mean a \$1M difference in bottom line



17

Leadership

- Crusaders board – Chair Mike Eagle
- CEO Steve Tew (now NZRU CEO)
- Coach Wayne Smith
- Team manager, later coach Robbie Deans
- Captain Todd Blackadder (now coach)
- Other key staff



18

Leader's qualities

- Chairman Mike Eagle played a key role in managing stakeholder relationships
- Managed CEO link with the board
- Chair and CEO relationship crucial to success of the Crusaders



19

Leader's qualities

- Eisenbach, Watson and Pillai (1999) highlighted the importance of individual leaders' qualities, especially ensuring their actions match their rhetoric, and their ability to develop relationships with stakeholders as key elements for managing change.
- CEO Steve Tew was perceived to have those qualities, making individuals feel empowered in their roles, making people feel supported in what they were trying to achieve, and he had made them feel valued and included in the bigger picture of what the organisation was striving to achieve.
- Tew was also considered a 'straight talker'



20

Leader's qualities

- Tew's leadership style can be conceptualised in terms of Kouzes and Posner's (1987) definition of transformational leadership being comprised of five practices:
 - seeking to challenge the way things operate
 - inspiring a shared vision amongst employees
 - providing the framework for employees to act in accordance with that vision
 - modelling the behaviour for employees to follow
 - encouraging employees through recognition and celebration of success



21

Leader's qualities

- Tew's leadership also neatly portrays Gill's (2003) model of leadership for change:
 - Vision
 - Values and culture
 - Strategy
 - Empowerment
 - Motivation and inspiration



22

Conclusions

- Unique CRFU values transferred to Crusaders, especially notion of selflessness
- CEO and coach driven
- Strategic change focused on values
- Balancing community rugby vs needs of the professional franchise problematic



23



Questions?

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25