



EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT PARTNERS CASE STUDY

Administrative Cohort Implementation

Abstract

The following questionnaire was designed for Kimberly Cotton, Sr. Executive Assistant, to talk about how the Leadership Support Team (LST) was implemented at Jack Henry & Associates®.

By Lynn Walder

Owner, Executive Management Partners

CAN YOU GIVE US A LITTLE BACKGROUND ON YOUR COMPANY (INDUSTRY, SIZE, ADMIN GROUP SIZE, ETC.) AND YOUR ROLE AT JACK HENRY?

Jack Henry & Associates, Inc.® is a leading provider of technology solutions and payment processing services primarily for the financial services industry. We have about 6,800 Associates and close to 75 administrative business support partners.

My name is [Kimberly Cotton](#) and I am an administrative advocate and mentor.

I manage the Office of the president & CEO and work closely with our Administrative Cohort (what we internally refer to as the *Leadership Support Team (LST)*), Corporate Communications, People & Culture (HR), and other business functions across the organization to ensure that all programs, events, presentations, and messaging are aligned.

HOW WERE YOU INTRODUCED TO (OR HOW DID YOU END UP FINDING) THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF "THE ADMIN COHORT MODEL"?

Research. Lots of research. I came across [The Admin Cohort Model](#), published by [Lynn Walder](#). We were able to scale her administrative cohort model and adjust the framework to fit our organization.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN TENETS THAT YOU FELT WERE ALIGNED WITH YOUR CURRENT COMPANY'S ADMINISTRATIVE EFFORTS AND/OR GOALS?

Jack Henry's 4 tenets to enterprise execution are 1. Transparency 2. Consistency 3. Collaboration and 4. Communication.

All 4 tenets are built into our framework, bylaws, and foundation. We came together as a Team almost four years ago to:

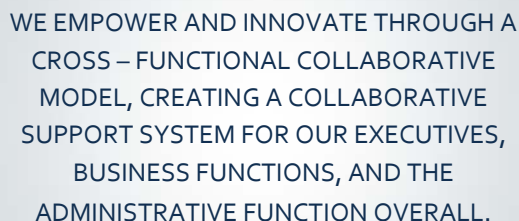
- **build relationships** (super important!!!)
- gain visibility into each other's' projects and business areas
- share and align processes
- and simply **share what we know** (extremely important!!!)

We anchor to our tenets every day through the way we work, the way we share, the processes we follow, and the way we communicate. Note that I **bolded relationships** above – This. Is. Key. It is **THE** most important element to build trust in one another. Once you have that, then carrying out the tenets are so easy.

CAN YOU BREAK DOWN (IN A CONCISE WAY) HOW YOU WENT ABOUT IMPLEMENTING THIS MODEL AT YOUR COMPANY? (IF YOU CAN OFFER ESTIMATED TIMELINES, THAT WOULD BE GREAT AS WELL!)

It did not happen overnight and in fact we are still evolving as I write this, and it just keeps getting better.

The LST (Leadership Support Team) Cross – Functional Collaboration Model is defined below:



WE EMPOWER AND INNOVATE THROUGH A CROSS – FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATIVE MODEL, CREATING A COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR OUR EXECUTIVES, BUSINESS FUNCTIONS, AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTION OVERALL.

We have built a cohort model that encourages a collaborative and supportive learning environment.

We came together in 2017 to get to know each other, understand our roles better, share our strengths and knowledge, discuss our pain points, and discover ways that we could grow and develop ourselves better. Our model has 3 prongs:

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT THROUGH OUR CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM

We selflessly partner to achieve the executive's goals, advance the executive's agendas, and leverage the executive's time. Our goal is to tightly integrate LST across CLT.

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION THROUGH OUR BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

The strategic collaboration is very important as we integrate cross functional stakeholders and move projects to completion. The relationships are also important as we discover ways to enhance communication and collaboration.

STRATEGIC UNIFICATION THROUGH OUR JACK HENRY ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS SUPPORT NETWORK

Our strategic focus is to create new (or streamline current) administrative processes to ensure efficient use of time and resources on behalf of our leadership.

OUR STORY

SOMETIME IN 2016

I remember thinking that I needed a “Team” to run the Office of the CEO – effectively. I knew that my relationships would be key to create something like this. I had never seen anything like this at our company, nor did I know of anyone in any my networking groups (at the time) that had a model like this.

MY MENTOR

Tiffany Haynes, who is now our Chief People Officer and Head of Consolidated Contact Centers, was my mentor during this timeframe. We would have coffee and simply talk. I enjoyed our time because she was the first female leader who really inspired me to show up every day with corporate courage. She is wise, talented, and one of the greatest leaders I’ve ever known. So, now that you know who [Tiffany](#) is, what you need to know is what she told me.

“Write it down.”

I talked to her about my ideas and how great it would be to have a Team, a “cohort” that represented our executive leadership team. I wanted to inspire and empower my peers – and yet, I was not sure how to do it.

She loved the idea but encouraged me to have a strategy – and to write a [strategic plan](#). So, I did.

Tiffany had also been working with a strategy consultant at that time and suggested that we meet.

I collaborated with a few trusted thinking partners to talk through a few ideas with our consultant and once we had a plan, I started calling my peers. I asked each of them one question – “*Do you see yourself as a leader?*” and some of the responses were simply, *no*.



“...BY LINKING THE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTION TO STRATEGY.”

-Lynn Walder

So, how do we change the mindset of not just ourselves but to our peers and to our leaders?

The goal was to build a team, a cohort, that represented each leader across our executive leadership team. It was not about titles and levels of administrative function – it was the person who had the trusted partnership and who coordinated all efforts (projects, programs, logistics) on behalf of that leader, the person who ran the Office of (Insert Title) – Office of the COO, Office of the CTO, Office of the CFO – you get the idea.

OUR FIRST MEETING

We hosted our first meeting at our corporate HQ around 2017. The interesting thing to note here is that although I had a great relationship with my peers 1-1, they did not really know each other nor had ever met in person. This is before O365 was implemented across our company and we really did not have those collaborative tools that we have today – and making video calls was not a normal everyday practice.

We were fortunate enough to have our consultant facilitate our first meeting. The agenda focused on getting to know each other, building a framework, and sharing our work stories. I created a prescriptive presentation outline and asked everyone to present their stories and share the following segments:

- Career Progression and Introduction
- Executive Profile and Partnership Review
- Key Projects and Corporate Initiatives Engagement

- Areas of Expertise and Organization style
- Areas of Improvement, Development, and Pain Points

The first meeting was **pivotal for us** – not just in building better relationships (which are now amazing friendships), but it immediately broke down silos and any misunderstandings. Because some LST members didn't know each other, they didn't really understand the scope of each other's work nor projects their business units were aligned to. We connected over our pain points and wanted to do something about them. We respected each other's strengths and knew we'd have each other's backs in any areas of expertise. We created a circle of trust, which allowed us to collaborate openly, share knowledge and ideas, and work more confidently.

Since then, we have hosted meetings annually to talk about the things that matter to us and now have a monthly cadence to touch base on initiatives and development opportunities around the company.

HOW HAS THE MODEL ELEVATED THE ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES/FUNCTION AT YOUR COMPANY?

Our model has given us a platform – to stand together, to have a voice, to collaborate openly, to influence leaders and associates – while leading others.

Our foundation shows how we are impacted, how we influence each other, and others around us.

We are recognized as change champions, brand ambassadors, and influencers across the organizations.

HOW DID YOU SECURE AN "EXECUTIVE CHAMPION" TO HELP LEGITIMIZE YOUR WORK?

Our executive partnerships are built upon respect, trust, and confidentiality. We are very fortunate that our leadership team has shown support for this initiative from the very beginning.

Our value shows in how we move information, strategically collaborate, and partner with areas of the business on behalf of our leaders.

WHAT ARE SOME OBSTACLES (IF ANY) THAT HAVE BEEN ENCOUNTERED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION AND/OR USAGE OF THE ADMIN COHORT MODEL? WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENT?

I think one of the biggest obstacles we have is competing priorities across the LST. Sometimes, it may take us longer to connect and move the needle on certain projects.

We have recently expanded our steering committee to give other LST members a chance to make an impact in various areas.

WHAT WOULD BE SOME OF YOUR PERSONAL ADVICE TO AN ADMINISTRATOR WHO WANTS TO INTRODUCE & INTEGRATE THIS MODEL AT THEIR OWN COMPANY?

Make it fun and do not be afraid to lead. Communicate often as a team and through 1-1's. Share constantly. Listen and be there for each other no matter what.

Be an advocate for your peers through leadership and development. Mentor others and share your experiences.

BONUS: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE QUOTE OR SAYING THAT YOU END UP USING WAY TOO MUCH IN YOUR DAY-TO-DAY ROLE?



As you navigate through the rest of your life, be open to collaboration. Other people and other people's ideas are often better than your own. Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you, spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life."

-Amy Poehler



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PROCESS, YOU ARE WELCOME TO CONNECT WITH [KIMBERLY COTTON](#) OR EMAIL KCOTTON@JACKHENRY.COM



EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT PARTNERS

TO ACCESS ORIGINAL ARTICLE ON THE "ADMIN COHORT PHILOSOPHY" CLICK [HERE](#).

FOR ADDITIONAL ARTICLES & RESOURCES ON THE EVOLVING ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTION, YOU CAN VISIT LYNN WALDER'S LINKEDIN ACTIVITY PROFILE [HERE](#) AND CLICK ON "ARTICLES".