



CASE STUDY //

Transformative team development

Discover how Complete helped Pets at Home's
build a winning senior team.





CASE STUDY

Pets at Home Senior Leadership
Team Development Journey

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“What our business has been through in the last few years has been transformative.

“The business was underperforming and now we’re winning. Part of that success has been the team coming together faster than we would have done without Complete.”

Background

Pets at Home is the UK’s leading pet care business. With over 15,000 employees, 453 stores and £1Bn in turnover, the company is passionate about pets and people.

Peter Pritchard, Pets at Home CEO, was appointed in 2018 and brought in Complete to help build a high performing senior team. Peter recognised that the quality of the top team would directly impact the future success of the organisation.

“The business hadn’t been performing ... I needed a guide to help me and to engage the team.”

The Challenge

Peter is honest about the challenges he faced back in 2018, “The business hadn’t been performing and key to unlocking its success would be a strong leadership team.

“I recognised that how the team worked together would determine the success of the organisation. I also knew that I couldn’t fix things by myself. I needed a guide to help me and to engage the team, to give us the tools and techniques to help us manage ourselves and our team.”

After a recommendation from a colleague who had worked with Complete before, Peter met Alan Watkins to talk about how Complete could help fix the issues facing the Pets at Home senior team.



The Complete Engagement

"I'm sceptical when I meet organisations like Complete," admits Peter, "but I was impressed by Alan. There was passion, but the way he described things it felt practical and doable. I get nervous of models and theories on their own, I like to see theory applied in practicality.

"Complete's experience resonated with the challenges we faced. I felt they understood."

Louise Stonier confirms that the Complete programme was different from what other providers were offering: "Many leadership programmes either focus on one element, such as the individual or the team, but there are not many that look at all aspects of individual, team, their value set and behaviours and how this then impacts commercial performance and sector leadership."

"In addition to this, the Complete programme does bring in an element of neurology which puts the leader firmly in the space of being in control of their behaviour and ultimately their leadership style."

Depth of Understanding

The Complete Team Journey goes much deeper than individual and team behaviours. The development journey is grounded in connecting physiology, feelings, thoughts and behaviour to results.

Achieving greater control of all the levels of the human system increases energy levels and improves clarity of thinking for individuals and the whole team. Collectively, the impact is in much greater levels of team effectiveness.

Peter was impressed by the practical application of the Complete programme: "Complete laid out a process that resonated and was achievable. I had previous experience that could have helped the team and I could describe the problems, but Complete helped me build the solution and a plan."

Complete's first step working with senior teams is to listen and understand the organisation's challenges and what they want to achieve.

Complete designed a team journey that would transform the top team's performance in a matter of months working with Peter and Pets at Home's Chief People and Culture Officer, Louise Stonier.

"Even before the first day of the programme, I could see it was going to work by the way they engaged with us." Explains Peter. "They spent time listening to us and understanding our challenges and what we wanted to achieve. This made sure that we started the programme in the right place."

Figure 1. The Integrated Performance Model





The intervention: eight days of team development

Some of the modules designed for Pets at Home, included:



a. Context set with the *4D leadership* framework

The team was introduced to the 4D leadership framework (see Figure 3). This was essential to broaden the team's perspective beyond their focus on tasks, targets, goals and metrics (IT dimension) and help them drive improvements in all required areas.



b. Understanding individual and team *values*

Complete assessed the team's values in detail which helped to build a common language around motivation, culture and cultural transformation. It also clarified how the team could operate more effectively and leverage their collective strengths.



c. Creating *psychological safety*

Once a common language and a leadership model had been created, there was an urgent need to focus on helping people to open-up about what was really holding the business back. This included helping the team to achieve a level of radical candour that allowed tensions to be raised and resolved much faster and more effectively.



d. Building stronger relationship bonds and *trust*

Complete focused on strengthening the relationship bonds between individual team members by teaching the team how to listen much more deeply. A trust-building 'timelining' experience was created by Complete, during which some deeply personal stories surfaced and a fundamental appreciation of each other's lives emerged.



e. Accelerating performance through *contracting*

The team established a powerful 'soft contract' between Peter, the CEO, and the rest of the team. This surfaced and resolved underlying tensions and misunderstandings. The contract brought new clarity and precision to what the team and Peter needed to drive success.



f. Decision making using *Integrated Decision Making*

The team recognised that their ability to move at pace was hindered when decision-making stalled through a lack of alignment. Complete taught the team how to make much faster decisions and align perfectly behind their decisions, without needing forced compliance. Complex issues were resolved, at speed, using *integrative decision making*. This unlocks the wisdom of the crowd and step changes the quality of engagement within a team.

“I’ve thoroughly enjoyed the team
development process with
Complete.

“I feel like I’ve developed and learnt
as much as the team has.”

Peter Pritchard, CEO
Pets at Home



Faster, Better Decision Making

Peter Pritchard immediately saw the benefits of the Complete programme: “We started at the base level by understanding each other’s styles, how we all show up and why we do what we do. This was very revealing.

“Complete not only make the programme content relatable, they also explain why we are the way we are, they ground it in physiology. Critically, they introduce us to a tool, and then we practice the tool.”

Figure 4. Integrated Decision Making (IDM)

ISSUES & TENSIONS //



According to Peter, the secret to the Complete programme is more than the investment in time and the benefits of spending a day together getting to know each other, the real power is when you get back to the workplace and apply what you’ve learnt. That’s an area that has been a particular success for Pets at Home

“As a team we’re committed to the development.” Explains Peter. “We faced business problems, but we were there together, and the timing of the programme was perfect because we were all under stress and strain, and so everyone felt they needed this.

“We were brave enough to say we needed help. I’m very proud of how the team recognised that and it helped make the Complete programme even more beneficial.”

The Pets Pledge

The Pets at Home team had been struggling to get their 2030 pledge finalised. While they had lots of ideas, input and discussion, they had not managed to finalise the pledge and secure strong alignment.

In just a couple of hours, using the Complete Integrated Decision Making process, we helped the team clarify the 2030 pledge and everyone bought into it entirely.

“One of the most valuable tools we learned to use was Integrated Decision Making. It’s a really helpful, practical tool. Good things, in terms of organisational impact, are coming from it already.”



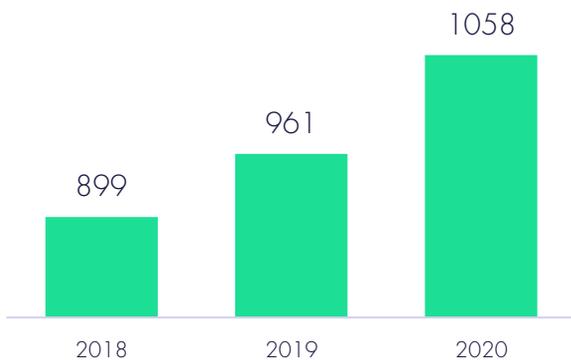
The Impact Reaches Financials

In just 18 months, the team has progressed from a stage two team, to a stage four team on the team developmental scale.

This represents at least 10 years' progress in just 18 months. And all of this has been achieved despite considerable external pressures, including a pandemic. Revenue growth has reflected this with overall revenue jumping 17% in 18 months (Figure 5).

This jump in revenue was reflected in a significant rise in share price (Figure 6) from 116 when Complete started working with the team in the summer of 2018 to 411 in Jan 2021, a 254% rise in just 18 months.

Figure 5. Revenue growth in £M 2018-2020



"We have made considerable progress which can be seen from our financial results." explains Louise Stonier, Chief People and Culture Officer at Pets at Home. "The techniques that we are learning from Complete have also guided us through the pandemic."

"They helped us to move quickly from the day-to-day reactive work that was all consuming at the start of the pandemic to our longer strategic vision, making sure that we continued to make those longer term strategic investments."

To further quantify the improvement in the Pets at Home team, a Team Development Inventory assessment was conducted three quarters of the way through the programme. This assessment revealed that the team was performing above benchmark across all six areas of team performance.

Figure 6. Share price growth Jan 2018 – Jan 2021



"The team journey doesn't stop for us. We're dedicated to growing. Even through COVID we've kept the programme and practice going.

"With Complete, we've continued to adapt the programme to the current challenges of the business.

"We're moving on, we're seeing new things. We're now recognising that the team is a thing in its own right, and we will continue to invest the time, space and external impetus to keep us growing."

Peter Pritchard, CEO
Pets at Home

“Complete have exceptionally high-calibre people.

“Often the people who sell you a programme aren't the people you engage with, but not here. Here we're dealing with people we know, and they know us, and we respect them.

“I find it hard to say anything bad about them!”

Peter Pritchard, CEO
Pets at Home



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