

CASE STUDY

Mindset shifts help military learn from nature

A case study in progress: TetraMap and the Singapore Armed Forces

What can a world-renowned, highly efficient armed forces learn from New Zealand nature? Singapore, comprises a land space of 704 km². Picture New Zealand, a land of 4.3 million people and its Lake Taupo at 616 km². The lake, similar in size to Singapore, could house this nation's 4.9 million people on its surface. New Zealand has nature to share – setting an interesting platform of collaboration between the Singapore Armed Forces and TetraMap.

TetraMap International was invited by the Centre for Leadership Development, SAFTI MI (Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute), to stretch mindsets and transform thinking about how teams can more effectively and naturally, learn together. This is a case study in progress as the body of work is still in its infancy awaiting impact validation.

The Partnership

The Centre for Leadership Development spearheads leadership development in the SAF. CLD leaders were at first intrigued with TetraMap's potential as a development tool, but with further investigation discovered how the model might leverage into an "approach" to team learning across the forces.

The Team Learning project with TetraMap International was evidence of the Singapore Armed Forces openness and courage to:

- ▶ Explore different approaches with an alternative to psychometric instruments for mass engagement across levels.
- ▶ Contextualise each learning event in recognition of the unique needs of participant groups, thus tailoring the organisational approach to team development.
- ▶ Engage in a co-design effort to leverage multi-disciplinary diversity, and take into consideration the unique needs of the military setting.



The SAF Centre for Leadership Development discovered TetraMap's usefulness as an "approach" for learning development.

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The Challenge

Integration of Team Learning as a catalyst for success within a forces-wide learning initiative.

Process

Always future-focused, the SAF broadened the scope of team development and turned to Team Learning as a strategic imperative. How small groups learn together and transfer that learning is significant to Singapore's new generation of leaders.

The beginning

Building a 'sense of team' between client and vendor set firm foundations. This involved:

- ▶ Key stakeholders certified as TetraMap Facilitators to ensure in-depth understanding of the model and original intent for its creation.
- ▶ Building trust – in both relationship and in the model itself.

The middle:

- ▶ Co-design: the team consisted of military leaders, a civilian psychologist who certified as a TetraMap Facilitator, and both directors of TetraMap International.
- ▶ Co-creation of all materials and artefacts for use in the final course outputs.

Delivery:

- ▶ Finalised artefacts and pilot courses delivered in-country to various end-users, including the SAFTI MI Senior Commanders for engagement and buy-in.
- ▶ Key success factors for this phase were based on the trust built within the co-design team. Keeping communication clear, correcting quickly and taking responsibility for the whole, enabled the team to work-through challenges, maintain flexibility, minimise stress and consistently improve deliverables on a day-to-day, event-by-event basis.



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Outcome

- ▶ Common understanding of how the model and approach serve as a framework for considering one's own behaviour in the context of team, team learning and team development.
- ▶ Consistent application of the model's key principles, based on Nature's elements: earth – air – water – fire.

More specifically:

Earth: Goal-setting – Defined the alignment between SAF team learning needs and the potentials of TetraMap as an 'easy-to-grasp' approach for personal development and alignment with existing initiatives' (e.g. Organisational Learning)

Air: Systems and policies – Studied the concept of inter-dependence within unit hierarchy, systems in the SAF (ground, training & education systems) and identified the best point-of-entry for highest leverage, system readiness and potential points of resistance.

Water: Relationships – The co-design arrangement afforded professional partnership and exchange, rather than a vendor-buyer context. This engendered engagement of stakeholders from the start (i.e. on-the-ground leaders, trainers, the CLD, senior commanders) and respect for different expertise regardless of seniority.

Fire: Maintaining team motivation – Challenges were consistently reframed as opportunities. Focus was maintained, contextualisation was highly valued and stakeholders were continually offered opportunities to 'practice what was preached' (i.e. the force-wide initiative to retrieve lessons learnt in every event).



Mindset Shifts Leverage Success

Client comment sums up the initial impact of the initiative – what eventuated was a *...subconscious mindset shift, emphasising that the impact of TetraMap may not be overt like knowledge learnt, rather an experience and process.*

Based on TetraMap International's developmental experience, on the model's global applications, and on the insight of a few CLD visionaries, TetraMap was deemed a model that could add value to the current forces-wide learning project that was initiated more than two years earlier. TetraMap entered at a pivotal point to facilitate and leverage its success. The model could do this because of its mindset shifting capacity and engagement factor. The facilitation style used to share TetraMap with SAF demonstrated respect for learner diversity and developed into what CLD coined as "The Tetra Approach."

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TetraMap

TetraMap, the model has over the years, also been described as:

- ▶ *A way of being, a lifestyle.*
- ▶ *A way of thinking, doing, feeling and creating.*
- ▶ *A thinking habit.*
- ▶ *A facilitator of mindset shifts for sustainability*

The 'Tetra Approach' as coined by the client in this case study is in fact, a great-leap-forward in TetraMap's development as it reflects a broadened scope of proven applications. The SAF chose TetraMap as a learning approach to engage its people to shift mindsets about self, the behaviours of others, facilitation and about team learning.

The model's Elements, earth, air, water, fire, initially understood in behavioural terms now provide a framework, a structure onto which other models and strategies can be dissected, understood, then put back together. Constant and consistent referral to the model as a framework makes facilitating learning more engaging and memorable. It creates a common language that serves as a basis for individual, team and organisational sustainability.

To learn more about how TetraMap and the Tetra Approach might help in the development and sustainability of your People – Planet – Profit – Legacy, contact Yoshimi and Jon Brett at TetraMap International www.tetramap.com



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