

Alternative management team

The original idea for the Alternative Management Team was to have a different group of people who were looking at some of the big issues that the senior management team were having to deal with in a time of great economic change.

So, we pulled together a diverse group of people and asked them questions, particularly around how we prioritised back of house work and front of house work.

How we looked at creating an enterprise culture right through the organisation.

And if we started looking at issues around charging for some of the activities how we could do that, generate income, without excluding people by those charges that we had applied.

The group itself is made up of members of staff, volunteers and community partners.

Alternative Management Team are helping TWAM to come up with innovative ways to engage the community and also consider how to pay for these activities.

I think, you know, basically, you can have two types of group that work around this:

One is very much ideas generating, trying to take those ideas forward.

And one is that more strategic and scrutiny organisation.

And I think that the alternative management team has done both at different times.

And that's determined by the people that are on that group as well because they've shaped that process.

I do believe that the alternative management team is, in the main, an operational group.

Strategy is determined

by senior management team.

We hold senior management group

to account by asking critical questions

and wanting those questions answered efficiently,

with evidence to support the answers.

We question policy.

We question its implementation.

We question its evaluation

and we question how it's

actually communicated to staff.

I believe that the bridge

between senior management team,

staff and communities

is now being established

and that was really important.

Senior management team

had to see how their policies,

how all of their developments

were being translated to staff

in a transparent manner.

One of the things that we became aware of

is there was no clear strategy

how partners who wish to engage

with TWAM actually do that.

It was disjointed and depending on

which member of staff

the community partner spoke to,

depended on the service they got.

The Alternative Management Team

has now established a framework

and a process for our engagement

with community partners.

Which is clear and transparent

and reflects the mission,
the values and the objectives of TWAM.
With Alternative Management Team
acting as guides, mentors in fact, you know,
to any partner who wishes to engage.
One of the recommendations I would give
is to think about the continuity
of the group to avoid stagnation,
group members being on the group too long,
almost becoming professionalised.
The team initially sat outside
of our internal structures and we spent a lot of time
bringing them into the internal structures
and now they are there,
they can be a lot more effective.
The group recognised that an effective facilitator
is central to its role and function.
That facilitator needed to have
good communication skills,
both with SMT and staff
and know the workings of the organisation.
I think it is important to match the topics
that the group discussed
with interests of the group members
and also with the power they have
to influence the organisation.
We've been in a three-year R&D process
and that's been a fantastic opportunity to do it
and we've done it in partnership
with the group and we've learnt a lot.
What I have learnt is if you want it
to be a strategic advisory group,
you need to think how that's going to work
alongside other organisations
your board, whatever other structures
you might have in place.

And you also need to be very specific with people
that that's what you want from them.

If you want an operational group
or you want the group to shape itself,
that's absolutely fine but you need to be very clear with people,
at the start, what you're looking for.