A growing team at a distributed tech company

Product growth is adding to the pressure on this team to deliver results for the company.

This team started off as individuals and grew to become distinct functions; a content group, an events group, and a developer relations/community group. One of the objectives of this two day retreat was to align all the team members around a re-branding - to position them as the Growth team.

The CEO wanted to help the team to get a better grasp on their vision and mission...

"I’d like us to start with why and build from there."

Caleb - CEO
The team at Sensu is entirely remote and slowly expanding. The Growth team plays a pivotal role in the organization's ability to scale and grow. The annual retreat is an opportunity to build a sense of team, direction and alignment around key topics.

In the briefing, they asked for three major things...
- Build strategic alignment.
- Address and discuss tactics.
- Build a 2020 road-map.

In our first engagement, we’d brought a lot of different tools to the table - including a half-day of service design blueprinting. Reflecting on that experience, we felt that more could be done to help the team incorporate and operationalize their learning. In this engagement, we decided to keep things simpler and more targeted. We wanted to ensure that the exercises built on one another and ultimately delivered a completely operationalized change.

We designed an agenda that met their objectives without leaving them overwhelmed or bogged down for hours...

“All the activities were 'bite-sized', so everyone could be engaged and the conversation could flow freely to emerging topics.”

Anna - Director of Content

Breakout Session
The design facets

- Two themed days: Strategy and Tactics
- Lean Coffee to allow for emergent topics (plenty of these)
- Creativity warm ups - 'explaining' and 'pitching'
- Silent brainstorm (inclusive thinking time for all learning styles)
- Making work visible
- Tying the two days together with a strong narrative
- Energizers (based on co-op theater games) to break things up
- As little talk from us as possible (no big presentations)
- Physical posters rather than slide decks (tactile, more accessible, participants could draw on them)
- A strategy day that focused on mission and metrics
- A tactics day that focused on ideation, prioritization and planning
- 1-on-1 and group coaching to help individuals and sub-teams clarify and internalize discussion points

Alignment and shared priorities were the focus of our design...

"PeopleStorming did a fantastic job taking a raw idea - a feeling or desired direction - and helped us turn that into an actionable plan where everyone knows who is responsible for individual deliverables, and we all have a shared sense of priorities."

Todd - Developer Relations
The impact

- An aligned, adopted team level mission
- Better product understanding
- Detailed metrics at team and sub-team level
- A shared understanding of how we can best work together
- A method for prioritizing work
- A sense of togetherness and team to carry through 2020
- A 2020 Roadmap for each team
- Two weeks work done in two days
- A shared understanding of what's needed from leadership
- An aligned, adopted set of sub-team missions
- A north star to guide the team and org into its next phase