

## *Variety is key to Leadership*

Management talent will not be stimulated by training alone, says Philippa Davidson, HR director of TV Solutions company, NDS. Here she explains how...

Can training ever deliver? Just think about it. You go on a course and return to an unchanged situation. Your colleagues are still working in the way they were before, you still face the same challenges, and nobody wants you to start rocking the boat. No wonder people sometimes question the value of training. But it doesn't have to be this way.

At NDS, we believe we have found a way to ensure that training makes a direct impact on people and the business. We have done this by supporting training with an integrated programme of activities that include mentoring, coaching and project delivery. This is what transfers learning into the workplace.

The programme that enables us to make this claim is designed and delivered by R&A Consultancy & Training, and it focuses on helping our high potential managers to become business leaders. It includes:

- Four modules spread over six to eight months. The key theme here is to uncover participants' leadership potential by providing quality training on high performance management, 'teaming', decision-making and leadership coaching
- Executive one-to-one coaching between modules to help participants address issues particular to their development or working circumstances
- Mentoring from senior managers selected from outside the participants' area of activity
- A work-based project, which forms an integral part of the programme. It has to be presented to the participants' mentors and senior managers during the final module.

We have also ensured the programme is highly interactive. So as well as exploring theory and methods, participants learn through, for example, rope-based exercises, which get them working together as a team, as well as teaching them important leadership skills. We are a fast growing company, and such experiential learning helps us to address the issues that arise from our evolving culture.

**OPPORTUNITY...** We have people who work in different sites and countries who complete this programme, and they value the opportunity to network and support one another. This agenda is also supported by the mentoring process, where again mentors and mentees typically come from different parts of the business.

The coaching element is delivered by R&A's trainers, and is designed to help participants stay on track with their development. Reinforcement of new skills, models or insights is an essential part of what we call 'sticky learning' (ie learning that sticks) and the coaching ensures that every manager reviews what they have learned, and highlights any particular aspect of their development that needs attention.

Of course, the coaching is also a great support for participants who want help with their project - the final part of this jigsaw.

The model that R&A uses here is Score (Symptoms, Causes, Outcomes, Resources and Effects), which provides participants with a framework around which to consider the outcome they wish to achieve. In essence, when people are clear about what they want, and recognise the effect that such an outcome will have, then it becomes easier for them to see what they have to do to address their current situation. This model helps participants to identify the causes of any existing difficulties, and the resources they might need to achieve the result they are aiming for.

**EVALUATION...** One way we evaluate the programme's success is through the participants' project presentations. In one case, for example, a manager looked at how people in his team were (and were not) contributing during a time of great change. It was a very real dilemma for him, and it challenged his leadership style. In choosing this area for his project, he showed how the programme had focused him on a big issue, and how he was tackling it quickly and directly.

In another case, we had a manager who was so impressed with what he had learned on the programme that he took his own team away for two days to identify and agree on how they could work better together.

He used models taken directly from the training which, he realised, provided him with a way to inspire and motivate his team in ways he had never even considered before. That is leadership in action.

**VERDICT...** leading the way. This training helped NDS managers to recognise how to become effective leaders. It builds skills in the areas of high performance management, coaching, 'teaming' and influencing, which they can use in one-to-one and group interactions.

