

Case Study: DVLA

Business challenge: the DVLA has been tasked with accelerating the quality and range of services it offers, operationalising this under the banner of the 'Organisational Change Programme (OCP)'. This is a large-scale, cross-organisational initiative, but DVLA recognised that both leadership excellence and stream-lined organisational design were key components in successful execution. A bold new vision for leadership was created, moving from a traditional 'command and control' ethos towards a more coaching orientation. To support this and to improve the organisation's capability in the face of a number of senior management retirements, DVLA decided to invest heavily in equipping new people-managers with the skills and confidence to drive change.

Background

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT). Its main purpose is to facilitate road safety and general law enforcement by maintaining registers of drivers and vehicles, and to collect vehicle excise duty.

The people implications of the Organisational Change Programme (OCP) involved not only a restructure but a significant cultural change. A new definition of the role of leaders as "To lead and develop people to deliver our business" had led to a major shift in the way DVLA expected its leaders to behave and how it measured their success. This, combined with the fact that there were a number of new managers in responsible positions lacking experience, persuaded the Agency to invest in a development programme, focused on both their personal and professional development.

Adrian Thomas, DVLA's Learning and Development Strategy and Communications Manager, and a key figure in driving the programme, says: "We wanted leaders to see that managing people is not just a process and a checklist of skills. Individuals need to know that it's much more about 'what I need to do to improve myself so that I interact more effectively with other people'. Our objective is to bring leaders to maturity through this organisation so that they really drive our change process."

Solution

DVLA chose OPP as a partner for the programme. Adrian explains: "OPP won hands down. I had worked with them before in a coaching project so knew something of their capability. We didn't want prescriptive models and off-the-shelf components. We were looking for a programme that would get under the surface of behaviour and help people see that the first step to being a leader is based on personal insight. We used the strap-line 'It's All About You' to get this across, which really resonated with our young managers."

Alison Jorgensen, Head of DVLA's L&D Business Advisors team, who managed the programme's implementation, says: "OPP stood out from early in the tender process. The credibility and integrity of the organisation went without saying, but

more than that, the flexibility and credibility of the people we met from OPP was impressive. They were very innovative and extremely flexible with regards to how we worked together. The consultants gave us lots of ideas, and understood our business and our challenges.”

She says: “Every organisation has its cultural issues; we knew there were going to be some sensitivities and potential resistance around a major development programme. OPP gave us comfort that they had listened to us and understood this – they felt like a safe pair of hands and were very pragmatic about what we needed to do to engage people.”

OPP worked in close partnership with DVLA’s Learning and Development Group (LDG) to design a programme that would offer delegates increased awareness of themselves and others as a basis for developing their capability as managers. They called it ‘Development FM’ (for managers). “The theme was carefully chosen as a powerful metaphor for the importance of getting on the same wavelength as others,” says Adrian. “This gave us a great hook for marketing the programme in a new and exciting way to generate buy-in across the organisation.”

As part of the OCP, the agency had undertaken a talent audit involving a half-day assessment for each manager. Each individual received developmental feedback against the agency’s core people-management competencies. But, critically, this also identified common development themes, and it was important that the new programme had these at their core. Development FM’s five modules address these five areas:

- Raising awareness
- Relationship management
- Unleashing potential
- Change catalyst
- Conflict management

All delegates complete the first module and then identify and pursue their own development journey, selecting from the available modules to suit their individual experience and development needs. The MBTI® questionnaire, a powerful tool for increasing self-awareness, underpins all the modules by providing a framework to understand and value differences. The programme also includes case studies and practice sessions with ‘live’ issues.

The modules focus on practical activities, so that participants leave armed with tools and techniques that they can immediately use when they return to their jobs. They take time between modules to reflect on what they have learnt and apply it, and consider which is their best next step based on evaluating their own performance as a leader –maximising the impact of the programme.

Leaders are encouraged to take responsibility for their own continuing development and to send the same message to their reports, propagating the philosophy that it is a manager’s role to create a positive learning culture by facilitating the development of others, every working day. With more focused attention on each individual, they should be better able to unlock potential in their people.

A workshop pilot took place at the end of 2006, prior to the ‘live’ event launch in April 2007. Since then it has been rolled out as part of the management development curriculum. Alison and colleagues have marketed it widely – and highly professionally – with presentations, testimonials, posters and themed road-

shows to stimulate voluntary attendance. The 'It's All About You' theme was reinforced using the McFly song of the same name at the launch. Other popular songs were used to theme the other modules to help render them more accessible and create an element of fun around the programme.

The response, Alison says, "has been great. It's one of the most popular courses on our books. We've had fantastic word-of-mouth promotion, with a major breakthrough of our evening workers actually requesting to be included. OPP were very flexible in helping us create this option. The feedback across the board has been tremendous with a reported engagement score of around 90% from participants." As many as 1,500 managers may ultimately participate in the programme. DVLA and OPP continue to work together to fine-tune and enhance the programme in light of participant feedback.

Business benefits

This programme is different from anything DVLA had done before, with a strong emphasis on the individual, a focus on personal development needs and an approach tailored to the organisation's culture. Delegates were overwhelmingly positive about the self-knowledge achieved as a catalyst for development. This deeper understanding of their impact on others maximises the likelihood that they will achieve lasting behaviour change, and that the organisation, in turn, will achieve sustainable performance improvement.

'It's too early to be able to measure business impact in hard numbers. But we know this programme is breaking through to people with the message that even if you have a specialist role, you depend on others to get business results. So it makes a vast difference to your effectiveness if you understand yourself and can adapt the way you work with others to get the best out of them. Adrian says, "It's making people thirst for more, creating a new appetite for development and a focus on unlocking potential."

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