

Leading to Deliver – Leadership and Culture Change initiative for managers in the social work services sector 2003 – 2007.

An innovative approach to leadership development involving blended learning, academic accreditation and private sector consultancy.

Client Requirements

In June 2003 the Taylor Clarke Partnership was contracted by the Scottish Executive to design and deliver Leading to Deliver, a Postgraduate Certificate leadership development programme for the social work services sector in Scotland, accredited by the Robert Gordon University. This programme was launched by Euan Robson MSP, Deputy Minister for Education & Young People, and has run for 4 cohorts with a total of 400 participants, comprising middle and senior managers working in the social work services sector throughout Scotland. Another cohort of 100 managers was further contracted for in 2006 and started in January 2007, this also included a short programme for the participants managers to brief them on what their staff will experience so that greater support, commitment and buy-in is achieved.

Our Contribution

The project aim is to deliver a fundamental change in the leadership culture of organisations i.e. mainly local authorities and major charities, making them more focused on service delivery and client satisfaction.

In order to meet this ambitious aim we work in partnership with the commissioning organisation the Social Work Services Policy Division of the Scottish Executive. This programme equips participants with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to make the required changes to the way they work, in order to help them deliver a demanding agenda for social work services.

The design phase of the project lasted three months. It was based on the results of an extensive training needs analysis carried out by the Scottish Leadership Foundation. During this phase there were no less than weekly meetings between the client, our project team and our content developers to ensure programme outcomes were maximised for all participants.

A wide range of learning and development methods are used, including:

- online completion of 360 degree feedback and Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) self assessment exercises prior to the commencement of the programme.
- face-to-face delivery via a set of four, three day residential modules, including the use of plenary and syndicate groups, facilitated by 9 Taylor Clarke consultants.
- online discussion groups, both self-directed and moderated by RGU staff via their virtual campus.
- extensive use of Robert Gordon University's virtual campus by geographically dispersed participants to access learning resources and liaise with academic staff and facilitators.
- online and phone coaching by Taylor Clarke's consultants.

- a mix of facilitated and self directed action learning sets for geographically close participants.
- accreditation at post graduate certificate level via a series of assessments set and marked by RGU Social Work dept staff.
- bespoke web enabled CBT on key areas of knowledge via a series of modules designed and delivered by The Fifth Business.

Another key factor in the design of the programme was the need to cater for, what was a very diverse group of participants. This diversity took a number of forms; first variety of organisations i.e. local authorities, charities, higher education and the Scottish Executive. Secondly their prior experience ranges from middle managers to Chief Executives. Thirdly their experience of management and leadership development and their educational levels vary greatly, from little or no tertiary education to people who hold 2-3 degrees. Given this diversity the design phase also had to take account of, and cater for, a range of level, education as well as technological capability and infrastructure.

The Impact

Initial evaluation of the impact of the programme with both participants and their organisations in mid 2004 yielded very positive results. These included the application of the learning, the energising effect it has on participants and the increase in personal and team effectiveness. The participant drop out rate for this demanding programme is very less than 5% and there is a consequently high graduation rate currently at 96%, making it Robert Gordon University's most successful Postgraduate course to date. We believe these figures testify to its real value to a group of participants who lead very busy lives working in a high profile, stressful environments.

