

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

BACKGROUND

A leadership programme delivered in 2007-2008 to Directors and Heads of Service built on existing knowledge and skills required to meet the changes and challenges the Council faced.

It was recognised that those in the management tiers below would also need training to help support the leadership team in creating and delivering services within a new type of council. A middle management programme was designed.

As part of the design Heads of Service were to support a module – either through providing a strategic view, participating in the teaching, sharing their expertise or answering organisation specific questions.

From 2009-2010, three groups of middle managers were chosen to go through training.

Assessments in the form of OPQ's were undertaken by Human Resources and feedback was given to each of the participants.

The first group commenced their programme on 19th January and completed it on 1st June 09.

THE PROGRAMME

Aims:

To assist the change management process in East Herts Council and ensure middle managers have the knowledge, competence and confidence to manage their service effectively

Objectives:

At the end of the programme participants will:

Share a common approach to management with their Directors and Heads of Service

Understand the purpose of key strategic changes and the need for a corporate approach

Understand and be able to use key council policies and procedures

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

Have developed the skills needed for effective performance by themselves and others

Developed the confidence to apply their knowledge and skills to achieve improved team performance

Modules:

The programme consisted of 10 modules, to be delivered in whole training days or delivered as two modules within the same day.

The modules were:

- Getting the best for East Herts
- Getting the best from change
- Getting the best from your function
- Getting the best from your team
- Getting the best from your personal resilience
- Getting the best from the individual
- Getting the best from formal processes
- Getting the best from the budget
- Getting the best in equality and diversity
- Getting the best from the future

The Dragons' Den

In addition to the 10 modules, projects undertaken by the participants were to be presented at the end of the course to the Chief Executive and the Head of Human Resources for approval and, if appropriate, funding.

Time was to be allocated within modules to work on the initiative.

Strategic Direction

Anne Freimanis supported the programme. She gave an outline of her ambitions for the programme, emphasized that participants were working in a new type of council, one where change was occurring.

When questioned on Dragons' Den she advised participants on the importance of having a practical idea which affects the world outside the council.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

Evaluation:

For the purpose of evaluation, participants were asked on the first module to identify their outcomes.

The group of 12 was broken into three smaller groups.

Each group was asked to refer to the course objectives and modules and identify their outcomes. These were written on flipchart and presented by each group. The flipcharts were retained by the Trainers.

EVALUATION SESSION

Eleven of the original twelve participants attended the final module - a three hour session divided into 3 parts:

Evaluation
Preparation for the dragons' den
Delivery of the dragons' den presentation

The twelfth participant offered feedback at a later date. This has been integrated.

EVALUATION PROCESS

1. Free discussion on the value of the programme
2. Evaluation against participants' specified outcomes
3. Feedback on modules

FREE DISCUSSION ON THE VALUE OF THE PROGRAMME

All participants endorsed their attendance on the programme saying they felt that the programme had increased their skills and knowledge and it had been a worthwhile experience.

Comments included that the course had given opportunities for reflection, sharing experiences and creating new ideas and ways of working.

Participants placed a high value on the networking opportunities the course had created and in some cases this had proved very positive where managers had cross service relationships.

Presence of the Heads of Service was positively acknowledged.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The team endorsed the view that for half day modules rather than putting two together forming a full day away from the office, leaving them as stand alone sessions means managers could still attend to their work obligations.

Dragons Den

At the time of this discussion the dragons' den presentations had not been delivered.

The participants had divided into two project groups. This was their decision. No limitations were placed on the number of projects that could be generated.

Feedback given by the group was that insufficient time had been placed on the course for project work. Two other related issues arose. The first was that the individual who generated the project idea (and whose service would be the ultimate beneficiary) ended up doing much of the work required. The second issue was that motivation was challenged when the project didn't benefit ones own service.

EVALUATION AGAINST PARTICIPANTS' SPECIFIED OUTCOMES

The group of 11 was broken into the original four smaller groups. The flipcharts with desired outcomes were returned to each of the groups.

Participants were then asked to discuss the outcomes they had identified and whether the course had delivered this.

Recorded below are each group's original outcomes and the feedback they gave as to whether these outcomes were met.

"What I want from the course" – group/individual responses and evaluation

Group A

1. Understand Council's direction; enable to work effectively with colleagues
2. Establish contacts with other services
3. Improved skills to manage staff
4. Understand staff motivation

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

Their evaluation

The group said that the Council's direction had generally been understood but some points had not come across clearly.

The group commented that the networking that occurred as a result of attending the course was very useful and they had established contact with other services. It was also useful to hear others' experience and this had assisted them in acquiring skills.

More practically on staff motivation, they felt rather than just understanding motivation they had learned how to improve motivation.

Group B

1. Better time management skills
2. Leadership skills – confidence
3. Improved people skills
4. Clarity on procurement
5. More cross service communication
6. Influencing

Time management was an outcome specifically wanted from one individual and he felt that this had not been covered well.

The team felt with the exception of procurement all other outcomes had been achieved. The cross service communication was identified as specifically beneficial.

Although the group had not given any specifics under "Influencing" when they were discussing their outcomes identified "Influencing Senior Management" as something which had been achieved.

Group C

1. Get a better understanding of the Council's policies to work more effectively
2. To gain some more ideas to help when dealing with individuals in team
3. Develop, enhancing and refreshing skills

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

4. Balancing (ways to balance) work, staff and life
5. To be more involved in the strategic direction of the authority

The group felt that had achieved a better understanding of the council's policies which had assisted them to work more effectively.

They also acknowledged they had gained ideas to help with dealing with people within their team as well as developing and enhancing skills.

The member of the team who had identified being "more involved in the strategic direction of the authority" didn't feel this had been achieved.

Group D

1. Gain corporate buy-in
2. Reinforce what managers do
3. Opportunities for networking
4. New skills and ideas

This group expressed that gaining corporate buy-in was some way to being achieved.

The course had certainly reinforced what managers do.

Like other teams they felt that the opportunities for networking were great. They also felt they had achieved new skills and had new ideas.

FEEDBACK ON MODULES

Participants were asked to identify the modules they had found most useful. They could select as many of these as they wished.

Participants valued the OPQ assessments which they had undertaken before the programme commenced.

Team working, Formal processes were expressed by the team as being most beneficial within their roles as manager. The diversity session received very positive feedback from the group.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

Delegation and coaching were also useful and participants said that both modules offered techniques and skills they were able to implement.

Handling conflict and building personal resilience were also mentioned as having benefit.

Although Dragons' Den had in the general discussion been the focus for some lively opinions (positive and negative) two of the participants gave the project working an endorsement.

Finance and procurement was the module which participants felt hadn't offered any great insights or value. Only one manager felt the session beneficial.

THE DRAGONS' DEN

Two projects were expertly presented. Both projects identified a means to increase revenue for the Council.

The Panel Members of the Dragons' Den approved both projects.

Without the Dragons' Den aspect to the programme it may be argued that these revenue raising ideas may never have serviced.

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation that occurred took place on the final day of the middle-management programmed and before the dragons' den exercise occurred.

Participants stressed the value they had gained from the programme and identified particular modules which were of the greatest benefit.

The team also gave valuable feedback in terms of suggested improvements.

However there is value in now seeking feedback about the usefulness of the dragons' den exercise.

Further useful information could also be gained from undertaken an evaluation exercise to explore whether participants are still using the skills and knowledge gained since the programme has finished.