

A case study – Creating a coaching culture

A request was made to deliver a one-day coaching skills workshop to 5,000 people in front line retail roles within 6 months in order to build a coaching culture. Whilst the immediate request could have been fulfilled, albeit at considerable expense, there was undoubtedly an underlying issue which needed to be uncovered and analysed. A business performance consultancy was undertaken with the business sponsor and senior representatives from the retail leadership team. This uncovered a need to upskill the leaders with the ability to coach the coach in order to create the required culture and an environment which would make the change sustainable, down to line manager level.

Further investigation into the existing learning provided to the retail personnel showed a multitude of Instructor Led Training programmes available which were similar but not consistent. The impact of this when personnel moved between different retail departments was that they often attended yet more coaching skills training workshops even though they had already been trained. Additionally, there was no process in place to embed learning from any of the training programmes into the “day job”.

The proposal made to the sponsor was to overhaul the current coaching learning in its entirety in order to streamline the current offering, create consistency and offer a range of learning solutions which could be aligned to specific needs and roles.

The learning solution was made up of three core elements which allowed greater flexibility to achieve the learning outcomes required:

1. A 30 minute e-learning module which outlined the coaching models chosen as core to the retail business, including a knowledge test. As well as an effective stand-alone module, the e-learning was used in the following ways:
 - pre-requisite piece of learning for the Instructor Led Training (ILT) workshop.
 - a refresher/conversion module for those who had previously attended coaching skills training.
2. A one-day ILT workshop which included an assessed role-play which focused the learning from the day and gave absolute clarity to the post workshop skill development actions.
3. A “Learning Transfer” action and assessment pack. This was an assignment for the learner to undertake live coaching sessions observed by an experienced coach (generally their line manager) against pre-set assessment criteria. This pack was also used to pre-assess those who had either previously been trained, or believed they were already sufficiently skilled, or needed help and support to further develop their skills.

The key outputs and results from the above solution, once implemented, were:

- Increased voluntary take up of the “new” ILT programme – 90% attendance compared to average 75% across the previous range of programmes.
- Greater consistency and establishment of “one way of doing coaching” to kick-start the coaching culture. Additional benefits were the sharing of ideas and practice across retail areas due to a mix of learners attending the ILT and cost saving from the demise of 9 duplicated programmes.
- Flexibility for the retail business to create a mini-bespoke learning programme tailored to the needs of the individual from the 3 core elements of the learning solution as opposed to the original request to “sheep-dip” all 5,000 people through an ILT workshop. Estimated cost saving/income generation from this approach was in excess of £5M in recovered opportunity costs.
- Usage rates – all 5,000 people completed the e-learning within the 6 month window and as this was tested the quality could also be tracked and reported back to the business sponsor.

- Employee survey results in the year following the coaching solution showed an 8% rise in perception of the value of the line manager.

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