

Think Ministry of defence, think command and control? Perhaps you should think again



Background

The Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) Executive Team are responsible for an annual procurement budget of around £16B. They oversee all major deals on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for example the purchase of future aircrafts and ships. As part of a general initiative in the MoD to develop its future leaders, the DE&S Commercial Executive Team undertook training which included a brief introduction to coaching for leadership development. Following the session it emerged that there was an overwhelming appetite among the Commercial Executives to learn more about coaching through formal training. In late 2007 i-coach academy was selected to develop a customised in-house programme in partnership with the MoD. According to Steve Eades, Corporate Services Team Leader, i-coach academy was chosen because they understood the MoD requirements better than other companies who tendered.

Objectives for the Coaching Programme

At the completion participants should be able to:

- Identify their current leadership style and be aware of the impact of their style on others
- Identify their own and their team members learning and communications styles
- Demonstrate increased insight into their current approach to coaching and the repertoire they hold
- Demonstrate an understanding of coaching skills and how they relate and differ from mentoring and instructing skills
- Enhance current skills and experiment and apply new skills and techniques within their workplace
- Construct and carry out coaching conversations using but not limited to GROW
- Identify personal preference and how these influence their coaching style and those they coach
- Identify coachee's individual learning style and motivation in order to adjust their coaching approach

- Understand the limitations of a coaching leadership style
- Build successful peer coaching relationships to further support their personal development and the development of a coaching culture across DE&S

The Programme

The programme was run over four months. Formal training included an initial two day workshop followed by applied coaching, learning reviews, individual coaching sessions with an i-coach academy coach and buddy coaching. The majority of the time was set aside for participants to apply and practice their newly learned coaching skills in their day to day work.

"Both Caroline Horner and Eunice Aquilina, who delivered the programme handled the group with exceptional professionalism and with authority which stemmed from their vast knowledge of coaching. I have dealt with many coaching consultancies over the years and, from my experience, i-coach academy is one of the more preminent companies in the field." Steve Eades

"A rare opportunity to learn something genuinely new and useful" - Participant

Programme Successes

Increased Skills

Most reported that they are more confident and competent in coaching staff using the techniques they have learned. There is a greater self awareness among participants of their own leadership style. Many remarked that they are less inclined to offer solutions immediately for the coachee letting them explore for themselves possible answers. Participants' listening skills have also greatly improved.

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Better Conversations with Staff

Most have seen an increase in meaningful discussions with staff, allowing conversations to develop using a more enquiring style and some remarked that they are more relaxed in allowing staff to reach their own conclusions when problem solving.

Continue with Increasing Their Skills

There is a general recognition that participants should continue with their coaching practice in the workplace, continue with the buddy system and some are considering more formal coaching training.

Embedding the Practice

In terms of embedding a coaching leadership style in the business many suggested that it would be difficult to do so without keeping this at the forefront of the Commercial Executive Board agenda. Time and work pressures can sometimes conflict with the intention to continue with coaching. It was suggested that all senior DE&S leaders should be encouraged to develop these skills as well. Many felt that coaching skills should be cascaded down the commercial management chain.

Personal Benefits

Many found that by using coaching they were able to make better use of their own time as their staff were taking greater ownership of problems thus allowing them to spend more time on strategic business issues

Moving Forward

Plans are now being put in place to filter this training down into the DE&S Commercial world.