



Case Study: UNUM

The Professional Manager Development Programme

Background

As a result of work previously carried out for Unum's HR Director, whilst in his previous company, the People Development Team was asked to outline plans for a management development programme for 150 leaders and managers, across three sites, with the following aims:

- To transfer core values into behaviour
- To develop core management competencies providing a baseline standard for performance
- To challenge and improve performance in a successful business

After numerous meetings, a programme overview was built and presented to Unum's HR steering group.

Prior to programme commencement, the People Development Team met Unum's Directors to gain buy-in and visible support for the programme. This was underpinned further with on-site roadshows designed to engage line managers in the development process.

Solution

The programme included various methods to engage learners and their differing learning styles, including:

- **Personal Development Centres** – to ascertain current skill levels and inform programme design
- **Line Management Engagement** – to ensure line and operational support for development activities
- **Learning Plan and Contract** – formalised discussions and demonstrated commitment from both learner and Unum
- **Learning Logs** – to support reflective learning and provide a vehicle for transfer of learning into the workplace
- **Differentiated Programmes** – programmes designed with outputs from Personal Development Centres meant that different parts of Unum received tailored programmes that still maintained central themes. Topics included leadership, change management, coaching, developing self and strategic thinking.
- **Workplace Transfer** – People Development Team developed an assessment methodology that supported the transfer of learning into the workplace and also provided a pathway to Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) accreditation. Two forms of assessment were used, reflective reviews to encourage individuals to reflect upon their performance and a Business Improvement Project to ensure new skills would be used in a productive and meaningful way for the individual and Unum.
- **Accreditation** – option to gain two accredited qualifications: ILM endorsed award 'The Unum Professional Manager Certificate' or ILM L3 Award in First Line Management, or both, dependent upon requirements and wishes of learners
- **Web Portal** - bespoke website to support and underpin learning
- **Professional Membership** - automatic student membership of the ILM allowing access to a variety of additional learning and personal development resources
- **Recognition Events** – held monthly, hosted by Unum's CEO as part of monthly 'Managers Meetings', added impetus to the programme and reinforced messages

Throughout the programme, continuous emphasis was placed on the application of learning into the workplace. To support this critical aspect of the programme PDT developed tools (outlined above) to help learners and also practised a philosophy of discussing with learners when and how they could apply the tools and techniques learnt as well as reviewing their effectiveness at later stages in the programme. This proved highly effective in encouraging learners to experiment with their learning, especially when supported by other learners' success.

Results to date

Metric driven

The People Development Team designed a Unum-specific feedback form to measure two key dimensions: engagement and self assessment of learning. Metrics to date indicate that both have been significantly over achieved across the range of activities delivered.

Other metrics included attendance figures (99%) and formal complaints (0). Unum's annual Employee Opinion Survey showed performance improvement of 19% within Management Services.

Anecdotal

- Collected within workshops – the majority of participants reported an improvement in either their or their team's performance as a direct result of learning taken from the workshops or the refreshment of skills previously learnt but not applied
- Collected outside workshops – Directors and Senior Managers noted a significant increase in the level of team working and communication at middle manager level. They also noted a reduction in 'silo working'
- Collected by Unum – Unum held a number of focus groups, independent of People Development Team involvement. Feedback supported the data collected above but also reinforced the business relevance of the training and produced fresh ideas to support the implementation of new optional workshops

Unum's Management Services Director, Phil Evans noticed "an immediate improvement in conversations between my managers and their direct reports and an increased confidence in dealing with difficult situations."

Stage one is now complete; the senior leaders have completed their mandatory training and stage two (main management community) is 70% through implementation.

The People Development Team is now considered Unum's preferred supplier of Leadership and Management development and since stage one completion, has delivered ten independently commissioned events as a result of the Professional Manager Programme's success.

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