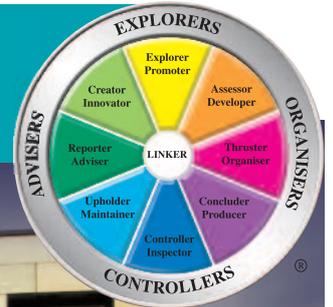


Building success for the future



Innovation, effective team working, and responding to the environmental and other challenges posed by government are all essential requirements for delivering a multi-million pound building programme.

Aware of the pressures, and willing to explore new ideas, the University of Bradford's Department of Estates and Facilities recently turned to the Team Management Profile.

"They are an innovative team and leaders in their field - and they want to remain so," says Liz Proctor, Training and Development Adviser in the University's Staff Development team - who is Team Management Systems (TMS) accredited and worked with the department throughout the process.

In February 2012, in recognition of their sustainable building programme, the department won both 'Carbon Champion of Year' and 'Client of the Year' awards from the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) - beating off competition from the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Ministry of Defence and others.

Says Liz: "They wanted to measure how effective

they were as a management team, identifying their strengths and gaps and what would help them develop."

Overcoming sceptics

In March 2011, an introductory session was held with 24 managers - in two groups of 12 - from across the department's three teams: ancillary, security, and building maintenance & capital works. In total the department has around 280 staff.

Inevitably, there was a little bit of resistance at first to the techniques, says Liz. "However, when they read the results of their Profiles, and saw how accurate they were, even the most cynical were won over."

As project managers, the department staff related quickly to an exercise that role-played setting up a restaurant, which demonstrated the need for different capabilities within teams. And they thought the overall results very valuable

and interesting, as this sample feedback illustrates:

'I have already started seeing myself differently and how I fit my Profile on a daily work basis.'

'I am starting to take into account how others could perceive me and how I communicate with other team members.'

“

I have already started seeing myself differently and how I fit my Profile on a daily work basis.

Once they had their own Profile results, staff had to be convinced that they needed to share them with others in order to understand one another. But they accepted that quickly - helped along by the unthreatening Profile language. And when they looked at the overall results there were lessons to be learnt.



Laying the foundations

None of Liz's work with the Team Management Profile would have been possible without earlier foundations that department director Clive Wilson introduced to the department.

"In 2005 we had exactly the same group of staff but nobody spoke to each other," he says. "In fact, there was one-upmanship, with people almost waiting to tell someone else that they had got it wrong."

Moving into open plan offices helped remove physical barriers between people, and staff that wouldn't normally mix were actively encouraged to integrate - and deliberately so by moving their desks alongside one another.

The impact of the changes was dramatic. In the past, says Clive, the supervisors were very adversarial with each other. "It was one of the worst pockets in the department," says Clive. "Now they are all working together. They all sit together. They communicate together. And they hear one another. And that has completely broken down any of the barriers that were there before."

"Once we had broken down barriers, team members became more willing to talk to one another," says Clive - which was essential for doing the Team Management Profile, with individuals now willing to share their Profiles.

“ Using the language of the Profile made it easier to talk about issues.

Taking action

After a successful first look at their Profiles, everyone wanted to look at the results again - at the linking skills, and exploring the results within their own teams. So a second set of workshop sessions followed six months later. With some teams just having restructured, and with new managers in post, this came at an ideal time.

The second session with the ancillary, security, and building maintenance & capital works team looked again at the Team Management Wheel and did an exercise to identify what each team member does and doesn't respond well to. The aim was to give them a greater understanding of one another's preferences, and the need to adapt their communication styles to work more effectively with one another.

"There were some really honest conversations," says Liz. "Using the language of the Profile made it easier to talk about issues." As a result the team have started to draw up some 'rules and regulations' on ways of working, how to work more effectively, and how they should communicate.

The benefits were evident. "I have not seen anything like it have such an impact on a team," their manager told Liz - adding that it had also helped them settle in as two new teams.

The top management team have also found their Profile results useful. On the positive side, they showed they had good overall coverage of the different team roles. But there were known gaps when it came to promoting themselves and finding the time to reflect and learn from what they were doing.

"They have so many projects on the go that they move onto the next one without really having the time to stop and reflect upon the lessons from the last one," explains Liz.

In response, the top management team have taken action to improve their website, and they have realised the potential significance of communication links they are establishing with the Deans of the University. Looking at the Team Management Wheel has also boosted their confidence.

Looking ahead

Further sessions using Team Management Systems with the department will take place in Spring 2012. Then, the top management team will

look at 360 degree linking skills, to get an idea of how they are perceived by colleagues. Others will look at strategic and management issues such as setting objectives, quality standards, developing the team, delegation and allocating tasks.

"It has been very good, it has been quite enlightening, and we have got a lot from it," says Clive. "People now understand who they think they are. Getting them to listen to what other people think they are - and sorting out the two, to close gaps, etc. - is our next step."

"It's all very well doing it on one's own, but it's different when you have to ask five or six people to comment on you. I think there will be apprehensions about moving forward. But, at the end of the day, I think it's got to be done."

“ We can see that people are less confrontational... there is an understanding that we all come from a different place.

Evaluation

Although introducing the physical changes to the office's layout were an essential first step, the overall project has been geared towards introducing greater customer focus and flexibility of service.

It is hard to assess the effectiveness of teams, admits Clive, but he is confident of what has been achieved. "We can see that people are less confrontational, more inclined to work together and there is an understanding that we all come from a different place," he says.

And already the results have been embedded into day-to-day service. Building on the results of the Profiling, the department recently held a series of customer focus training days using a company who use actors to demonstrate given scenarios - staff groups are then asked to discuss and give feedback. When issues were acted out before them, 80-90 per cent said they would act differently with a customer in future.