

Case Study

Introduction

This case study considers a programme that Teleios has been involved with over the past two years to help the Defence Procurement Agency (DPA) drive through substantive reform. This new culture had to be embraced by the leaders of the organisation who then had the challenge of rolling this out into the many teams whose work is Defence Procurement.

This substantive programme has been delivered through a series of 5 day Master Classes. To date we have delivered twelve of these sessions and the work is ongoing. Teleios was selected to design and deliver the work after a successful competitive tender.

We were told later that we were awarded the work because we put together a bid that understood the "below the line" issues and our design was radical and yet practically based.

The success of the work has recently resulted in a Master Class for the Executive Board, which has produced some significant results.

The Changing Context

The DPA has over the past 5 years, been very publicly criticised in the media for some very high profile projects which have either overrun on time and cost or produced equipment that has not performed to expectation. Like many media interventions the criticisms contain, both aspects that are true and highlighted areas to be reformed. It also revealed a lack of real

understanding of the complexity of the work of the DPA.

The DPA exists to "protect the realm" a charter that it genuinely and deeply cares about. Post September 11th this charter has taken on even sharper focus. The agency sits in a demanding position as it resides between the Military, the Civil Service, the outside suppliers and the politicians. Each has its own set of requirements and expectations. Put along a side this, the impact huge and continuing advances in Technology, with the very real need to get the most advanced equipment to where it is needed fast *and within budget*, you get some idea of the scale of the work. Having said this some of the attitudes, behaviours and processes did indeed belong to an age long gone.

What to do about it

The Government had already initiated significant reforms in the Civil Service to change working practices and the DPA has been implementing these along with various internal programmes. The anticipated breakthrough from all of this work had been patchy at best and it was felt that if the changes were to be successful more impetus had to be given. It was rightly seen that critical to the modernising work were the leaders in the DPA. They had to be the exemplars of this new way of working. This new way included being much more business like, being prepared to challenge the system, to lead and serve rather than command, to

understand and work sympathetically within political realities, to be better able to work with a variety of stakeholders and to drive projects that produced quality equipment on time and in budget. The leaders were key to this process.

The leadership task was also to win back hearts and minds. Battered by unrealistic expectations, criticisms, under funding and the usual reaction to substantive change, the moral was in some places, low.

How we developed a solution

The DPA needed to shed some of its stuffy and less helpful ways and retain many of its practices which are world leading. The leaders were to be the exemplars of this approach and much more responsible and accountable for their own teams. They were to be given room to use their own unique style rather than a prescribed set of procedures outlined in a manual.

The Master Class was therefore to be a mix of high impact workshops which introduced concepts, practical tools, time to challenge stakeholders and indeed be challenged by them, time to work on areas of individual competency and time to build a sense of leadership community.

What we were asked to change was fundamentally the attitudes of the management.

The Design of The Programme

This we all knew was critical. We also understood that the design had to be both high impact and practically focussed on real life issues.

Teleios was selected to design and deliver this programme because we had a number of very different approaches to leadership development. These included,

- An emphasis on serving leadership.
- A unique modelling process which explores at depth the expectations between leaders and followers.

- A tool that identifies how Change Able an organisation is and what specifically needs to be leveraged to shift working practises.
- A profiling tool which explores at depth peoples attitudes towards key aspects of the leadership role.
- Questions of Leadership, which provides a structured way of exploring fundamental issues of leadership.
- A methodology called Modelling the Way, which helps leaders think and work consequentially.

The five-day Master Class was started off with a candid strategy presentation that updated leaders on direction and progress. The rest of the time was spent working on peoples real life issues introducing the above tools, methodologies and concepts to provide a structure and sense of direction. The week was concluded with a very candid dialogue between the senior leaders and a member of the executive board. This last session was critical as many new ideas, concerns and insights were shared.

The delivery of the programme

The Master Class was highly interactive and the design needed to be very flexible. In essence we provided the structure and approach and the leaders provided the specific content.

Our challenge was to hold people's interest and commitment over a very intense five days and we built in

opportunities to “play”. We also worked in partnership with the internal training team and this has worked supremely well and provided real added value to us all.

So far we have delivered 12 workshops to up to 25 people at a time and the work is ongoing.

What has given us a real edge in the delivery of a hugely challenging design is the team who deliver the work. We had to get the right mix of skill and experience to gain acceptance by people who have very impressive

records of achievement.

The Teleios Team consisted of a former senior Army officer, the person who is leading the Whitehall and Industry Group which is bringing together leaders from government and industry, a person who has considerable international business and commercial experience and is a Programme Director at a leading Business School, and two leading researchers into organisational behaviour. Most importantly though, each one of are team had the scars of experience and a story to tell.

The results of the programme

The first workshop was about winning the trust and acceptance of the DPA community. After some very challenging moments we were given the trust and commitment of the leaders and the results from the pilot workshop were substantive.

From this early time having passed the “are you yet another consultant here to tell us how to do our job!” (expletives omitted) test, the workshops went from strength to strength and the results were and still are being felt throughout the DPA – here is a quote from Professor Peter Brook who leads the Integration Authority.

“What we have achieved in this course was truly impressive. We dovetailed Teleios Consulting’s work into our own strategy work. The synergy was excellent and the transformational effect was better than we could have reasonably hoped.

The results are still being felt here at the work-face six months later with a stronger sense of commitment and focus among the staff. The problems we are facing have not become less difficult, but there is an overall sense of expectation of success.”

Challenges Faced

This was a very high risk and difficult assignment. It required a shift in the leadership culture within the DPA and that is never easy to accomplish.

Both the DPA and ourselves had a reasonable amount of anxiety before the delivery of the pilot. The Ministry of Defence knew that they needed a catalyst for change, not more of the same leadership training. They thought that our proposal was radical and may well provide the stimulus needed, but we represented a high risk, as we were unknown to them. We also had some anxiety about the size of the task particularly as most outside consultants were regarded with cynicism.

There were two key challenges. Firstly we had to win the trust of the leadership community, by not behaving in the way they had experienced most consultants - by listening to them and providing something that was practical and had depth. The second challenge was to get the Executive Board to listen and work in a different way, with the team leaders. The latter had all kinds of political sensitivities involved.

What this means to you

The purpose of this case study is to allow the reader to see what the customer problem was and how Teleios Consulting could work within that environment to bring change. The particulars of the problem and approach will change from market to market, but we believe this case study shows some important points:-

- Teleios Consulting can work in areas where there is great deal of sensitivities and history. Our approach is forthright, but respects people's positions and needs.
- Teleios Consulting are able to understand the customer's environment and work with them to develop a course that is both applicable and brings change.
- Teleios Consulting are able to engage and work with senior people because our style is to understand first and then facilitate change afterwards. We do not use a potted approach that we apply blindly in every situation.
- Teleios Consulting has years of experience and knowledge which it can call on to provide just the right type of training programme, workshop or mentoring role for any situation.

- Teleios Consulting's programmes are linked to current research, use proven methods, are highly interactive and produce long lasting change.

A Teleios Consulting course can allow your staff to understand, own and act upon the new business goals more quickly than you could achieve on your own.

Conclusions

We hope that this case study demonstrates how we have worked in a complex and challenging environment. We stayed true to our beliefs in the content and the process of the work when this came under intense challenge during the gaining trust phase.

We hope too that it speaks too of the bravery of the DPA in selecting our bid over other larger consultancies that are known to them and have a more public profile. We had to work sensitively with this issue.

We also hope that it demonstrates how we have successfully provided the catalyst for a shift in culture that is substantial and lasting.

If you want to know more about how Teleios Consulting can help your organisation then visit our web site at www.teleiosconsulting.com or contact us at the address below:

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