

Case Study – British Airways

Maximising the value of internal coaching

British Airways (BA) are committed to achieving a high performance leadership culture that engages colleagues at all levels and promotes world-class levels of productivity and service across their business. Their focus is on ensuring the personal development of employees and developing the critical talent needed to run the airline operation effectively, efficiently and ensure continued business success.

Developing internal coaches to ensure personal development

Back in 2011, BA invested in the development of a pool of internal coaches as part of their programme to ensure the continued development of employees. The coaches are senior leaders who manage their coaching commitments within BA whilst also managing demanding roles. The coaches initially went through a structured 6-day training with a leading business school, and have continued supervision as part of their practice.

BA’s complex business is continually evolving, and multiple changes combined with the tough economic climate had taken their toll on the focus given to coaching. The business identified a need to re-energise and encourage their coaches.

Selecting the right partner

Leigh Naylor, Leadership Consultant within BA, had been impressed by the book, “Get Ready for Coaching” by Caroline Lark. Based on academic research and in-depth practical experience, “[Get Ready for Coaching](#)” enhances executive coaching by enabling the coachee to prepare effectively to work with a coach.

As a result, Leigh initiated talks with Talent for Growth, founded by Caroline, about a solution. Leigh had recognised the challenges faced by coaches who have dual roles and are operating in difficult times. Her response was to implement a number of initiatives to demonstrate the importance placed on the role of the coaches and to improve levels of support. This project was one such initiative.

Programme objectives

Leigh identified several key objectives:

- Demonstrate the desire to invest in the on-going development of coaches
- Stretch and challenge coaches to stimulate energy and enthusiasm
- Provide an additional source of support to the coaches outside supervision
- Build on the initial training and take their skills and confidence to the next level

The solution also needed to be accessible and allow for varying shift patterns, as coaches came from different parts of the business and some had unpredictable work schedules.

The coaching programme in practice

Talent for Growth designed a series of 2-hour workshops entitled “Food for Thought” to meet the need. Topics were current and relevant to the business and included:

Coaching Leadership
Telephone Coaching
Coaching across Borders
On Boarding

Coaching Gen Y & Millennial’s
Emotional Intelligence Coaching
Career Coaching
Coaching Models

Goals

Re-energise and motivate internal coaches as a part of the continued programme to maximise their contribution to leadership development.

To ensure that coaching plays a strong role in supporting the growth and development of BA leaders.

Approach

Design and deliver a series of bespoke 2-hour workshops to provide on-going development for internal coaches.

Workshops were designed to stretch and challenge coaches, build their repertoire of tools and, importantly, build confidence.

Results

Attendance has been high and coaches report greater confidence as a result of the workshops.

Where learning has been applied, knowledge has been shared within the network of coaches to spread good practice.

Energy and commitment to coaching and to continuous professional development has grown over the duration of the project.

About British Airways

British Airways, part of International Airlines Group, is one of the world’s leading global premium airlines and the largest international carrier in the UK. The carrier has its home base at London Heathrow, the world’s busiest international airport, and flies to more than 170 destinations in 70 countries.

British Airways has a fleet of more than 280 aircraft, including the A380 and 787. The airline carries more than 40 million customers a year and serves those customers 35 million cups of tea, 36.5 million meals and 3.7 million bottles of wine.

British Airways currently has approximately 40,000 employees including 15,000 cabin crew, 3,600 pilots and 5,500 engineers.

There were 11 workshops in total. Given the limited time available, each workshop needed to be fast-paced, interactive and impactful in order to guarantee success. Caroline and senior consultant, Shelagh Smith, ran the workshops between them over a period of 12 months.

Each workshop was designed to stretch and challenge the coaches. A recurring feature of many sessions was to introduce a new tool or model, giving the coaches an opportunity to practice it during the session and get a 'taste' of its application in coaching.

Programme success

One challenge for the facilitators was the need to build rapport and trust very quickly and engage the coaches in the programme. An introductory session was added which enabled the participants to help shape the content and get to know the facilitators and each other.

Caroline Lark reflected: **"The initial introductory workshop was extremely valuable and I'd certainly want to always include that in projects such as this. It set up the programme, built trust and enabled the coaches to feel included in the shaping of the next 12 months."**

Attendance has been high, particularly given the many demands on the coaches. Feedback both to facilitators and to Leigh has been extremely positive.

Susie Kong, Corporate Programme Manager, one of the workshop participants, said: **"I am so pleased that Shelagh and Caroline are doing these modules with us. It really will help our confidence as coaches."**

Caroline Lark commented: **"Two hour workshops really can deliver impact and value if set up and delivered well. Providing good resources is key to supporting the learning. Coaching is increasingly been seen as having such potential value that finding ways to make it affordable is growing in importance. One of its merits, and what differentiates it from some other development solutions, is that it always develops both the coachee and the coach."**

"The "Food for Thought" workshops have been highly successful and benefited our coaches tremendously. The return on investment is evident in the positive feedback I have received from the coachees across the business. Caroline and her team have designed and delivered a very professional and credible programme of workshops. I put a lot of the success of these workshops down to the manner in which they have been designed and delivered. I enjoy working with Caroline and look forward to working with her more in the future."

Leigh Naylor, Leadership Consultant

"Thank you very much for the very useful session yesterday and most of all many thanks for the extra stories!

Telling stories is definitely a tool I want to build into my coaching."

Workshop participant

Get Ready for Coaching

** Now available as an eBook **

"This is the first book to offer much needed guidance to the coachee ... it should be very helpful." *Sir John Whitmore*

Whitmore

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About Talent for Growth

Talent for Growth is a global, flexible and innovative consultancy focused on developing leaders and teams to optimise business performance. We are development experts, but we are also pragmatic, business driven individuals – everything we do ties back to supporting the strategy of the organisation.

We offer:

- depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise in leadership development and team effectiveness
- a focus on collaboration and sustainable solutions
- international experience
- absolute adherence to our commitments

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