

BP Chemicals

Situation: BP Hull is the second largest manufacturer and supplier of acetic acid in the world and a leading employer in Hull. During 2004 a significant degree of rationalisation took place which resulted in a reduction in the workforce of around 30%. At the same time the decision was made to move from 'self managed teams' to a closer supervised structure which created a number of new leadership positions. There was a concern at the lack of management skills within the new team leaders and an Employee Attitude Survey that was undertaken suggested at the same time confirmed this view.

Measures were taken to rectify this situation, by BP contacting Chiumento to recruit an Interim Manager with responsibility of designing and delivering a suitable training programme to all the first line managers.

The interim programme was to assess the training needs of the team leader population across the site including the shift team leaders and design an appropriate solution.

Chiumento Interim Manager Alan Reynolds was appointed as the Learning and Development Advisor where he commented, "I was comfortable with the brief as I had had experience in working in an engineering environment from a previous assignment and was familiar with the Health & Safety and cultural issues. My business and HR background also gave me sufficient knowledge to recognise the areas of focus. I had also completed several training need analysis projects for a major bank."

Approach: Alan's first priority was to speak with a cross section of staff to gauge at first hand the size of the task and get a clearer picture of the training requirement. There were some interesting observations which would impact on the eventual solution. Shift working was a major obstacle and to ensure all the necessary managers could attend, Alan recognised that he would need to spread the training over several weeks.

Time was also a constraint - there was a general reluctance to attend lengthy extended training courses and the plant was undergoing a scheduled major maintenance shut down which would initially restrict attendance. Alan built up a good network of people who were very keen to give views and provide help – there was a very positive response to the training initiative from all levels in the organisation and managers could see that support was being provided.

The outcome of the research that Alan undertook resulted in a four module training programme of three half days and one full day workshops which were spread over three months allowing all present managers to attend. Each module was designed for a specific purpose starting with a Self Development Workshop, designed to engage people into the learning 'habit', followed by a module which provided a context of the role of team leader and included some of the key HR policies. The third module was on motivation, performance management and coaching and finally there was a half day on team building and delegation.

The delegates that attended the training were mostly 'first level' managers but several of the senior managers and wider leadership team also attended to 'brush up' on their skills and all responded extremely positively to the programme.

Results: The project proved so successful that the assignment was extended by two years to enable a further six follow-up 'master classes' to be developed - Influencing Skills, Developing Assertiveness, Presentation Skills, Time Management, Managing Change and Appraisals.

The programme is now an integral part of the training offering not just at Hull site but including the adjoining Research Centre. The modules have also been delivered at a neighbouring plant, group headquarters in Sunbury and at a subsidiary refining business in Holland. It has its own website and 'branding' – 'Managing our People' and has spawned a spin-off cultural change programme – 'Valuing our People' which was nominated for BP's prestigious 'Helios' award. The training programme has also been nominated twice for a National Training award.

Some facts:

The training initiative was part of a series of actions that were undertaken in response to the 2004 Employee Attitude Survey including a complete site job evaluation and pay review. As a result, in 2006 the latest Employee Attitude Survey improved by 14% - one of the highest increase in BP. 134 training courses have been delivered to over 310 people with 120 managers and 'trainee' managers completing the original 'Foundation' programme.

Alan concludes, "From my perspective it has been one of the most rewarding pieces of work that I have ever achieved. There was a considerable amount of research carried out in the various subjects which has built on my knowledge of management, behavioural science and psychology. As well as the training programmes I have been able to add value to several strategic initiatives including a further recent reorganisation programme. I have also helped developed others with individual and executive coaching."

Client feedback has stated that the training has provided a consistency in management development across the plant resulting in a clearer understanding of what is expected from managers going forward. There has been a general improvement in the management 'culture' with greater competence in areas such as appraisals and 'people' management.

Client Endorsement

Following an extensive site re-organisation we had an opportunity to re-engage and re-energise our line manager behavioural skills set. Many line managers were appointed to new roles with new (first time) line responsibilities or more senior line managers had extended the team management responsibilities.

It provided an ideal opportunity for an experienced L&OD manager to re-fresh life into our existing training programmes or 'create' customer focussed new programmes.

Internal progression of our own L&OD adviser combined with a broader HR organisation review had created an opportunity to look externally and breathe new life into our existing programmes .Alan was an ideal candidate ...in fact he far exceeded our expectations of what could be achieved and we significantly extended his contact. His work has been integral to the upskilling and engagement of TL's and senior Line Managers to the challenges of ' getting the best performance out of themselves and their teams'

Alan has an excellent spread of L&OD skills which he applies with great skill. He has won respect across all levels of management and his natural listening style has opened many doors. His training templates have been applied beyond our manufacturing environment and 'hold - good' in practically all operating environments and cultures. I would have no hesitation in re-engaging Alan in the future and would expect to work with him on 'one-off' issues in the future.

John Jennings; Global HR Manager, BP Acetyls