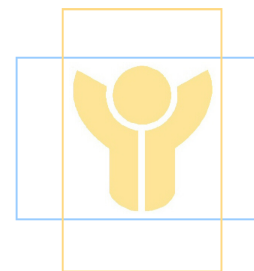


# Case Study – Crawley Borough Council Gets Winning Edge



In 2002 recently appointed Crawley Borough Council Chief Executive, Michael Coughlin created the 'Global Management Team'. This was made up of the Council's 80 or so senior managers as a key component of a programme of change and improvement at the Council and as part of preparations for a Comprehensive Performance Assessment by the Audit Commission.

With the aim of improving the Council's performance and culture, Michael and the GMT would get together quarterly for leadership, performance and management skills development, presentations from guest speakers and discussions.

From these meetings it became clear there was insufficient understanding of the concept of personal development and 'how' you think about things, with both being alien to a proportion of the staff.

## Internal Culture Review



Nicky Webber

In March 2003 Nicky Webber joined CBC as Business Support Manager in the Housing and Environment Directorate. She became part of a management group working with Michael tasked with looking at the culture within CBC, how they might need to change it for performance improvement, and what mechanisms were around to carry through such change.

The group began studying how CBC could introduce programmes to change the way the staff were thinking. They identified key areas they would need to tackle; the more obvious, such as social inclusion, diversity and equality, but also what Nicky describes as the 'softer side' – the way the team looked at culture and behaviour. "There were a number of cultural issues", Nicky explains, "people were working in 'silos', there was a lack of joined-up thinking, and there was an inconsistency in standards, attitudes and performance".

Having experienced a couple of courses on Cognitive Performance Enhancement (CPE) – developing the 'way people think about what they think about' – Nicky arranged a meeting with Michael and Richard Jackson, Partner of Mancroft International, the company that developed the original 'Winning Edge' CPE courses.

An initial half-day course was set up, as a taster for members of the GMT to experience some of the areas where Winning Edge would support the Council's performance development plans.

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## Pilot Course

In November 2004 it was followed up with a pilot course of 30 staff from two of CBC's Directorates – Housing and Environment and Resources – through a concentrated one-day programme. The nominations for the voluntary course represented a cross section of staff from all levels, based on a variety of selection criteria:

- Their current role, which make them champions of the initiative or respected influencers amongst other members of staff.
- Their aspirations, i.e. their willingness to embrace new thinking or progress within the organisation.
- Their development needs such as greater work/life balance or increased confidence and empowerment.
- They missed the original presentation to GMT.

It was recognised that most personal and business benefit would be gained if nominated staff were interested in the course's approach. A half an hour briefing was given on the aims and objectives to help staff to consider if they would like to take up the opportunity to gain a 'winning edge'.

Attitude to being selected ranged from those keen to develop and learn, to those whose outlook and thoughts were 'set in stone'.

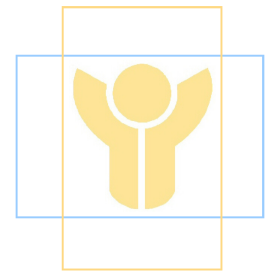
Despite fears of never having been on this type of course before, initial feedback was very positive, with the vast majority of delegates supporting the view that everyone in the Council should go through the programme.

Evaluations took place three months later in order to review the areas and degree of change. All managers reported positive change in the staff attitudes and the translation of those changes into improved performance.

As accredited Investors in People, CBC have a Course Evaluation Tool that requires managers, and those who they have nominated for courses, to agree beforehand what they both want to get out of it, and to meet immediately afterwards to review achievement against their objectives.

Three months later they met again to evaluate the sustainability of the course's output.

With the Winning Edge course, managers were able to demonstrate continued improvement in terms of distinct attitude and behaviour shifts. Comments such as "Now brings ideas and a new enthusiasm to the unit", "People around the individual have greater awareness of her role and input", and "Does not worry so much about areas he cannot influence but rather focuses on areas he can influence" came back from the managers.



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## Council Wide Roll-Out

A combined funding bid was made, driven by Nicky and the Director of Resources who had been on an open Winning Edge three-day course, proposing to roll out the course to staff across all four of the Council's Directorates. A programme was agreed to reach 375 targeted individuals from some 850 staff between May 2006 and May 2007.

25 one-day workshops took place, each with a maximum of 15 delegates made up of specific teams or a cross section of employees.

The workshops addressed four key areas – personal excellence, choice, managing work/life balance and handling change. The use of key phrases such as:

- The quality of my life is limited to the quality of my thinking.
- Goals should always be expressed in terms of what I want not what I don't want.
- Move towards thinking in teams of expecting success.
- You have to change thinking before changing behaviour help to embed the concepts in the delegates' minds.

It was a lot to pack into one day and Nicky and Mancroft worked together to fine tune the course structure and content to facilitate even greater interaction and discussion.



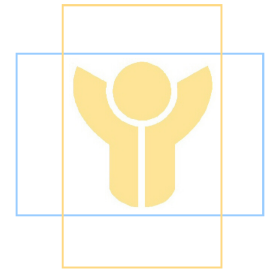
The course gets people thinking about what they want and value in their lives, and their responsibility for their actions which, in some cases, may mean people realising that they are square pegs in round holes and moving on. This however, as Richard Jackson points out, is "inevitably in the long-term interests of both the individual and the organisations".

CBC has a Culture Change and Improvement Plan in place to which feedback from the courses contributes. The plan is designed to make people feel that they have a choice, and it delivers the strong message that the Council wants people who want to work for it and are willing to work together.

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In conclusion, Nicky says that the Council now has areas that it can hold up as examples of the beneficial changes that can be achieved through the personal development workshops. "The internal culture is moving towards working together, and the significant improvements in attitudes and ownership of responsibility are being reflected in enhanced performance."



The 'acid test' for Michael comes in the form of a review of performance by the Audit Commission (March 2006), which found the Council has continued to make good progress in addressing its improvement priorities. The culture of change and the modernisation programme both continuing to develop well, with an analysis of performance indicators demonstrating an improving performance overall.

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