



Building leadership capacity to deliver tomorrow's transportation

Summary

International expansion within a highly competitive and regulated marketplace, meant this transportation business is seeing tremendous pressures on its operating model. Running both rail and bus franchises through a unionised workforce, it needed different ways to accelerate the readiness of their leaders to step up into the multi-dimensional and complex roles they required. MDV Consulting was brought in to help build their leaders' capacity to lead in more strategic and collaborate ways in order to navigate their fast-changing environments.

The Challenge

Expansion into new geographies, the rapid pace of change in transportation and the complex demands of multiple stakeholders was spearheading this international transportation company's need to create a stronger pipeline of leaders who are ready earlier to move into bigger and more involved roles. Demands on these leaders are many and difficult:

- A very competitive market requiring ideas and faster responses to stay ahead.
- International expansion required expertise to be adapted for the local culture.
- Problematic industrial relations made it difficult to foresee the clear delivery of plans.
- Changes to regulation was a constant challenge.
- Decision making had to take account of the views of varied and vocal stakeholders.
- A devolved management structure challenged the consistency of work quality and made collaboration across separate business units difficult.

Although leadership development activities had been provided previously, the company recognised it needed a different approach, one providing sustainable capacity building and giving participants the life-long learning to keep developing their capacity to think about and act differently to these challenges. They needed to strengthen leaders' capabilities to demonstrate more flexible and agile ways of working, to promote collaborative working and be comfortable with ambiguity and rapid change.



The Solution

Championed at a senior level by their Chief Executive Officer, MDV Consulting designed a modular 12 month programme enabling leaders to continue transitioning through development stages with ever increased sophistication in how they think, perceive and act on the information around them. The development journey was built around the personal development of three key areas: Cognitive, Interpersonal and Personal capacities, all essential to successfully navigate the leaders' challenges.

Applying the conditions for vertical growth

The programme was designed to create the conditions to accelerate learning and make that learning "stick". To enable transformational learning, the programme was designed to provide a disruption to participants' current thinking or 'heat experiences', promote opportunities for 'colliding perspectives' – or alternative views, as well as giving formalised support for participants to develop new and improved ways of thinking. Based on research by Nick Petrie (Center for Creative Learning), these three conditions are highlighted as key to accelerating and promoting lasting development.

Understanding the starting point

Each individual's development journey started with a 'vertical assessment', facilitated by experts from MDV Consulting. Information gleaned from 360-degree feedbacks and psychometric tools consisting of the Leadership Development Profile (LDP) and Cognitive Process Profile (CPP), was supplemented by in-depth

feedback and personal development planning sessions carried out by specially trained vertical coaches. Those psychometrics were used to give an assessment of a person's cognitive preferences and 'Action Logic', or how they make sense and respond to situations around them.

Reports produced following the feedback sessions were then explored in a three-way meeting between the participants, their line manager and the HR representative, to explore the opportunities and support required to address their development needs and aspirations.

Developing the capabilities

The 'formal' element of the programme started with a three-day workshop attended by the entire cohort. The aim was to:

- Discuss the business challenges and what different responses might be needed.
- Understand the theory of adult development and what underpins the different development stages so they relate this to their own stage and needs.
- Identify with the capacities of 'Cognitive', 'Interpersonal' and 'Personal' and what these look like as capabilities demonstrated in the workplace.
- Learn tools to strengthen their capabilities to address complex challenges in today's uncertain and fast-changing world. These tools equipped leaders to take multiple perspectives, ask different questions, make decisions in uncertain situations, design safe to fail experiments and deepen other capabilities.
- Build a cohesive group to promote cross-department collaboration and idea generation.

The programme design focuses on helping participants acquire "learning to learn skills". Content enables the learning of practices to develop a growth mindset, take an open attitude and be more receptive to new knowledge.

Development activities helped participants to:

- Learn to seek and take account of multiple perspectives.
- Use action inquiry to gain a more thorough view of the landscape of a problem.
- Use problems as opportunities to learn from.

Outcomes to date

The programme is still in its early stages with further modules delivered over the 12 month period. However, participant feedback to date is good, "Best programme so far", with the development seen as a different approach to previous activities.

Participants have praised the transparency and individual focus of the process. They appreciate the focus on their current stage of development and how their individual learning needs are matched to the business opportunities and challenges they face.

The client gained valuable insight from a holistic view of participants' assessments. This highlighted the centre of gravity for the whole group, allowing a programme to be designed that offered participants just the right amount of stretch and support.

Collaboration is already being enhanced across the business as a result of new connections made – participants were heard to say, "Let's put in a day in our calendars and talk about this more."

What next?

Three remaining modules are scheduled to happen over the following 10 months of the programme and will focus on helping individuals develop 'Cognitive', 'Interpersonal' and 'Personal' capacities to fulfil the full requirements of their leadership roles.

For more information please contact:

[Mike Vessey](#)

MDV

Leadership and talent consultants



Read related articles at:

www.mdvconsulting.co/experience/articles