DEVELOPING MANAGEMENT MUSCLE

By Carolyn May, Stillmuchtooffer Ltd.

The term 'Management Development,' if not always uttered in hushed tones, is at least written with obligatory capital letters. It is so established as a concept that you can even do an NVQ in it, let alone a Phd. That really gives it the stamp of authority. Yet go back only 60 years and we find that such a term barely existed, well not in its contemporary incarnation anyway.

Track back even further and ask whether managers were 'developed' in the woollen mills of Victorian times. Of course they weren't. Knowledge of the processes involved and the ability to direct the workers were enough to qualify you as a taskmaster. So why is it that today's managers are expected to have a wide range of clearly defined 'skills' in addition to their specialised knowledge?

Well partly because the workers are no longer 'directed.' Instead modern managers have to 'negotiate targets.' In order to succeed at this they need emotional intelligence, not just academic or vocational intelligence. They have to be leaders, mentors and coaches. They are expected to be empathetic, excellent team players, articulate communicators, creators of productive working relationships, innovators and incisive decision makers, to name but a few of the prerequisite qualities. So what if these paragons lack one or more of these attributes? How are they to be developed? It is straightforward enough to deliver courses on new quality systems or risk assessments but how exactly do you teach sensitivity?

The answer, for many companies, lies in personal self-assessment instruments of which there is a wide array. Some are old, familiar friends; others are new kids on the block. Most operate through a questionnaire, analysis and feedback from an expert, qualified practitioner. Normally the initial impact of this, often expensive process, is to encourage self-indulgent introspection, followed by an inappropriate curiosity about the performance of colleagues. A knock on benefit is that the approach makes those very colleagues nicer people to work with. After all self-awareness dilutes arrogance doesn't it?

Ask any manager about management development training and you will find similar stories. They will tell you that they have been analysed to death. You name it; they have been personality profiled with it. And what have they done with their newly developed self-awareness? In all likelihood they have tucked it away in a filing cabinet. So when the next training session comes along there will be a sense of, 'Been there, done that.'

So were the personal assessment tools really of any use to the management team? In my view they probably were - at the time. It is always useful to place yourself under a personal microscope. Self-examination is good for the soul as well as for the performance review procedure. But how do you ensure that the tools are of lasting value and how can you guarantee that individual personal development leads directly to sustained company growth?

By asking three important questions: Are all the instruments the same? How will you measure the improvements? And most important of all: How will you ensure ongoing value for money once the training session has ended?

Since all companies are unique, the second and third questions can only be answered through partnership action planning, analysis and evaluation between the client and the training company. I know Einstein stated, 'Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted' and of course with personal development there are many intangibles but despite this most organisations are going to demand, quite rightly, at least some evidence that expensive training has been of value.

However, I can answer the first question here. No, all instruments are not the same. They operate like any other tool; you need the right one for the right job. You don't want to be cutting hay grass with a lawn mower. So either choose a training company that offers a range of tools or choose an instrument that works like a Swiss army knife. Such a multi-purpose tool is the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI®).

In my experience the HBDI®, to paraphrase the famous Heineken advertisement, 'reaches the parts other tools cannot reach.' Widely used

to improve performance in Fortune 100 companies in the States, these organisations report superb, measurable Return on Investment (ROI) as a direct result of applying wholebrain® thinking systems throughout their organisations. The Herrmann model works through analysing thinking preferences so that individuals and teams are encouraged to work out a whole new operatus modi, scrutinising their own strengths and areas for improvement and working out for themselves how best to improve results. In doing so conflicts are resolved, relationships forged and teams bonded together. Personal growth is important but after the dust has settled on the interactive games of the Away Day, managing directors have to ask themselves whether that usefulness to individuals has translated itself into lasting value for the company itself. After working with the HBDI®, companies report broad based benefits such as increased revenue, and culture change as well as more specific gains related to target markets and focused strategies. The flexibility and scope of the HBDI® provides real, measurable value which raises that bottom line, reduces costs and improves efficiency.

So to be sure of obtaining maximum value from management development training, even when using a power tool like the HBDI® as a catalyst for transformation, it is essential to follow the Stillmuchtooffer 3Rs framework.

Rationale: Select the instrument that will provide you with the necessary outcomes.

Rigour: Plan how improvements will be measured

Results: Action plan to ensure integration and continued use of the new learning

Following this approach will give you what you really, really want: the fourth R - Return on Investment. And to cap it all, your managers will have been truly massaged into shape.

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