

# Case Study 2

## Role Knowledge Gap Analysis and Coaching for Improvement – UK Water Company

### Summary

The client, a UK Water Company, had recognised that after a period of refreshing their management structure and then reorganisation of their operational teams, there was a business risk associated with a potential lack of experience and consistency in their key knowledge areas amongst operational staff. These key knowledge areas related to:

- An awareness of Regulatory and Legislative operating requirements (water quality, environmental, health and safety plus customer service based)
- An awareness of Company Safe Systems of Work
- An awareness of Company Standard Operating Procedures
- An awareness of Company specific operational Key Performance Indicators

This programme of work took place over a period of around 8 months split into an initial design phase, benchmark assessment phase, coaching and mentoring phase then a reporting and ongoing assessment phase. The design phase included working with the Company's business, training and development leads to refine scope and methods of assessment and delivery. The benchmark assessment phase was run by the business training and development team. The coaching and mentoring were delivered by a team of Learning and Development specialists and the ongoing assessment model was then taken on by the business as the "business as usual" approach to ensure continuous improvement.

The programme resulted in improvements in internal training delivery, coached delivery of individual personal development plans, a reduction in lost time incidents, reduction in work in progress backlogs and improved Company confidence in the consistency of key knowledge across the business unit.

### What was the aim of the Programme?

The programme had four primary aims:

1. To provide confidence to Company senior management by ensuring a consistent level of knowledge and understanding of critical operational, regulatory and legislative requirements in the identified operational business department.
2. To assist in instilling a culture of self-responsibility for personal development.
3. To drive an uplift in operational performance and customer service by ensuring a wider awareness of requirements plus consistent application of Standard Operating Procedures and Safe Systems of Work
4. To support team leaders and managers with coaching/mentoring from external, seasoned operational experts in a way to help them establish themselves and grow into their new roles.

The programme also had three secondary aims of:

1. Garnering feedback on the effectiveness of current training delivery in business-critical areas
2. Identifying any consistent themes of knowledge shortfall
3. Identifying any issues arising from the business need to operate across several widely spread geographical territories each with distinct operational network histories.



## Who was the target audience?

The target audience consisted of directly employed members of the Company's water network operations team. This included repair and maintenance work crews, leakage inspectors, network inspectors, pressure reducing valve technicians, team leaders and area team managers. This included leakage inspectors, network inspectors, pressure reducing valve technicians, team leaders and area team managers.

## What did the programme involve?

The programme used a phased development and delivery approach to build outputs designed to business needs.

### Phase 1

The aims of the programme were refined and agreed with the Project Sponsor. Once the aims were refined a methodology was developed and signed off that would enable the delivery team to:

- Understand and capture the business knowledge and competency requirements for individual roles within the target department,
- Benchmark current performance against those role requirements
- Provide a mechanism to deliver individualised personal development plans including coaching support to engage with and take these plans forward
- Provide an assessment of progress against individual personal development plans
- Provide a mechanism for the business to adopt the assessment of progress as part of business as usual



### Phase 2

The Company's training and development leads worked with target business department to brief and then deliver the role specific initial set of assessments. These were computer-based questionnaires using a variety of formats such as picture questions, true and false statements and multiple-choice options across role relevant topic areas that included operational practices, ability to access existing role support resources, relevant regulatory needs plus customer and legislative drivers and requirements. Everyone was provided with feedback on this benchmark assessment through their line manager as part of the existing one-to-one process. Feedback included areas identified as strengths as well as weaknesses and guidance towards improvement.

### Phase 3

Every member of staff that undertook the initial assessment was provided with a one-to-one coaching and assessment session by an external Learning and Development operational expert. This expert resource consisted of selected seasoned senior managers who could bring industry expertise from outside the commissioning Company. The commissioning Company felt that external resource would bring a valuable dimension in terms of shared external experience, a coach that was independent from the Company so would engender openness to the coaching discussions and a demonstrable commitment to investment in individual development.

For the repair and maintenance teams, inspectors and technicians the coaching sessions consisted of a half day using the initial assessment results review as a starting point. For team leaders and managers, the coaching sessions consisted of a full day with operational observation built into the day in addition to the initial assessment results review. Both types of coaching session included discussion and agreement on specific areas for development within the individual's role.

### Phase 4

The final phase of the project consisted of reporting and forward planning. It provided a matrix by operational team area and role type of the initial individual Red, Amber Green ranking against the role specific knowledge and competency areas plus the Key Performance Indicators. A review of progress between the initial assessment and the coaching session, plus feedback on the post coaching assessment. This feedback was structured into individual personal development plans that identified, amongst other mitigations, any additional formal and informal training requirements. Feedback on issues identified through the coaching sessions with existing business process, training and communications was also provided. The model questionnaire used for the initial assessments was then further utilised to measure progress and improvement.

## What were the outcomes?

Feedback from participants was that, although initially sceptical of the Company's motivation, they found the process incredibly useful. The opportunity for coaching and gaining an external perspective on performance and challenges was felt to be key and provided useful industry context for a number of the consistent issues identified. The opportunity to take time out from their day to day and focus on personal development needs was welcomed. The Company were able to identify:

- Improvements in how they undertook their internal communications,
- Improvements for training relevance and delivery effectiveness in specific areas
- Rectification of previously unidentified impacts of business processes on the ability for teams to perform leading to a reduction in the backlog of work in progress
- Improvement in lost time incidents resulting from more consistent awareness of and application of Standard Operating Procedures and Safe Systems of Work.



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