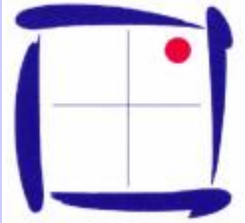


Case Study:

National Blood Service

Knowledge and Skills Framework



The Challenge

When the National Blood Service (NBS) modernised its approach to processing donors, by redesigning core processes, they found that they needed to develop the skills of their staff. The roles of many groups of staff changed significantly, and the NBS management found that they did not have good information about their peoples' skills, experience and knowledge. This was causing difficulty in taking strategic decisions and causing unease and resentment with their people.

The NBS needed to know:

- Ø what skills and knowledge levels were necessary for each job role
- Ø how their staff rated against these ideal models
- Ø 'global skills gaps'
- Ø learning opportunities for individuals
- Ø show a pathway for career progression
- Ø the criteria for excellence in a person's current role.

The Solution – Developing a Knowledge and Skills Framework

A project team was formed to understand the extent of the gaps in skills and knowledge for each particular job role. Once this was completed and analysed, the team would put in place development plans and implement learning opportunities for staff on an individual, and group-wide, basis.

The Vine Project Team, as it was known, asked ValueAdding.com Limited to assist them throughout the project. ValueAdding.com has experience of implementing Knowledge and Skills Frameworks, and has an approach to working collaboratively with clients that fitted with the culture of the NBS and Vine Project Team.

The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF), combined with the NHS Leadership Qualities Framework, was used as a basis for the NBS Framework. However, some tailoring was necessary to make it fit comfortably with the NBS situation and extend to senior management and medical roles.

ValueAdding.com's approach was highly participative through the frequent use of cross-functional workshops incorporating different levels of the organisation. The benefits of this approach were:

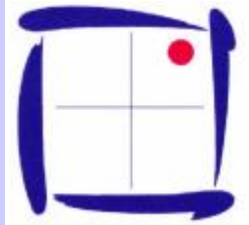
- ü Communication to all groups of staff regarding the project
- ü Involvement of all grades and job roles to achieve better quality outputs
- ü Increased acceptance of the final conclusions
- ü Improved decision making
- ü Linking with the wider NHS initiative

ValueAdding.com assisted with each part of the project, without taking ownership away from the NBS Project Team.

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What Was Done

A questionnaire was developed and sent out to all 3,000 staff in the Services to Donors Directorate. This was a large, comprehensive document that staff filled in themselves and returned to a central processing facility. To assist people in completing the questionnaire, and increase the response rate, the NBS trained 40 'Vine Champions'. These people championed the project in their Regions with the help of line management, and were on-hand to answer any queries that arose.

The following steps were followed:

1. Conduct initial interviews and review role descriptions
2. Design and populate KSF framework (workshops)
3. Agree skills levels for each job grouping (workshops)
4. Pilot and amend questionnaire (group working)
5. Train Vine Champions (training workshops)
6. Send out questionnaire and process returns
7. Analyse data and report back
8. Interpret results and prioritise action areas (workshops)
9. Plan and implement development programmes (workshops)

Results

The results of the project showed that there were some fundamental skills and knowledge gaps for all roles. One of these was in the area of leadership. Many other gaps showed up for individual roles. The Vine Project Team linked these gaps back to the strategic plan for the NBS - 'donor loyalty' and 'customer service'.

Although some of the results were uncomfortable for many specialist roles and senior management, they were looked upon in a positive light. At least there was now the information upon which to take some rational decisions about significant investment in training and development.

The team was adamant that these shouldn't be just classroom training courses, but a mixture of several learning experiences in the form of 'blended learning' solutions. These would include some classroom activity, but also involve e-learning packages, mentoring, secondments, reflective learning, assignments and one-to-one coaching.

A group of training professionals sat down with the list of priority needs that had emerged at the previous workshops and started to draw up proposals for them. These proposals were put to the Vine Project Team and accepted in their entirety. What was impressive was the fact that each development suggestion could then be tracked back through the data to a 'need' which in turn was part of a skills and knowledge gap allied to a strategic requirement.

ValueAdding.com supported the NBS throughout this project.