

CASE STUDY

UK colleges transform leadership in OD project



A subsidiary of General Physics (UK) Ltd
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Challenge

How do you take a further education college that is an average performer and mobilise the impetus, capacity and the desire to transform itself into a centre of excellence?

Bath Consultancy Group was selected to initially work with three colleges who were identified by and where the senior management team of each college were keen to participate.

“The question is: how can we as leaders move from a position where we’re talking about problems and what other people should do, to talking about solutions and what our individual actions are in those solutions - what should we do?”

Principal of the college

Solution

The programme focussed on developing the leadership within the college and importantly helping to shift their own capacity to improve.

Bath Consultancy Group has been working with two middle performing colleges. The key objectives were:

- Accelerate the progression from satisfactory to good and then onto excellent, in particular shifting the college’s own capacity for improvement
- Raise achievement levels that feed economic prosperity
- Achieve better OFSTED ratings
- Create a greater educative capacity amongst the staff leading to an enhanced experience for learners
- Develop better local partnerships on skills and economic improvement



LEARNINGS

“We are delighted that the OFSTED inspection has validated the shifts we have seen happening on the ground... it’s a tribute to the willingness of managers at all levels to speak their truth, hear the feedback from others and take responsibility for positive change.”

Bath Consultancy Group

Outcome

September 2008 - The latest OFSTED inspection of the college has praised the strong leadership of the principal and senior managers recognising their aim of becoming an outstanding college over the next four years.

‘The college is accurate in its assessment that leadership and management are good across the college. Strong leadership from the principal and senior managers has brought about much improvement since the last inspection. Senior managers and governors have set a very clear strategic direction, which is well understood and shared by staff. Managers have set challenging targets to achieve the aim of becoming an outstanding college over the next four years.’ OFSTED 2008

The college, which had previously been deemed satisfactory, is part of a pilot project initiated the former Chief Executive of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership. For the past six months, Bath Consultancy Group has been working with the college to accelerate the change from a satisfactory college towards an outstanding establishment.

The Bath Consultancy Group team, led by John Watters, provided just 30 consultancy days support to the college, helping us to align our leadership and organisational culture. The college used the Organisation Workshop as a catalyst for developing leadership potential at middle and senior levels in the college.

An independent company, using both quantifiable and qualitative criteria for assessing change, evaluated Bath Consultancy Group’s contribution to the college’s journey to excellence. Some of the significant shifts that had taken place were:

- Moving beyond functional silo based working to collective cross functional and cross level working
- Moving away from a top driven organisation to more distributed leadership in which people hold an awareness of, and need to work with, different perspectives
- Growing the habit of ‘saying your truth’, including owning up to vulnerability, whilst also reducing the tendency to blame others, both within and beyond the leadership team

- Releasing potential and experimentation at different levels to build a contagious appetite for improvement
- Making learning not just classroom based but an integral part of leading effectively in the moment
- Switching from habitually problem focused conversations to more solution focused ones in which appreciation and asking questions is a key feature

Bath Consultancy Group has just completed work with a second FE college and will be starting a third college shortly.

“Bath Consultancy provided an excellent opportunity for us to consider our approach to leadership throughout the college. With their help we have embarked on a journey to transform our college culture.”

Principal of the college