

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council - Measuring and Developing Emotional Intelligence

"Developing people skills really is at the heart of management and leadership. If I were asked to name the top six managers in this authority and the top six leaders of people, it would be the same list. But it's probably the most difficult area to train managers in. We need people with good interpersonal skills, the ability to communicate the Council's expectations, people who are good listeners and people who can use a flexible range of approaches in any given situation. We need managers who can create an environment which is not 'risk averse', where people are prepared to take calculated risks to achieve improvements and not feel afraid to make mistakes. In the future we will need managers who can achieve results through motivating and encouraging others not by simply using the traditional autocratic style of leadership."
Graham Heywood, Chief Executive.

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, a large local authority (11,000 employees) in the North West has begun a management development programme that features a range of components to equip its managers for the 21st Century. The authority is keenly aware of the importance of leadership and people management skills and has included a computer-based 360 degree Emotional Intelligence Profile and supporting development workshops to enhance its managers understanding of self and their ability to interact effectively with team members, customers and other managers. For further information on this case study contact [Jo Lloyd](#), Corporate Learning and Development Manager on 0151-934-3391

Situation

The Chief Executive's views on leadership are strongly supported by Alan Moore, Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environmental Services who joined the authority after many years with the retail chain, ASDA: "Leadership is important at all levels in my directorate. Over the years, we've thinned out the management tiers. We have to move quickly and show that we can achieve the goals we've been set. For example, we rely on a lot of funding from the European Union and central government. This always involves targets and timescales. If we're going to achieve these, it's very important to get managers at all levels to action plan, take decisions and be accountable for those decisions. I can't delegate unless I have the confidence that that will happen. Our managers need to be robust, have stamina and a great deal of tactical awareness. This means they have to understand themselves, their own strengths and limitations and the repertoire they have available.

"We're also involved in a lot of capacity building through partnerships with other organisations like the Regional Development Agency, police and fire authorities. Positive working relationships are key to this. Honesty, transparency and trust are all qualities we must instil in our staff."

Management and leadership development sets a big agenda for the authority and it's one that Jo Lloyd (pictured right), Corporate Learning and Development Manager is acutely conscious of: "A number of things in the recent past, including a Society of Local Authority Chief Executives' (SOLACE) review of training in the Borough, made it clear that a co-ordinated, corporate, approach to training in general, and management development in particular, is vital. We have made progress. I can remember the days when managers thought that if they were asked to go on training, it must mean they'd done something wrong! We moved on from there to a situation where there were a lot of management development activities going on, but they were pretty much 'one-offs', with little forward thinking, co-ordination or follow-up. I was worried that the Council would be looking for a 'quick fix', but what we need now is a strategic programme that meets corporate and individual needs and helps managers to develop and apply the necessary skills over the long term."

Jo was aware that there were a number of issues that the programme had to address. Some of these were short-term but high priority, such as addressing the high level of sickness absence in the Borough or enabling managers to make greater use of information technology. Others were broader with longer-term implications, such as raising overall management competence and skills.

Process

Jo and her team set about designing the management development programme. "Use of IT was particularly important," explains Jo. "We have quite a number of managers with computers in their offices, basically gathering dust. They don't feel confident to use them. This means they're not being as efficient in their jobs as they could be. It also means they probably don't appreciate the potential that IT has for their area of responsibility. HR Management was also high priority. Sickness absence had been picked up in our first Best Value Review. The levels were quite high, and this was definitely affecting productivity. Managers either didn't understand the policies and procedures or they didn't think it was part of their job to apply them. That was really just the tip of the iceberg. There were a lot of other HR procedures that they also needed training in.

"When it comes to developing all-round management competence and skills, we had had a good experience of using MAP (Management Assessment of Proficiency) in the past - 48 senior managers had been through it in the late 1990s and their evaluation of MAP was positive, although there were no follow up activities to address the identified deficiencies. We wanted to use MAP again, this time with the follow-up workshops. However, we felt there was more involved than just competences. I became more and more convinced that skills and behaviours - the way you manage and lead - were just as important."

This realisation led Jo, who was already accredited in the use of psychometric testing to investigate what types of personality profiles might be appropriate. Two in particular seemed relevant. The '16 PF5' is a well established personality test - now updated to be administered and analysed using software - and provides information about a manager's preferences and typical styles in approaching a range of different situations and tasks. The second was the 'Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire: Managerial (EIQ:M)' developed by Professor Victor Dulewicz and Dr Malcolm Higgs. This questionnaire - also available as a computer application - covers seven elements of Emotional Intelligence:

- Self-awareness
- Emotional resilience
- Motivation
- Interpersonal sensitivity
- Influence
- Intuitiveness
- Conscientiousness

"Emotional intelligence is all about using your understanding of emotions, in yourself and others, to deal effectively with people and problems in a way that reduces anger and hostility, develops a collaborative effort and produces creative energy. Used properly, emotional intelligence can develop managers who can:

- listen with empathy
- give effective feedback
- create a positive, inclusive climate
- manage conflict
- foster openness and a no-blame culture"

"I thought the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire would be really useful in helping managers to get to grips with the personal and interpersonal skills they needed," says Jo. "If we could make them more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in these areas, we could then provide workshops and one-to-one coaching to help them to develop further. The strength of the EIQ:M is that it can be used in a 360 degree way. We try to make sure that the questionnaire is completed not just by the participant, but also by their line manager, two peers and by two people they manage. That way we get a more rounded view, and we can see the differences between how a person sees themselves and how they are seen by others."

Jo and her colleagues put together a programme that would consist of the following stages:

Stage 1 - Assessment

- Introductory briefing
- Skills assessment - IT applications covering Windows NT, Word 97, Access 97, Excel 97, PowerPoint 97 and Internet Explorer 5.
- HR Management Testing - currently focusing on Managing Absence.
- Financial Management Testing (not yet fully developed).
- Personality Profiling - the 16PF5.
- Emotional Intelligence Profiling - the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire: Managerial.
- Managerial Competence Profiling - Management Assessment of Proficiency.

Stage 2 - Feedback

- All participants to receive written notification of their results for the Skills Assessments and the Financial and HR Management Assessments.
- All participants receive one-to-one feedback from a Corporate Learning and Development Officer on their managerial proficiency, personality profile and emotional intelligence profile.

Stage 3 - Learning and Development Action Planning

- All participants with their line managers will meet with a Corporate Learning and Development Officer to agree a Learning and Development Review Action Plan to address the issues identified from the assessment stage.

Stage 4 - Development

- Participants will be able to choose either the 'Accredited Route' (for managers who do not wish to pursue a management qualification, but would prefer to undertake managerial proficiency modules as part of an Action Learning Set) or the 'Qualification Route' (for managers who would prefer to follow the Chartered Management Institute's 'Competent Manager' programme).
- IT Competence - leading to the European Computer Driving Licence.
- HR and Financial Management Competence - accreditation in each of the HR and financial policies and procedures.

Stage 5 - Reassessment

- All participants to be reassessed for managerial proficiency and emotional intelligence profiling no later than two years after the initial assessments.

Stage 6 - Ongoing Learning and Development

- To encourage participants to regularly review how they are performing in the workplace, all participants will be entitled to one set of emotional intelligence 360° feedback profiling each year
- Participants will be encouraged to register for and use the Institute of Management's "smart Continuing Professional Development" scheme that is available online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year
- Participants will maintain a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) logbook detailing their ongoing learning and development, in particular their use of Sefton's Policies and Procedures (as detailed earlier)
- As participants progress through the "management ranks", they will be encouraged to take further qualifications appropriate to their level of responsibility and accountability. Such needs will be dealt with through the Learning and Development Review Scheme with applications submitted on the Learning and Development Needs Application Forms to the Corporate Learning and Development Unit for scheduling as appropriate.

"We thought about including 'leadership' explicitly in the programme, but in the end we wanted to keep it simple and stick to the term 'management' that we thought would be more widely understood. But there's a lot of leadership in there, particularly in the Emotional Intelligence Profiling and Development", reports Jo.

Jo and her colleagues were keen to roll the new programme out across the Borough. However, budget restraints at the time made this impossible. There was also a case for testing the programme in a more limited way before it went council-wide. This has led to a pilot programme involving 11 managers in the Development and Environmental Services Directorate which started in October 2001.

Alan Moore, the Strategic Director responsible, was very supportive of the personality and emotional intelligence profiling in particular.

"When I worked for ASDA, we used a lot of personality profiling. Some people do very well at interviews, but when they take up their post, you can be in for a disappointment. They have the professional skills in their own discipline but they can't lead people. More objective tests like these can identify their strengths and weaknesses.

"I am a strong believer in succession planning. We need to bring forward and reward the right people. But you need to know where their strengths and weaknesses lie and then give them development that is more tailored to their needs, not just send them off on courses."

Outcomes

The eleven managers, who range in level from Assistant Director to Team Leader, are now in Stage 4 of the pilot programme - the Development Phase - and have almost completed four development workshops. These have focused on:

- Thinking Clearly and Analytically
- Disciplining and Counselling
- Listening and Organising
- Emotional Intelligence

An interim evaluation of the programme is extremely positive. The majority of the participants have found the personality profiling, emotional intelligence profiling and MAP either 'useful' or 'very useful'. The profiles plus the follow-up workshops, according to the managers, have brought about some real changes in their behaviour and interactions with the people they lead. Some examples are quoted below:

- "Trying to listen more and talk less and give people more space"
- "More aware of my own behaviour and that of other people"
- "More reflective on what I do on a day-to-day basis and think more about how I manage situations and people"
- "Trying to be more rational to ensure I don't become stressed or over-react to difficult situations"
- "Set aside time to reflect on key issues and decisions - analyse process and results, set targets"
- "Trying to be more positive and accepting set-backs will happen from time to time - maintaining performance despite set-backs"
- "Trying to be better prepared and make less intuitive decisions and responses"
- "Adopting a more sensitive approach in dealing with others"

Two of the participating managers provide further insights based on their experiences.

Sue Tydesley, Team Leader for Development Control South, is new to Sefton having joined the authority more or less when the pilot programme began. "I had been working for West Lancashire as a case worker. I was pleased to get this job, but was worried about moving into a management role. Did I know enough about management and managing people? We have a lot of targets to meet - approving planning applications - and in my new role I would have to get results through other people.

"The personality profile has made me much more aware of myself. It's identified characteristics I hadn't been aware of. It has shown that I am very good at dealing with change and I'm more tolerant of disorder than others.

Both of those things can be good in my situation. But it has also shown that I am more trusting of other people than the average person. I need to think about this when I am dealing with others.

"The emotional intelligence part has been very useful. I have always felt that a manager should be good at people skills. People have to enjoy working with you, and for you, and they have to feel valued, if you're going to get results. Having done the profile, I am now reading about emotional intelligence and trying to put the principles into practice. I am reassured that there are different approaches to managing people and that you need to use different styles with different situations and individuals to get the outcome you want.

"The IT part has been invaluable. To be honest, when I joined the authority I had no IT skills at all. It had passed me by. I didn't even bother to do the assessment because I knew I wouldn't pass it. Now I am regularly using Word and I am planning to use PowerPoint for presentations.

"What's also been useful about the programme is that it mixes people from different management levels. It's been very helpful for me to be in a group with more senior managers. It has given me the opportunity to learn from their knowledge and experience. The disadvantage has been that I am the only woman on the programme and new to the authority, but I've been told this won't happen again."

Nigel Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Technical Services (pictured right)-responsible for engineering, building maintenance, architecture, drainage and security - is at the other end of the management spectrum. He has been with Sefton for 14 years, having previously worked as a project manager in the private sector. "In my experience, the private sector is better at promoting people on management merit rather than because of their technical background. Local authorities tend to promote people into management because they are good at their discipline, not necessarily because they can manage. That can leave a big gap in their abilities. It doesn't have to be that way. People could be learning management skills at quite an early stage in their careers, for example when they become team leaders.

"I joined the programme not because I thought I had any particular deficiencies but because I wanted to be better at what I do. The personality and emotional intelligence profiling was quite intriguing. I understand a lot more now about the kind of person I am and how other people perceive me. The way I may try to manipulate others is exposed. It has definitely revealed things I can change, but it takes work.

"The whole process has helped me to understand other people better - why they do certain things and how they react. I know a lot more now about how I should present myself and use different aspects of my personality to get the best out of a situation. Sometimes I have to temper my views to get things to happen. I realise that I have to understand the effect I have on others and be



more flexible. Sometimes I have to stop using a particular tactic and try something else instead of just blundering on.

"I think these kind of skills are absolutely vital to developing leadership. If a corporate budget isn't available I would be prepared to put departmental money into getting more of my managers on to this programme. I believe in it that much.

"Networking has also been useful. You realise you have the same problems and the same barriers as your opposite numbers in other departments. You don't just feel you're sat in a box on your own. We're all coming up with some really good ideas and sharing good practice."

Future

Given the success of the pilot, Jo and her colleagues are very much hoping that the Sefton Management Development Programme will go corporate. That will depend on budgetary decisions, in particular establishing a Management Development Officer post to take greater responsibility for the Assessment Stage which is the most resource intensive.

The Chief Executive, Graham Haywood is supportive: "We need to make sure everyone at Chief Officer and equivalent level - that's at least 60 or 70 - and a good raft of people below that have the full range of corporate management and leadership skills. We can build on the very good work that Jo and her colleagues have started."