LEADERSHIP CASE STUDY

Background
The Chivas Brothers Manager Development programme consists of a series of specific modules of learning accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management. The programme was initiated in 2009 to:

- identify and develop the skills of potential managers - thereby guaranteeing a robust succession plan;
- hone the leadership and interpersonal skills of senior and middle managers.

The programme was designed to develop the leadership capacity of managers at 3 levels:

- Potential Managers (Level 3)
- Chivas Managers 1 – Team leaders, line managers (Level 4)
- Chivas Managers 2 – Senior managers (Level 5)

The Leadership Programme
Forum Interactive developed a range of interventions embedded at specific points in the programme to support the learning process. These experiential learning activities are designed to engage participants in applying theory in a practical, dynamic setting using interactive stories, supported by group work and coaching to:

- help leaders see how theory works in practice;
- enable leaders to see the consequences of their actions and behaviours;
- provide a safe, blame free platform where participants can test leadership styles;
- encourage managers to ask questions, debate and share experience.
Interactive Stories
We created a series of stories in the form of live action scenarios at the heart of which were three fictional characters; a Production Manager, Section Manager and Production Line Supervisor who worked in a fictional electronics company. Participants were drawn into the learning process, and could easily engage with the events played out in front of them.

A specific scenario was created for each management group level.
Example 1

3.1 Level 3 – Potential Managers:
Scenario:
The Section Manager has been recently promoted from the position of Production Line Supervisor. This promotion brings added responsibilities but also requires a behavioral change, primarily the need to enforce her seniority on the Production Line Supervisor— a former colleague.
In this particular scenario the junior member of staff has a hostile reaction to the demands of the new Section Manager, demonstrating that change can be met with resistance. This change of situation presents a real challenge to the character involved – she requires a different mind set and a different set of interpersonal skills.

Learning & benefits:
The Level 3 scenario was about managing change and handling new, sometimes unexpected, responsibilities. The session demonstrated the impact of leadership style/behavior on junior members of staff, particularly those who are resisting change. At certain points in the drama, the facilitator would rewind the action. Participants were encouraged to ‘coach’ the actors towards a more helpful conclusion. By testing different leadership styles and seeing a variety of outcomes new leadership skills were learnt.
Managers also came out with a deeper understanding of how to handle a similar situation in their working lives.
The session also stimulated debate, and encouraged participants to open up. Many had varying views as to the correct approach to the situation which encouraged people to ask questions, reflect on how they act and behave and how they could do things more effectively.

Linda Herkes from Chivas Brothers comments:
“Many were apprehensive at the start, but very quickly bought into the process. This was largely down to the believability of the Live Action scenario. The audience were only allowed to interact with the actors during the session, and we put a lot of input into the scenario based on real life experiences. It was clear the audience could relate to what they were seeing.”

Linda continues:
“Change is a fact of life in any organisation, but few managers are trained how to manage it. The Live Action scenario in this session clearly showed that it is not always up to the senior manager to make an adjustment when a relationship has gone sour. In this case, the section manager must also make changes to his/her behavior when dealing with his boss and the sales supervisor.”
Example 2
3.3. Level 5 - Chivas Managers 2
In this scenario, participants were asked to coach actors in role.
The brief was to give a performance review, but the actors were often difficult and challenging. The whole process was put on video for managers to take away and study in their own time.

Learning and Benefits
These coaching sessions were designed to encourage managers to break away from a traditional ‘telling’ style towards a more inclusive, interactive ‘coaching’ style.

Linda comments:
“Coaching is a key part of our leadership development programme and proved a particularly useful tool for senior managers. Using Live Action theatre, we were able to up the ante and put some of the managers under pressure. We don’t necessarily expect them to face difficult team members every day, but by doing so in a safe, controlled environment, they take away new skills sets that could prove useful in the future.”

Feedback
After each event, Chivas Brothers collected feedback from participants to gauge their reaction and measure outcomes. Many commented on how realistic the scenarios were, and how they provided an effective learning platform based on self reflection and sharing common experiences.

Participant Quotes:
“I could relate to the actors because I actively find myself in these situations in my working life. The content was very true to life”.

“Excellent training session. The use of actors brought it to life and made it more enjoyable, more realistic and easier to relate to the situation.”

“I really enjoyed the interactive role-playing element of the course - it really focused attention on leadership behaviors”

“This session demonstrated how different leadership styles can be used to achieve the final result.”

Linda comments:
“By coaching the actors, our managers were able to test their leadership skills, and see the consequences of their actions. There is no other training tool that provides a better learning outcome.”

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