

team talk

News from the office

Restructure

We have created a new role of Senior Consultant. This will increase our capacity to focus on client relationships and business outcomes, and we're pleased to have promoted Simon Merrell and Katie Scott into these roles, giving them greater responsibility and more ownership for client relationships.

Team day

At our last team day we used MBTI® to explore our relationships, working styles, and how this impacts on our work. We then discussed opportunities for improving our services to clients. This was a useful session and one of the ideas we are going to develop is a service to help clients evaluate the business impact of training. Let us know if you would like to discuss this.

Katie returns

Katie Scott is just returning from maternity leave. We've missed Katie's hard working, creative approach, and we know our clients have too. You couldn't ask for a nicer person to work with, so having her back will be a great pleasure.

Well done Wayne



Our associate, Wayne Woodley, is well known for his energy and passion. We recently sponsored him on his first ever race, the Bristol 10k, raising over £700 for Cancer Research UK. He finished in under 50 mins which is very good and, as you can see from this picture, the passion never dies.

More to celebrate



Our Business Manager Amber recently gave birth to a little boy, Harry.



Lisa, our Project Coordinator, has just become engaged.

Congratulations to both!

sustain ability

It's from the heart

Efficiency, honesty, and transparency have always been at the heart of our values and by going the extra mile we ensure that we get the right results. This approach is applied to all aspects of our business, including what we do to minimise our environmental impact.



Being 'green' is relatively easy for us, as it reflects our values for doing the right thing, and doing it right!

We have been part of the CarbonNeutral® network of companies since 2002, through which our carbon footprint is assessed and offset by contributing to environmental projects around the world. We currently support a hydro

project in Peru, and a reforestation project in Tanzania. This offsetting includes our training delivery travel and resources, so our clients know that our services positively contribute to their own environmental impact.

We also seek greater efficiency in working with partners and clients. For project management we have online portals where documents are shared and updated – a great time-saver, which along with web conferencing reduces the need for travel.

We have invested in our own high-volume, energy-efficient printer, so we can do all our printing in-house using recycled materials wherever possible.

Based in Bristol, the UK's greenest city, we've always had centrally located offices enabling us to make full use of public transport. Most journeys to the office are done on foot or by bike, and the use of trains to get to training venues is ever increasing.

Last year we went one step further and moved into Bristol's greenest office building. However, with the imminent completion of the Environment Agency's new building (one of our clients), we may soon be knocked off the top spot!

We are always eager to do more to increase our efficiency and reduce our environmental impact, so do get in touch if you want to work with us on this.

you're in good company

Our clients

Boots / Cancer Research UK /
Capita / Construction Skills /
The Cooperative / DTZ /
Environment Agency / Food
Standards Agency / Kraft Foods /
Mars / National Grid / Ofcom /
Pentland Brands / Severn Trent /
Somersetfield / Southeastern /
Stockton Borough Council /
Threadneedle / United Business
Media / Vue Entertainment

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Interaction learning and development

St Nicholas House 31-34 High Street Bristol BS1 2AW

0117 315 5243 info@interaction-ld.com www.interaction-ld.com

Summer 2010

Interaction

learning and development

Summer's here!

News and views so far this year.

our work

Managing change
Performance coaching
Project management
for graduates

and more

CIPD L&TD Survey 2010
Return on investment
Environmental impact

www.interaction-ld.com

Here's a taste of what's been going on at Interaction, and some food for thought. We'll be publishing snippets from our newsletters online, so feel free to add your comments on our blog at www.interaction-ld.com.

what we're up to

Change management

This leading outsourcing company plans significant change through efficiency improvements, along with a shift in culture.

The business has identified managers who will be essential to this transition and wants to support them with a development programme.

We have put together a key component of this programme which looks at personal impact.

These 2 day workshops focus on communicating and influencing in difficult times. The programme is creative and challenging and offers individuals a great deal of feedback and reflection. We are half way through the delivery programme and results are telling us that it is personally impactful, with changes at work being implemented straight away.

Project management

A global food company needs to support their graduates' delivery of a commercial project.

The project's aim is to deliver real business value and develop the behavioural and project management capabilities of commercial graduates. We designed a series of short, engaging workshops that develop the graduates' ability to deliver a successful project.

We blended MBTI® Step 1 with existing mentor and line manager support, and key technical input from the business. This mix minimises the time away from the project and day job, uses existing support structures

to embed new behaviours, and provides the right balance between delivering a successful project outcome and personal development.

Timeout learning

One of our key clients wants to open up access to learning on a day-to-day basis.

They want to create enthusiasm, excitement and passion for learning at its UK and Ireland offices. Our brief is to create a series of mini-sessions that employees can access through the day depending on their training need.

The design principles include having short but precise objectives, engaging people through relevant activity, minimum theory – maximum pragmatism and, above all, being passionate and enjoyable.

Selection interviewing

We are working to provide a series of 1 day workshops aimed at developing interviewing skills.

This will be part of a suite of development interventions provided within a global clothing brand owner. They recognised that whilst their managers needed the freedom to ask specific questions for particular jobs, they also needed a framework for opening and closing interviews, and providing information to the applicant about the company.

Managers were keen to get some feedback on their style when interviewing as well as refreshing their skills, so we will use actors to provide them with 'real' applicants to develop their questioning and interviewing techniques.

coaching climate

Coaching has featured consistently in the CIPD Learning Survey since 2004. The economic climate may appear to account for the growth of internal coaching and decline in external provision, but in fact this is a familiar trend.



The survey reports that coaching takes place in 82% of organisations, delivered by line managers (increasing) and external coaches (decreasing). These trends could be seen to be a result of economic pressures, but in 2004 the survey was showing that the 'majority of coaching was being delivered by line managers'. Does 82% represent a big increase in coaching activity as we might believe from the words in the reports? On the surface, the answer is no, not really. 78% reported that coaching took place in their organisation in 2004, 79% in 2006 and 71% in 2008. It seems managers have been doing a lot of coaching and this will continue.

Perception of skill level also appears largely unchanged. In 2010, 66%

of organisations identified a coaching skills gap. In 2005, 65% said their managers were lacking coaching skills. In 2006, 52% said that lack of skills was a barrier to developing a coaching culture, and in 2007 20% of organisations reported that their line managers were trained to coach.

Conclusions? Coaching is happening and has been a big part of the mix for at least the last 6 years. It also seems that most coaching is being delivered by line managers, many of whom are perceived to lack the relevant skills – a situation that has changed little for 6 years or so. If this is accurate, it raises questions about the likely return we can get from the investment in coaching, or that some of the time devoted to coaching is a missed opportunity.

In 2010 we find that 36% of organisations have a system for evaluating coaching, but only 40% measure ROI. In 2004 the survey revealed that 75% of evaluation was from participant feedback with 29% being based on 'business performance measures'. There is some progress but it is hardly a big leap over 6 years.

It seems coaching is largely being delivered as an act of faith – 'we think it's effective so we'll keep doing it'. That might be enough. Who can argue with the value of a manager sitting down with a member of staff to discuss performance, or broaden their business understanding? Evaluating this kind of activity is never going to be easy.

If line manager coaching is to remain one of the main forms of learning, should we be paying more attention to developing the skills for it to be delivered effectively? All the evidence from the survey seems to point this way.

You can get a copy of the CIPD Learning & Talent Development Survey online at <http://bit.ly/cipd-survey>.

practical performance management

Our client, a leading health and beauty retailer, wanted a coaching skills programme for its managers that went beyond the theory found in books.



Managers from the recently re-organised Commercial Directorate had the challenge of coaching employees to reach greater levels of performance. They needed to balance this coaching role with their management and leadership responsibilities.

We designed and delivered a high performance coaching skills programme. Over two days, participants engaged in blended sessions which raised awareness, confidence and capability in using coaching day-to-day.

Sessions included:

- being precise about the performance gap
- exchanging skills and knowledge approaches
- coaching fundamentals
- a self-audit of their existing coaching potential.

It was essential that the programme provided plenty of coaching practice to experience coaching and

individual feedback. Managers spent time coaching each other as well as working with professional actors, who brought real situations to life and gave feedback on the effect of coaching from the coachee's perspective.

Ourselves and our client were determined to be clear as to what coaching managers were committing to undertake following the programme. After four weeks of coaching practise we conducted a follow up day to reflect on individual experience, hold group members accountable to each other, and further develop their own and each others' coaching capability.

July 5-6

Association of Graduate Recruiters



We are exhibiting at the AGR summer conference at Celtic Manor on 5-6 July. With the increase in internships and experienced graduate recruits we are interested to know whether this will have an impact on the kind of development that graduate recruits need in the future. So we're going to conduct a survey to ask attendees for their views and publish results after the conference.

return on investment



The current economic climate means there's never been more pressure on businesses to produce a return on their investment, but how do you measure return on investment with something like training?

It's common practice for companies to measure the immediate reaction of delegates to their workshops and they often test how much knowledge delegates have retained. We always ask for post programme feedback and provide a summary of this for our clients. But, enjoying the day and remembering what was taught is no guarantee that delegates will apply what they learnt. Even if delegates do apply their learning, how do you know it made any difference? And, of course, if it did make a difference, was that difference worth it when compared to the money spent on the workshop?

The answer is surprisingly straightforward and begins with assessing business needs. Specifically, what do you have too much of that you want to reduce? What do you want that you don't have at present? What do you want to improve? Once the business need is clear, the training should focus

directly on addressing that need. At the same time, think carefully about how you know you have too much or not enough of these things – what measures within the business tell you this? Identifying or establishing these measures allow you to monitor the impact and return on investment of your training.

Assessing business needs and setting measures at the start enables you to win budget and support for the intervention. This is always our start point when working with clients and enables us to design interventions. We also ask clients to tell us how the programmes are impacting the business throughout. This information is used to review activity and make changes and improvements.

Sometimes this can seem a daunting task, but it is our experience that where the business measures are clearer – and agreed, the final results are better, with us and the client working in true partnership to ensure success.

Please get in touch if you want to discuss making the links between training and business impact.