

## Building the right foundations

Over the years we have built up expertise and experience in designing bespoke graduate induction programmes, so when we were asked by Costain to design an induction week that enabled graduates to integrate quickly into the business, begin to develop key skills in line with a competency framework, and to network with each other at an early stage in their career, we jumped at the chance.

Costain is a very active community partner and was keen for the graduates to become involved with their CSR strategy as soon as possible, so we were asked to make sure this was incorporated into the week along with a number of key business inputs. The outcome was a successful four day programme that will now form a regular fixture in the graduate programme and act as a springboard for development for the rest of the programme.

[Click here to find out more about the programme.](#)

## Award winning partnership

It's always nice to be recognised and so we were delighted to be given an award from Kraft Foods Europe for 'outstanding partnership and contribution'. We have been working with Kraft Foods for over a year and recently worked with them at their Campus event in Barcelona.

Campus 2011 was a week-long learning event bringing together top talent from 17 countries across Kraft Foods Europe. The aim of the week was to recognise and celebrate top performers by providing them with an uninterrupted opportunity to focus on their development. It also enabled them to network with fellow attendees and the Kraft Foods Executive Leadership Team after a successful year for Kraft Food Europe.

Our involvement was to run workshops for 120 managers from across Europe on 'Outstanding People Management'. The workshops will enable managers to lead, support, and develop their teams in line with the business strategy. It focused particularly on employee engagement and coaching. The diversity of the groups, along with the prestige of the event, created a powerful environment in which managers felt inspired and supported. For us it was a great opportunity to work with such committed and impressive managers and to be part of an exciting event that will have a long lasting impact on attendees and the business.

## A fresh look at time management

In 2011 we were pleased to add Pentland Brands to our list of clients. Pentland is a brand management company, which owns and licenses a range of sports, fashion, and outdoor brands including Speedo, Berghaus, Red or Dead, and Lacoste. They asked us to design and deliver a one day time management workshop.

The workshop took a fairly psychological and self analytical approach to what stops each of us from being more effective. We looked at what goes on behind all the many prioritising and planning decisions we make each day; what motivates, drives and rewards us, and what we try to avoid. We also explored various practical tools (paper and technology based) and shared tips to increase productivity and reduce stress. We concluded with behavioural practice on such things as 'saying no' and managing interruptions. Each participant went away with very different 'takeaways' in terms of new tools to try, attitudes to hold, and understandings of how to manage themselves.

Now that the workshop has been designed and refined to suit the organisation's style and needs, the plan is to roll it out at intervals whenever sufficient need is expressed. It can be 'dropped into' the overall training plan easily and cost effectively at any time.

## An actor's perspective

**One of our professional actors, Barbara Furlong, talks about working with participants on an Interaction programme.**

It's Tuesday afternoon, I'm in Birmingham and I'm in the throes of being made redundant, again...Or am I? This is an interesting participant; I actually feel more like I've been invited into their office for a general chat about how my life's going.

'Where do I see myself in 2 years?' he asks, 'well, here, of course', I reply.

Did I say something wrong? Why does he look so awkward and embarrassed, why is he talking so much, and so fast? Blood vessels blossom in his cheeks, pores burst open on his forehead, and oh, are those tears welling in his eyes?

'Stop' cries a voice from the periphery; it's the facilitator. Now we have a chance, the participant and I, to talk candidly about what just happened and, most importantly, how it can be different. I give him a few pointers and home truths as to how his behaviour impacted on me and we have another go at what is a very difficult conversation and a transformation has occurred - he is clearer, to the point, but sympathetic.

It has been my experience that when Managers step wholeheartedly into these practise scenarios, and they invariably do, they'll blush, sweat and cry (occasionally all three). In fact name any emotion and I've probably witnessed it at least once over the years, and that is because actors bring a reality to development that no flip chart or theory can. We can replicate the awkward, challenging, embarrassing, and often mundane scenarios that Managers face every day and tell them how they are making us feel in a way that their team would probably love to do but can't. What emerges is a powerful experience, contained and 'held' by the facilitator.

Working with the facilitators from Interaction makes for a great team. They have the outside eye, whilst we have the skills to immerse ourselves in the scenario. This can be very powerful; usually watched by a small group of participants, delegates are often overcome by how real the experience is. The facilitators make sure that the participant gets as much out of the exercise as possible and that the rest of the group share ideas and tips with the individual to help them improve.

Although they are sometimes apprehensive about working with actors in this way, participants often ask to do more work with us once they have experienced how useful it is.

You can [read more information about how we work with actors](#) on our website or [just get in touch](#).

## Team news

Despite a busy 2011, we had time to invest in some development for ourselves. Four of us took part in a qualifying workshop which means we are now certified practitioners in the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI®). HBDI® was created by Ned Herrmann in the 1970's whilst he was working at GE in the USA. Based on the theory of brain dominance the instrument provides a model to help people understand how they prefer to think and operate, as well as a useful framework for ensuring that we communicate and relate to others effectively and comprehensively. The instrument also has applications for helping teams to work more effectively together. So far we have used the instrument to support our work in coaching, team development, and management development.

[Coaching is a growing area of our business](#) and Lucy Neale, one of our Directors will qualify as a coach this month.

Congratulations to Katie Scott, Senior Consultant at Interaction who had a baby girl in October 2011. Katie is still enjoying maternity leave at the moment but we are looking forward to welcoming her back later on in the year.

Congratulations also to Amber Dennis our Finance and Administration Manager on getting engaged. Amber will be tying the knot in July 2012.