

Case Study – St John Ambulance

Building coaching capability to support major organisation change

With public sector cutbacks and donations increasingly difficult to secure, charities are operating in a challenging environment. To navigate the current climate, organisations in this sector are having to adopt a more commercial focus, whether by diversifying activities, developing new partnerships or looking inwards to restructure or streamline.

Shaping the organisation to meet the future challenges

St John Ambulance (SJA) teaches people first aid so that they can be the difference between a life lost and a life saved. As the nation's leading first aid charity, they believe no one should suffer for the lack of trained first aiders. The organisation required significant business transformation and fundamental reorganisation to radically restructure their 5,000 employees and 20,000 volunteers from county teams into regional teams in order to create efficiencies and ensure local decision-making.

Why a coaching programme?

The impact of the restructure meant an influx of several hundred new managers, at the same time as the departure of many experienced job holders. Steve Foster, Director of People and Organisation for SJA describes the challenge: **“We had several hundred people, new to their position, new to management and new to the concept of a matrix structure. We also had a lot of people externally and internally who were willing and able to help with this challenge and so a coaching programme seemed the best way forward.”**

In order to support newly appointed managers and enable them to become effective quickly, St John Ambulance decided to implement a coaching programme. By building a substantial cadre of coaches (both employees and volunteers), the organisation hoped to transition to a coaching culture over the longer term.

Selecting the right partner

On selecting their preferred partner, Steve Foster says: **“I chose Talent for Growth because their offering suited us very well and we were able to access really high quality advice about how to build, launch and implement such a programme.”** He adds: **“As a partner, Talent for Growth is a really effective organisation. They spend quite a lot of time figuring out what works for you – what your culture is, what your business needs are, what you can afford, which for us as a charity is pretty important. And they're quite happy to tailor the offering accordingly. They're a versatile and flexible organisation with a really strong customer focus.”**

Programme objectives

As well as ensuring the right people were put in place as coaches, and providing training and on-going support for them, the coaching programme was also designed to:

- utilise the skills and experience of team members and retain links for some volunteers who would be leaving the organisation;
- get new managers up to speed as fast as possible to minimise the disruption of the change;
- provide a development opportunity for those who wanted to become coaches;
- give positive messages about how important people development is to the organisation as a whole, given the difficult climate.

Goals

The primary goal was to support and enable business transformation by:

- ensuring new managers became effective as quickly as possible
- utilising the vast pool of knowledge and experience within SJA
- supporting a cultural move to a coaching culture
- providing rapid but sustainable growth and development

Approach

- Co-created the coaching framework so that it met all the needs and engaged people from the start
- Designed a pragmatic but robust selection process
- Designed and facilitated Coach training workshops
- Provided tools for on-going development

Results

- St John Ambulance has over 60 trained coaches
- More than 100 managers are in coaching relationships
- All concerned, including coachee line managers', report outstanding results

About St John Ambulance

St John Ambulance is the nation's leading first aid charity. SJA believe everyone who needs it should receive first aid from those around them and that no one should suffer for the lack of trained first aiders.

Every year, more than 800,000 people learn how to save a life through their training programmes, including hundreds of thousands of young people.

St John Ambulance volunteers provide first aid in their communities, keeping people safe at events, and working alongside the NHS in response to 999 calls. They frequently campaign to raise awareness of first aid and directly educate the public.

St John Ambulance believe in encouraging personal development for people of all ages, through training and by volunteering within their organisation.

The coaching programme in practice

Talent for Growth designed a programme to meet the stated objectives and sought to coo create the processes by involving key representatives of the organisation to inform the design and crucially, to engage opinion formers and influencers. As Caroline Lark says: "One of Talent for Growth's values is to coo create wherever possible. We wanted to know exactly what was needed, what the programme should achieve, potential risks to success, top 3 qualities needed in the coaches and how to engage line managers. The interviews with stakeholders were an invaluable source of information."

The programme included:

- designing a framework, coach job description, application form, interview questions and process flows;
- holding a half-day workshop with senior HR team members to fine tune all of the above and get agreement;
- designing a one day coaching skills workshop, which ran for a total of 60 people across 5 separate workshops
- setting up EMCC membership for coaches;
- delivering on-going development through regular provision of new tools and models for coaches to use.

Steve Foster adds: **"They helped us with implementation advice, they helped us with a selection process to find really effective coaches and, very importantly, they provided really high quality training for our coaches."**

Programme success - outcomes to date

Steve Foster says: **"The coaching programme is still in its early stages but so far has been really successful. We have had some excellent personal development for our coaches."** Over 100 managers have either had, or are currently in, coaching relationships and as Steve adds: **"the testimonials that we've got from them in terms of the benefits from the programme have been excellent."** Feedback from coachees themselves and their line managers has been extremely positive.

Paul Bytheway, General Manager, Medicine & Emergency Care, Worcestershire Royal & Kidderminster Hospitals, one of the coaching skills workshops participants says: **"The workshop allowed us to explore our coaching potential and understand where we might be challenged. In a relaxed and supportive environment we learned a great deal and left feeling energised and enthusiastic about being coaches within SJA."**

Caroline Lark says: "This project is absolute proof that introducing and developing internal coaches does not have to be a lengthy, complicated and expensive process". The commitment from the coaches and from the organisation has been outstanding and it's wonderful to hear about so many successes from both coaches, coachees and their managers."

"What's made the programme successful is that it's simple, it's very practical, and it has some very good materials around it, such as the book 'Get Ready for Coaching'. It's very accessible ... and the training itself has been very effective. Talent for Growth's biggest strengths really are around understanding the customer's needs, culture and business, and then tailoring a solution to suit them".

Steve Foster, Director of People and Organisation



To hear Steve Foster talk about the coaching programme, visit talentforgrowth.co.uk/aboutus/testimonials/

"Thank you for an excellent coaching workshop on Saturday. I am sure we have all been on a variety of these events - and this was a good one. I felt that the timescale was about right and that you tailored the day to suit."

John Roberts

"Just a brief note to say thanks for a really useful and enjoyable day yesterday, I got a tremendous amount out of it and look forward to the whole coaching programme taking off"

Mel Fox, Regional Director (South East), Commercial Training Division

About Talent for Growth

Talent for Growth is a global, flexible and innovative consultancy focused on developing leaders and teams to optimise business performance. We are development experts, but we are also pragmatic, business driven individuals – everything we do ties back to supporting the strategy of the organisation.

We offer:

- depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise in leadership development and team effectiveness
- a focus on collaboration and sustainable solutions
- international experience
- absolute adherence to our commitments

For further information, please contact us at:

Tel: +44 (0)1647 277 709

Mob: +44 (0)7908 111 585

Web: www.talentforgrowth.com