

MANAGING UNCERTAINTY- POWERING POTENTIAL

A HELPFUL CLINIC BUSINESS SUPPORT CASE STUDY

SUMMARY

A senior manager for an international company was tasked with turning around five business units as the company wanted to rationalise operations. There was concern that the uncertainty during this time would impact motivation, risk losing key personal and know-how resulting in productivity losses and negatively impact commercial performance. Thor A Rain, from The Helpful Clinic was engaged to develop and deliver a training and support programme to mitigate and manage these risks. The programme, delivered over nine months, was called Managing Uncertainty - Powering Potential. It was completed without the loss of key personal and thus business critical knowledge. All managers involved reported feeling more motivated at the end of the programme and exceeded sales targets having learnt tools and strategies to manage uncertainty and maximise the potential that such situations yield.

SITUATION

The organisation was entering a period of significant and strategic change. The primary aim was to improve overall business results which meant restructuring and thus risk to people's livelihoods. The senior manager leading this change had attended a talk by The Helpful Clinic founder, Thor A Rain where the core theme was that without uncertainty there is no potential. This resonated and so he engaged Thor and The Helpful Clinic to customise and deliver the **Managing Uncertainty** and **Powering Potential** programme for his management team. Thor and The Helpful Clinic's approach to treating all feelings as information also struck a chord, even though, to him, it was a very novel approach.

"I was aware that we would be asking a lot of our people and that I would struggle to find the time to give enough focus to both the people and the process part of the change project."

"Thor's approach, and the fact that they had many years' experience supporting people through change, felt like a good fit."

Engaging Thor, the brief was to support managers and supervisors to manage uncertainty during the change programme's initial phase. Specific goals included:

- Upskilling managers and supervisors in terms of leadership in the face of change that had not been of their own making
- Mitigating the risk of discord, attrition, revenue loss, and staff absence through the change process
- Strengthening the business units in terms of people and profit to prepare for expected sale in 6-18 months' time

SOLUTION

Thor customised a training and development programme that was delivered at quarterly meetings via in person group training and one-to-one coaching sessions over a period of nine months. Group training focussed on the following topics, with coaching sessions aligned to individuals' specific needs:

- Understanding the change process and the inherent uncertainty posed by the experience of change
- Knowing how looking after your own body and brain powers you to deal with increased stress and uncertainty in times of change
- Creating a personalised dashboard with helpful indicators to support you in looking after 'you'
- Taking control of your own inner dialogue (turning your inner critic into your inner coach)
- Mastering self-management, including understanding behaviours like 'perfectionism' and skills like 'motivation' and 'self-care' in relation to anxiety or stress
- Managing your own, team members' and clients' expectations throughout the change process
- How to defuse tension and optimise participation and motivation when tasks and teams hit the red 'danger' zone

Strategic thinking was identified as an additional training focus and was added to the training. This was significant as the managers had different backgrounds and levels of training and experience. Personalised training on how to think more strategically was a key component in the overall success of the project. Risks were managed using a risk matrix to identify and track the individuals taking part in the programme in terms of feeling-based (both physical and emotional) as well as business and commercial KPIs.

SUCCESS

The Helpful Clinic's ***Managing Uncertainty - Powering Potential*** programme enabled the teams to harness the power of potential that is always inherent during times of uncertainty. Participants' leadership skills improved, in spite of the fact that they were leading through a significant change not of their own choosing, and as the results below indicate, all the stated goals were met and exceeded.

- The ten-strong leadership team performed beyond everyone's expectations, including their own
- Across the five sites, overall performance improved by 2%.
- There was no loss of key personnel, keeping valuable knowledge and experience within the business.
- All participants and their wider teams reported increased motivation and job satisfaction with no discord, attrition, revenue loss or increase in staff absence reported throughout the change process.

In addition to these planned outcomes, there were many unexpected benefits to the programme.

- Learning how to articulate outcomes in a way that could be measured gave managers a way of predicting future behaviour.
- Replacing defensive thinking led to participants collaborating and producing better results for everyone.
- Helpful language used during the programme to describe thinking and feeling styles became part of the team's lexicon, fostering a sense of belonging.
- Participants reported that focusing on feelings was helpful, when previously it had felt scary. Examining what was really going on, rather than assuming everyone understood, removed limiting behaviours.
- Increased levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness and pride were reported by many team members.
- The team won an award for 'Outstanding Performance'.
- The team won substantial investment from head office to develop best practice in terms of operational innovation that delivers business growth.

Here's what one manager had to say:

At first I just didn't get it but as things started to change all the things we had discussed previously started to fall into place and made me reevaluate what I could be doing to help things along. Our chats encouraged me to focus on fire prevention instead of fire fighting and talking to you helped me to put things into perspective. My confidence has grown over the months and I now feel capable and ready to move forward and grow my new position with the company. Once again I would like to thank you for all your help as now on reflection I don't think I could have done it without it - Manager C

We leave the final words to the commissioning manager:

"I feel I have proven my worth during a potentially very difficult period and the value of my team has been recognised. I cannot recommend Thor and this programme enough," says the commissioning manager.