

CASE STUDY

Cancer Research UK partners with Roffey Park to deliver Talent Development Programme

Introduction

Cancer Research UK (CRUK) is the world's leading independent organisation dedicated to cancer research, supporting research into all aspects of cancer, through the work of more than 4,500 scientists, doctors and nurses. Together with its partners and supporters, CRUK's vision is to beat cancer. It carries out world-class research to improve understanding of the disease and find out how to prevent, diagnose and treat different kinds of cancer.

The challenge

CRUK is committed to the ongoing development of its staff and is constantly seeking new ways in which it can equip employees with the necessary skills to thrive in the non-profit sector. The charitable sector is a highly competitive marketplace and success is dependent upon effective fundraising and the development and retention of the best people.

Hilary Oakley joined CRUK in 2007 as the Head of Learning & Development for Fundraising & Supporter Marketing where she is responsible for the professional development of its fundraising staff. As part of a strategy to identify, develop and retain the brightest and best employees, she wanted to work with an external organisation to provide a development programme that would really challenge and stretch the most talented staff.

"We wanted to create a system to develop and retain our best people for the long term, those who have the abilities to operate and lead in a challenging fundraising environment," explains Hilary. "I had already completed an MSc in People and Organisational Development at Roffey Park and knew its programmes are holistic, not prescriptive and centred on self-managed learning. I thought they could provide the perfect solution and approached them for help."

The solution

The fundraising L&D team worked in partnership with Roffey Park to develop an assessment centre to identify talented staff, followed by a rigorous, modular leadership development programme. Together, these components were underpinned by a simple framework against which people's potential could not only be assessed, but also developed. The programme is validated by the University of Sussex and leads to the award of Postgraduate Certificate in Leadership and Management for all those who complete it successfully.

"We first put in place a competency framework of ten key attitudes and abilities which describe what we want to see from our best people. Roffey Park helped to verify and ensure the robustness of this framework. We then collaborated with Roffey Park to design the assessment centres so we could



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identify people we wanted to take through to the talent development programme," continues Hilary. "People successful at the assessment centre then have the chance to go onto the leadership development programme. In Year One, we assessed 24 people for twelve places; of these, ten then went on to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Leadership and Management. The fact that it is recognised by the University of Sussex gives it added credibility and substance."

Roffey Park designed and supported the first round of assessment centres, providing one Roffey Park assessor per event. They also trained selected CRUK employees as assessors, to develop use of CRUK's internal capability and enable CRUK to run the process independently thereafter.

The programme is comprised of a launch event, four two-day residential modules and six learning set meetings. The modules are based around elements of the attitude and abilities framework and are facilitated by Roffey Park, however, individuals also undertake their own pieces of work, including 10,000 words on learning goals of their choice, linked back to CRUK. One goal often links to the development of a specific skill. The other to an organisational project. The participants themselves, supported by a Roffey Park facilitator, act as the internal examiners for the programme ensuring the final work is of Masters standard. This contributes to participants leaving the programme with highly developed feedback and critical thinking skills.

"The work is varied and comprehensive and has an immediate advantage to the business in some of the projects the participants get involved in," explains Hilary. "But there is also a

solid and rigorous academic basis which gives the programme real credibility. Given that the participants are investing their time over 15 months to undertake the programme, it was important for us to make sure it delivered to the highest academic and professional levels."

The results

CRUK anticipates that participants in the programme would get promoted and change roles more frequently and successfully. Early indications have suggested that this is indeed the case.

"Out of the original ten participants in 2008, the majority have been promoted or changed roles," adds Hilary. "Participants are able to immediately apply what they have learnt to their work. The programme breeds a higher level of initiative and engagement and is something our staff aspire to do. This success has allowed us to continue the programme and it is now in its third year."

Hilary is also quick to praise Roffey Park for its role in the programme's success: "Roffey Park contributes in so many key ways. First in the development of the programme content itself; then in the facilitation provided by Roffey Park's knowledgeable and experienced consultants. Equally important is location: Roffey Park provides a tranquil setting perfectly suited to learning. Participants really value the environment. It is a special place, comfortable, calming, quiet and ideal for learning.

With the programme in its third year, CRUK is keen to continue its commitment to this programme and has seen strong endorsement from the Directors within fundraising.

