

Case Study: Principality Building Society



Name: Principality Building Society (www.principality.co.uk)

Description: Leading Wales-based building society

Location: Pan Wales

Principality Learning and Development Consultant:

Christopher Hicks

Employees: Around 1,000

Sector: Financial services

Theme: Change management



Founded as a mutual building society in 1860, Principality Building Society is a vibrant and indigenous Welsh business based in Cardiff with more than 500,000 members.

Employing around 1,000 staff in a network of 52 branches and 13 agencies across Wales and the border, Principality is now the seventh largest building society in the UK.

“the biggest benefit is the way that people now communicate about projects.

They now expect change to happen rather than it being a surprise. People are now informed of the rationale behind the project in advance and that makes a big difference because they value communication”

Case Study: Principality Building Society



What leadership and management development did you undertake?

In February, 2010, the Society undertook a leadership and management development programme called Sticky Change. Fifteen members of the Society's Business Change team – those responsible for managing projects throughout the business – participated in the programme.

How did you identify your development need?

Feedback from colleagues and stakeholders about our Business Change team was that they were great at managing the technical, systems and process side of projects, but could do better at communicating with and involving people. A key action was to cascade learning points down to other members of the team.

How did you encourage delegates to undertake the training?

Benchmark questionnaires were issued to the Business Change team and its key stakeholders, one-to-one interviews were conducted and focus group sessions were convened before and after the training. We asked members of the team to rate themselves across a range of competencies and compared the results to stakeholder feedback. Whilst the Business Change team's pre-training self assessment suggested they were strong across all competencies, the stakeholder feedback indicated that there were certain areas in which the team could improve. The benchmark questionnaires were a key part of the programme and there was a measured improvement in the post training feedback from stakeholders.

How did you ensure that the learning was implemented?

Training was very action-focussed. We wanted it to be delivered in a very practical way so that people could apply what they learned. We started every session with the question 'What have you done differently?' and 'What are the results of doing things differently?' Delegates also shared stories, ensuring that training became reality.

What are the benefits of the programme?

I think the biggest benefit is the way that people now communicate about projects. They now expect change to happen rather than it being a surprise. People are now informed of the rationale behind the project in advance and that makes a big difference because they value communication.

Demand from people wishing to work on projects has increased and project meetings have become much more energised and engaging. More people are now involved in the change process at a much earlier stage and are better at planning for problems before they arise. Projects are therefore completed faster, which results in more accurate cost forecasts and more creative ideas are generated to move the business forward.

The response from delegates was good because they enjoyed the training and we were able to measure their knowledge and skills as the programme progressed. Project key performance indicators now involve verifying whether people can actually use a new system or process, whereas in the past success was measured by whether the system was up and running.

How will you ensure that the learning becomes embedded into the organisation?

Members of the Business Change team continue to meet trainer Fiona Cameron to ensure continuous improvement. The Sticky Change programme is now being rolled out to another group of 16 business managers, who are responsible for projects in their own departments. That way there will be a shared way of working and no surprises. We didn't want the Business Change team to go through training in isolation so that it became one-dimensional. We hope to continue to roll out the programme across the Group and we may even involve our Management Committee.

Would you recommend leadership and management development to other businesses?

I would definitely recommend the Sticky Change programme. Apart from improving communications and business performance, the programme emphasises that it's the people in a business that make things happen. Technology and processes are important but they are not the drivers; they are there to support what people do and make life easier.