

Client testimonial transcript
David Filmer- Training and Development
manager





What were you looking to achieve?

It was born out of looking at how we take our managers onto the next step of their development.

So, we've got a pretty comprehensive management training programme in the business. We take managers through what I would describe as the core requirements of a manager or a team leader, in terms of recruitment, induction, performance management, absence management those kinds of things. That's very much transactional, whereas what we wanted to do was, how do we make managers that bit more effective in terms of managing on the line? And helping managers to move perhaps from being problem solvers to being more about problem facilitators.

What we identified was that coaching was probably a game changer for us, in terms of not necessarily with regards to the more formalised tradition of let's book a room and have a coaching session type skills. But more about how do we encourage managers to be more of a coach on the line and in the moment. So, for me when I was looking at ways of developing this skill, I was really looking for a way in which I could help managers to learn that coaching wasn't his enormous thing that was really difficult to do. Because the perception is that it's a really difficult challenging approach to management. When it's really simple, at its simplest, it's just asking great questions and listening. So, it was about finding a way to enable managers to do that really effectively every single day.

People are naturally great mentors. You tend to find that whenever we bring new people into the business, we tend to buddy them up with somebody and that person will show them the ropes, will give them the benefit of their experience and typically people do slot very nicely into that mentoring role. They don't always know that's what they're doing, but by definition that's what it is. It's kind of moving managers out of that, so that when members of their team come to them and present an issue or a problem or ask a question, that the manager doesn't always feel the pressure to have the answer or solve the problem. Because that tends to create a scenario where the manager is always seen as the person to go to as opposed to individual members of the team being more empowered to make decisions themselves. So, it was a little bit of a step change with regards to how we wanted managers to approach managing people and teams.

For us, it's extremely important. We're delivering a customer service. We've got thousands of customers and across the business, a big proportion of the team are talking to the customers day in day out. These customers can have all manner of problems all manner of requirements that we need to fulfil. Actually, it makes so much more sense if people are empowered to go through a process where they can consider their options and make a decision. Provided it's within a framework and supported, rather than constantly having to say to the customer "can you bear with me while I go and ask my manager?" That doesn't create a great image of us from the customers point of view. So actually, it's about managers becoming much more competent at helping people to become more confident to deal with situations as they arise.



Why did you choose New Results?

The initial conversation with Nevil wasn't about coaching training at all. It was actually a conversation about sales training. At the time Nevil came to talk to us we had already engaged a third-party organisation to do some sales training for us. But when I'd looked at your website I noted that you guys do coaching as well. So, I thought this is worth a conversation. But what I really liked was the fact that what Nevil talked about was this idea of kerbside coaching, coaching in the moment. Which was exactly what we needed and what our managers need.

In our industry, it's fast paced and fast moving and it's enabling the managers to fit this skill into their arsenal, as a thing that they can do every day, day in day out without thinking about it. As opposed to something that is kind of I get it off the shelf when I use it when I'm doing appraisals or reviews. I didn't want it to be that this has to be something that where over time it just becomes what I do and what we do here. So that was what I really liked, the approach whereby we talked a lot about coaching in the moment, coaching on the line and how that could be a real game changer with regards to releasing managers to be more effective managing rather than problem-solving.

Every manager that I had spoken to pre-training and I know that it's discussed during the training is that initially coaching does take some extra time. It is far quicker to say to somebody "this is what you should do" or "I think you should do this." That is much quicker. But over time that person will keep coming back. If you then take a little more time to go through the process asking some great questions, listening to the responses, you may need to give some initial direction but over time you're developing that self-sustaining mentality in the individual. I go through a process of asking myself some questions, "right ok, what are my options? How would I address this? What's the best option for the customer?" And then make a decision and for us as a business provided that decisions are made to deliver the best solution for the customer, but at the same time making sure that it's best for the business, then to be fair nobody can really get it wrong. If you make a mistake but it's for the right reasons, then for me I see that as a good mistake and we can learn from that. That's what we want to encourage at TSG.

What differences have you seen?

Two things I would say. The first one is it's definitely made people think about their approach, think about the way in which they are managing and working with their people and teams. The other way, that was very obvious was during our annual appraisal process which we deliver from April through to June. I talked to a lot of people around the business, managers and members of the team and the comments that I got back from team members was that they noticed a difference in how appraisals were delivered. In that managers were asking a lot more questions, about how they thought they had performed and why they felt that that was how their performance had been. As opposed to historically where it might have been more of a conversation where the manager would tell the person. It was now being very much more about that person being asked to demonstrate and talk about it. That was a comment that I got an awful lot of times. And I thought; ok, if that's where we're starting from then I'll take that, because in a formal situation great, the next stage is how do we then become just more informal, it kind of happens? It is happening I'm getting anecdotal feedback from lots of different people that it's happening.

It's a bit of a lightbulb moment for managers and team leaders. The last group that went through the training I was talking to some after that and for one or two of them their initial thoughts were; this is great but how am I going to fit this in? This is something else that I'm going to have to do. The view pre-training was that it was "a thing" the view post training was actually; how do I now make sure that I do this because there is such a benefit and that it's not "a thing" it's just another approach that I need to think about working into my overall persona as a manager and team leader.

It's kind of looking at it in terms of, I get everything about it from the situational leadership point of view. Everybody gets that when somebody is new, they need lots of direction, we need to tell them. And everybody gets that when somebody is really experienced we can leave them to crack on and just get on. That's understood and that's accepted. Where it gets a little bit fuzzy is when you get up to the top of the curve as it were, it's like then well ok, coaching and supporting piece, that's when it's less clear. Because typically as you mentioned, we get mixed up between training, mentoring and learning and coaching, it all blurs and gets fuzzy. What you guys have done with the sessions is you've helped to lift the fog a little bit and make it clear what each of those things are and for me where coaching clearly fits in as an approach.