

Article in CiPD's 'Coaching at Work' Magazine 2007

GlaxoSmithKline's coaching programme helps transform culture

Describes how GlaxoSmithKline's Irvine site is using coaching to bring together elements of its transformational change programme

Liz Hall

Coaching is "the glue" holding together various cultural change programmes at GlaxoSmithKline's Irvine site.

GSK Irvine introduced a coaching development programme a year ago as part of a transformational change programme to help the business compete with China and India.

"Whilst our culture was not broken, it needed improving in terms of productivity and behaviours. We saw coaching as the glue to hold together different programmes," said Alan Roy, operational excellence and vision factory champion. Roy was speaking at a session on Building your organisational coaching capability at the CiPD's annual learning and development conference, HRD 2007 on 17-19 April.

An independent evaluation by MetrixGlobal recently confirmed that the coaching programme complemented other culture change activities. The evaluation, commissioned by Coaching in Partnership and carried out among 12 participants, also revealed a shift from a "controlling or directing style" towards a more "empowered" style: more engagement in open dialogue, that coaching enabled increased self knowledge, improved relationships and influenced career direction, and that it opened up new possibilities.

Roy said the business had the concept of "shadows of influence" when putting together its coaching development programme, which was designed and delivered by coaching provider Coaching in Partnership.

"We tend to emulate people of influence such as our parents or boss. So we targeted our eight site leaders to be coaches so they would cast a positive shadow across the site."

The organisation also targeted seven high potential employees to be internal coaches. Roy said that as the business was starting from scratch in building up its coaching capability, it was very important "to choose the right partners."

The programme included individual coaching sessions, a two and a half day coaching skills workshop, self assessments and feedback using personal profiling, and coaching skills mentoring.

Roy said experiencing coaching was vital as was the chance to practice coaching in a safe environment. A year on, the business was now concentrating on practising coaching which included having informal coaching conversations.