

Creating an academy for leadership talent

When a leading chocolate retailer wanted to develop leaders from within the organization, it decided to create a whole new leadership development program for the most talented employees. How did personality awareness help them to realize their vision?

Thorntons wanted to build an internal development program for priming high potential employees across the business. The venture would provide personal leadership growth and career support, with a desired outcome of greater engagement and motivation.

For those earmarked as rising stars the company wanted to roll out a program across all levels and all parts of the business. To bring this about it was decided to create a Leadership Academy.

Solution

Once a likely delegate has been identified, the development process begins on their doorstep. A personal development plan is created through a series of conversations between the individual and their line manager. Once a development plan has been agreed, HR become part of the process by helping to identify relevant opportunities across the business for the Academy participant to become involved in.

A development workshop has also been created for line managers, supporting them with the coaching skills necessary for taking employees through the Leadership Academy process.

Business Challenges

- Identifying an developing future leaders
- Identifying potential high-fliers
- Increasing employee engagement
- Coaching line managers in people development

Company Profile

Thorntons is a British chocolate maker, established by Joseph William Thornton in 1911. It has over 3,000 employees and more than 220 stores, and more than 180 franchises. It also operates through cafes and online, and via commercial partners such as supermarkets.

Thorntons

Thorntons chose the MBTI® Personal Impact Report (PIR) for the development work. The reports are sent to line managers at the beginning of the process. It is all about raising self awareness – “How you become more skilfully you” is the strapline adopted for the program. The MBTI instrument is also being used across the entire organization.

In addition to their one-to-one work with line managers, delegates attend three two-day off-site events over a 12 month period, delivered by the Thorntons Talent team. These run throughout the year, and the modules can be taken in any order, to prevent any delay in an employee’s development.

The three sessions are Essential Ingredients, looking at what leadership at Thorntons is all about; Raising Awareness, reflecting on self-belief and applying the insights of the PIR; and Proofs in the Pudding, a chance to ‘have a go’ and receive feedback on leadership style.

“The Personal Impact Report is such a rich resource,” says James Clayton, Head of Talent, Thorntons. “There’s a specialness to it, a wealth of valuable information to raise self-awareness and help people examine how they operate.”

Results

The Leadership Academy has been well received, and line managers in general have been very impressed by the wide range and relevance of the Personal Impact Report.

Amongst the people who have been through the development process there has been observable change.

“There has been a seismic shift in thinking on matters of leadership, and the impact of leadership,” says Clayton. “People are now far clearer on their vision of what good leadership should be for them. They are able to adopt a personal leadership style, with integrity and maximum impact.”


Solution

- Create a Leadership Academy based on the MBTI tool
- Integrate HR into the development program

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Thorntons



Individual high-fliers enrol on the Leadership Academy for twelve months. The program is ongoing, with the three set-piece workshops running every year. As new people are identified they will be introduced to the process via their line managers.

“Through enhancing participants’ leadership capability we increase the level of their contribution, both in their role and across the business,” says Clayton. “This adds value to both the individuals’ career journeys and also to the business.”

Results

- Potential leaders’ development is fast-tracked
- Increased self-awareness, motivation and drive for people selected for the program
- Heightened awareness of talent throughout organization



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