

OAKRIDGE SUPPORTS ASTRAZENECA WITH TEAM EFFECTIVENESS PROGRAMME

BACKGROUND

When AstraZeneca made the decision to close one of its manufacturing sites at Avlon, near Bristol, the senior management team (SMT) identified that it would need support during the period of change and also help in ensuring that employee performance levels were maintained.

AstraZeneca's Avlon site employs some 200 people who will be affected by the site closure in 2017, which is part of the parent company's strategy to cease manufacture of two products when their patents expire.

Aware that in times of change like this there are risks that morale can be low, absenteeism and accidents at work increase and employees lose focus, site HR and Training Partner for AstraZeneca Avlon – Nick Fletcher – looked to Oakridge for support.



One of AstraZeneca's preferred suppliers, Oakridge has worked alongside the blue-chip business for over 17 years and with a strong track record of designing and developing strong performance programmes, Nick knew it would deliver.

To this end, Oakridge was asked to design a programme that would help to ensure the site remained high performing until its closure and also support its leaders, who would undoubtedly experience many challenges through this time of change.

Avlon specified the importance of identifying each teams' needs in order to inspire positive behaviour change, increase focus and improve individual and team performance.

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OUR APPROACH

Oakridge's senior consultant, Andy Fleet, developed a bespoke, flexible and evolving Team Effectiveness programme to meet the specific needs of the SMT and their colleagues at the Avlon site. The programme was based on proven research and used the concept of focussed performance improvement (commitment to clear goals, monitored performance, and team engagement to drive performance).

The work started as a pilot with the SMT which, if the product was well received, would evolve according to feedback and be offered to other teams on site; teams varied in size from three to 17 staff.

Oakridge began by carrying out a diagnostic, using a 14 indicators Individual and Team self-assessment questionnaire for the SMTs to identify specific team strengths and development requirements. From this a report was produced that gave scores, involving the 14 team excellence indicators, about what constituted a high performing team.

Oakridge then created a bespoke Team Effectiveness programme for the Avlon site, using two key pieces of theory from Professor J.R. Hackman and Katzenbach and Smith, with tools such as an online team performance assessment, and emotional intelligence instruments and feedback, to identify areas of specific team and individual focus.

With well researched and proven theories that drive team performance, the programme is at the same time organisationally consistent but individually team specific, with a common set of team tools to monitor and measure team progress.

The SMT attended a workshop, during which they were asked to identify the three most important things they could do to drive value and also commit to delivering these three 'must wins' as a concept to further improve team and individual performance.

Six months later, Andy visited Avlon again to see if the three must wins were achieved, review a second batch of scores to see if performance was maintained and identify three more must wins.

Such was the success of the work – team performance wasn't only maintained but it had improved – that the Avlon Works Manager offered all 20 team leaders and their teams the opportunity to work with Andy. To date 10 teams have benefitted from working with Oakridge.

Andy worked with each team to ascertain where he could help them – whether that was in areas such as communication, stakeholder management or vision and strategy - and then gave them the tools to keep the momentum going and the focus on performance.



Andy Fleet, Oakridge's senior consultant said:

"It is a great honour to work with any client, but being able to support a blue chip organisation such as AstraZeneca on such a major project is a huge privilege."

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RESULTS

Due to circumstances, a fall in team effectiveness measures would be the norm, but expectations were surpassed when instead of simply maintaining team effectiveness, all teams improved, with team performance indicators increasing by up to 29%.

In addition, feedback from the teams was 'overwhelmingly positive' with one employee stating it was 'the most practical team session I've ever attended'. Others said the course was 'well run', with 'a good style of approach and content' while Andy was an 'excellent facilitator'.

AstraZeneca was so pleased with the results that it has commissioned further change work off the back the Team Effectiveness Programme.

Nick Fletcher, AstraZeneca site HR and training partner in Bristol said:

"Because we make pharmaceuticals, it is essential that the last batch is as good as the first batch and we knew Oakridge could help us reach that goal, despite the prospect of closure."

"Andy has experience in closing businesses and was very quickly able to understand our requirements. He had an excellent rapport with staff on all levels and created a fantastic atmosphere to work in."

"The results surpassed all expectations and we were delighted. We would use Oakridge whatever the stage in any lifecycle of the business – growth, maturity or closure."

