

OAKRIDGE TRAIN TEAMS TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY IN ESSAR

BACKGROUND

Essar Oil UK Ltd wanted to support people to Lead Effectively in Essar and to enable people to develop their competence and confidence to support the achievement of business objectives. In addition, and to create a 'continuous social learning' aspect, Oakridge suggested that the business would benefit from incorporating three-way meetings with line manager and HR, 360 feedback and Action Learning Groups with ongoing work based projects. The work-based projects were identified by programme attendees and presented to a leadership steering group in order to gain approval.

The objective of the programme was to give people practical tools and techniques in order to be more effective in engaging their teams. The mantra was "Getting things done in the best possible way". The business recognised that there hadn't been a significant investment in the leadership population and there was a gap in terms of development, which, it was hoped, could be filled. Historically, some leaders have been promoted based on their technical capability and were now being asked to lead teams, without any real leadership development. The business wanted to ensure that Managers were equipped with the right interventions at the right time and being very clear about the expectations of these 'People Managers'.

OUR APPROACH

It was clear that the business wanted the programme to feel 'special' so, rather than a right of passage, delegates recognised the investment being made and their value to the business. The middle management population is seen as a vital group in the overall success of the organisation. As a result the programme was developed to encourage discussion of real issues from the workplace with a focus on developing options for handling these issues. There was a 'push' and 'pull' within the business for the programme and it has been recognised by the senior team as critical to improved business performance.

THE PROGRAMME WAS STRUCTURED AROUND 4 CORE MODULES:

- **The Role of the Manager** – styles of manager as individuals
- **Managing Performance** – turning the attention to our individual team members around the 'what/how/why?' approach
- **Leading a Team** – looking at our teams as a whole and the way they interact across the business
- **Delivering for Essar** – reviewing the strategy of the business and making this real for our own areas



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RESULTS

The feedback has been excellent and a definite worthwhile investment. There has been a mindset shift within attendees who viewed themselves as Managers with a technical background but now see themselves as Business Leaders in their role. People are talking about the programme and interaction is taking place between participants. The bonds and alliances it has created have had a hugely positive impact right across different functions and the business.

The programme, designed and developed by Oakridge, has equipped people with useful tools to support the process of planning and prioritising moving forwards. It has created a 'common language' in the middle management tier across the business. Performance conversations are taking place in a much more structured way and focus on how things are getting done whilst encouraging team members to step up and develop their own solutions.

So, better quality conversations equates to increased engagement and performance.

The networking as part of the programme, and subsequently, cannot be underestimated. The business can see that people are using each other and behaving in much more of a coaching style of leadership. Attendees still network amongst each other and across the business, leading to stronger cross-functional working.

Additionally, the business used this programme to ensure Managers keep using the learnings and benefits for short and sharp interventions, and attendees continue with the Action Learning Group sessions to keep the skills in tune. Applying the learning via projects and action learning at local levels has also been impactful.

THE ROLE OF OAKRIDGE

The Oakridge facilitators were very easy to deal with and having them throughout the whole programme gave a continuity, which proved very helpful. The biggest single difference about Oakridge was their level of expertise and the facilitators, although with different areas of focus, they very much complimented each other.

*Judith Fraser, Senior Associate,
The Oakridge Centre said:*

"The modules ramped up the challenge for attendees, and in the final module we invited four senior team members to sit facing each other in the room for an hour whilst we threw questions to them on post-it notes on subjects relating to the business!! When the seniors leave the room we then get the attendees around a 'Board table' and give them half an hour to identify three 'Must Wins' for the business as they sit in three years' time. It's always amazing to see how they rise to the role, and we can share outputs back to the senior team"

*Richard Bell, Talent Development,
Essar Oil (UK) Limited, goes on to say:*

The Oakridge Centre team were incredibly good and the level of expertise they brought to the programme made such an impact. They were flexible, knowledgeable and easy to work with. They have a genuine interest in people and this was refreshing and appreciated. Sometimes, we under estimate the gap in people's learning when they have been promoted and have a built a career around their technical expertise. It isn't fair to then expect people to lead high performing teams without some support. The network and collaboration, alongside the practical support, has been outstanding."