

MANAGE - Enabling Sheffield's Managers

Institution: The University of Sheffield

Summary statement: This initiative helped raise the profile and value of the management role and enhanced management capability.

Problem/challenge: A growing realisation that Sheffield needed to focus support to improve management capability emerged between 2010-13. The success of the Sheffield Leader in raising leadership skills, combined with feedback from a number of reviews around equality and diversity and 'Investors in People' highlighted this need further. There was management development provision in place, but it was reactive and disparate. 1,400 individuals have line management responsibilities and it was proving very difficult to ensure that those who most needed support (as opposed to those who wanted it!) in improving their management skills and performance received it. The biggest problem however, was raising the profile and value of the management role, both amongst academic and Professional Services staff. Management has traditionally been seen as a burdensome administrative task that detracts from the real business of the University. We needed to change this perception.

Solution/intervention: A University-wide consultation took place with over 100 managers at different levels and in different roles. A cross-University steering group working with several external experts (including an esteemed Professor in Higher Education) drove the process. Two key priorities emerged – developing managers' skills and confidence to have constructive conversations; and helping managers to understand the importance and value of their role (particularly in relation to the application of equality & diversity policies). 'MANAGE' was launched in October 2014, adopting a parallel approach whereby 'core sessions' for academic Heads of Department and key Professional Services roles combine with Faculty tailored provision which uses an organisational development (OD) approach. In its 1st year, 66 sessions were delivered with 738 attendees. Although it's too early to gauge long-term impact, feedback is very positive, particularly in relation to improving the quality of conversations. Learning points include the need for a more robust research phase as part of our OD approach & having a greater oversight of communications rather than relying solely on faculty communication channels.

Key words: Management, Development, Capabilities

Contact: Phil Wallace, p.wallace@sheffield.ac.uk

Further information: <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/sld/manage/year1>