



Case Study

Developing accountable leaders in times of change

"I just wanted to drop you a line to say a big thanks for the last two days! My vision for the programme, back in September last year absolutely came to fruition. The two days were emotional, sometimes difficult and ultimately inspiring – just what I wanted. I must say that you had the perfect style and approach which made the environment really safe and supportive. I am really proud."

Louise Searle, Assistant Director, HR

Arts Council England was undergoing significant changes, due to cuts in government funding. These changes required leaders in the organisation to:

- Become more outward looking and outward focused
- Take clear accountability and tackle performance issues
- Develop a more commercial focus
- Work collaboratively as one organisation
- Be strong, coherent and unified in their leadership

As business psychologists, KO Consulting were invited to support the first phase of a leadership development programme, designed to enhance participants' self-insight, trust and ownership for change.

Having worked with the organisation to develop their behavioural competency framework, we were well placed to understand the culture and how best to set up the process for success. In particular, the legacy of recent assessment centres, meant that the process needed to feel strongly developmental, with any data "owned" by the individual participants.

We designed a two-day "Leadership Discovery" process – an in-depth process of self-exploration, using a combination of 360° feedback (gathered in advance of the programme and externally processed for confidentiality), group tasks, facilitator review, journaling, peer coaching and "real plays". The "real plays" element utilised a team of professional business actors to work with participants in small groups on real-life interactions that they were finding challenging.

Throughout the process, our task was to create the optimal conditions of learning, balancing levels of challenge and support, for leaders going through significant change. As the process progressed, we encouraged leaders to build trust and confidence in themselves and each other, through sharing experiences and feedback.

Each leader left at the end of the two-day programme with a clear, self-owned sense of their strengths and development areas. This helped them to focus their development through the latter stages of the development programme and to understand their role as catalysts for change.

We consistently received feedback from leaders on how insightful they had found the process, and how helpful it was to connect with their peers across the organisation through this challenging time:

"A massive thank you for the last couple of days, I realise that the experience will be one of those positive pivotal events in my professional and personal life. The exercises had a profound effect. I really appreciate your huge wealth of knowledge, expertise and easy going, professional style – you brought together all the stuff I've ever done or read about."

Senior Manager, Arts Council England