

Works-Based Learning - a Manager's Role

Employers' engagement

In order for employers to gain maximum business benefit from supporting the development of employees, managers need to be fully engaged in the work-based learning (WBL) processes. The following guidance outlines the role of managers in the development of their people. Whilst this is valid for the effective management of development generally, it is particularly valid where WBL is applied and business improvement is the imperative.

Identification of Requirements

In reviewing business plans, managers should make a full assessment of organisational, departmental and team development needs. This should include how development outcomes link to improvements in business, departmental, team and individual performance.

Having established the broader business development requirements managers should consider the development of individual members of their teams. Preferably this should be done in a 1:1 discussion, which is focused and outcomes agreed. A development plan should identify learning outcomes and expectations of performance improvement, or increased capability ideally linked to career or succession plans for the individual.

Identification of solution(s)

Through the 1:1 discussion the manager and individual learner should agree the appropriate solution(s) which could take a variety of forms. (Not an exhaustive list)

- Work shadowing.
- Coaching or mentoring.
- Work placement, temporary role change with support or special project.
- Secondment with support.
- In house training programmes.
- External training programmes (accredited & non accredited).
- E-learning with support.

HR support may be required to advise on policy implications of internal solutions, preferred suppliers for external options or research on potential solutions

Select Solution

Managers and the learner should evaluate the knowledge, skill and behavioural implications of solutions to explore the potential for transfer of the learning into the work environment. Well designed WBL processes are far more likely to deliver transferability and sustainability.

If external provision is the preferred option seek advice from HR or seek recommendations on FE, HE or other providers.

If the solution is a corporate approach (i.e. there are a number of employees who would benefit from a common programme) then HR or organisational development would normally procure the solution. This should be done in consultation with managers to ensure the links to improved business performance.

Whether individual or corporate programmes, managers should examine and agree the WBL approach with the supplier (either individually or through a third party e.g. HR).

It is accepted that the cost of the solution is a key consideration.

Supporting the learner

Having identified the solution, managers should play an active supporting role. This can be in a variety of ways – some or all of the following:

- Allowing the necessary time available to the learner to undertake the learning process, including research in the workplace. Agree a contract with the learner if possible.
- Consistently demonstrate that the learning is important in word and actions. Agree with the learner a process for progress reviews.
- Provide input to the development of the curriculum (i.e. what topics should be included) and learning outcomes.
- Provide business focused assignment topics to the development provider.
- Be available for consultation with the learner on work-based projects.
- Be prepared to act as a mentor to learners from other parts of the business.
- Encourage the learner to challenge current practice and be prepared to champion good ideas on their behalf, or, provide sound reasoning if they cannot be implemented.
- Be prepared to attend any programme occasionally to demonstrate interest and support. Attend any formal events e.g. graduation
- Review the impact of the learning with the learner one month to three months after completion.

The above could seem an onerous list. If, however as a result of selecting a solution which you are confident will deliver direct benefits to the learner, to you and to the business, any time spent can give tangible return on your investment.

Steve Dixon

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