



## Developing Client and People Management Skills of Senior Staff

### Context

The nature of business is changing. As competition intensifies so does the need to stand out from the crowd. Technical excellence is taken as a given. To be brilliant today, the successful executive has to combine this technical excellence with outstanding interpersonal skills. These 'soft skills' include the ability to listen, empathise and communicate effectively to a range of people. It requires a good level of self-awareness and the ability to flex one's behaviour and style according to the situation and context. These skills are essential for building relationships, networks, managing staff and encouraging loyalty.

I have worked with senior staff in the professional services, engineering and charity sectors looking to strengthen these skills. Each intervention is different based on the individual needs and context. However the underlying process is the same. Developed and refined over time this process has proven to be robust and highly effective.

### Process

#### ❖ Diagnosis

Experience has demonstrated that a full diagnostic is essential to shaping an intervention which will really work. Typically this will include:

- researching the internal and external strategic environment to understand the drivers impacting on the role(s)
- interviews with subordinates, peers and senior staff to gather an overview of individual performance
- meeting with individual, their line manager and HR Partner to agree
- objectives for the intervention and specific performance measures for the work and timescales

#### ❖ Intervention

At its heart, each intervention is designed to strengthen self-awareness and in doing so prompt behaviour change. The work is based on well-established personal development concepts such as Emotional Intelligence; systems thinking; mindfulness; Myers-Briggs Type Inventory and are delivered via:

- small group learning: this works well in larger organisations where using an action learning approach to bring together peers to share experiences and offer a mutually supportive learning environment
- one to one coaching: providing a programme of one to individualised sessions to explore specific challenges, motivations, concerns and change
- training – full day or half day sessions can be particularly useful for introducing generic concepts or frameworks which individuals can experiment with in their own time

#### ❖ Outcomes

Outcomes are assessed against the objectives and measures identified in the diagnosis. Feedback from clients has included comments such as:

- 'very helpful to have time out in a confidential environment to discuss these issues'
- 'I had no idea of the impact I was having on others. I feel much more in control now'
- 'I feel much more confident about managing difficult situations'
- 'I'm able to manage my stress levels better'