

Developing HR capability at Babcock

Background

Globalisation and growing competition mean that Babcock has to work hard to stay at the top of its game. And being at the top of its game starts with people: it needs the right people in the right roles in the right structure, equipped with the right knowledge, skills, mindset and confidence in order to drive sustainable performance. 'HR capability is critical not just to the success of the function, but to the entire business,' says Kerry Cardew, Head of HR (Corporate Services) for the Marine Sector of Babcock.

In September 2016 the Marine Sector, which, with 12,000 employees, is Babcock's biggest division, made a commitment to develop its HR capability in a business that is changing continuously. It has refreshed the HR strategy and reorganised HR into the 'three-legged' model popularised by Dave Ulrich (centres of excellence, a service centre and HR business partners). It is now working much more closely with the CIPD in order to benchmark its HR capability in these three areas, identify areas of strength and for development, and develop bespoke training and development plans to plug the gaps.

'The essential mission of HR is to strategically manage people as business resources in order to maximise the productivity of the organisation.' Says Kerry.

Aligning ourselves as closely as possible with the CIPD, with its professional standards, respected learning solutions and qualifications, and drive to ensure that work benefits everyone, is vital in helping us to achieve this mission.

'We have a huge people agenda across the Marine Sector and it's up to us HR professionals to lead and deliver that.'



Kerry Cardew
Head of HR (Corporate Services),
Marine Sector, Babcock

'I am really pleased that we are partnering with the CIPD, as our professional body, to deliver these programmes, and I would encourage all attendees to participate fully, learn as much as possible and then deploy those new skills and attitudes back in the business.'

Jonathan Whitworth,
HR Director, Marine
Sector, Babcock



Solution

The Marine Sector embarked on its 'Capability programme', in partnership with the CIPD, last year. **The aim is to develop functional competency in every HR role so that HR can play a more strategic part in the business.**

The pilot programme started in late November, with 12 delegates (typically HRBPs and HR advisers) from HR teams across the Marine Sector. The CIPD conducted a 360-degree-feedback diagnostic exercise to benchmark the group against the CIPD's Profession Map standards for excellence in HR. The Profession Map covers eight behaviours (for example, curious, collaborative, skilled influencer), ten professional areas (for example, organisation development & design, learning and development and reward) and four bands of professional competence.

Each participant had one-to-one feedback based on their results with a CIPD consultant, which helps inform their personal development plan. The CIPD also aggregated all the results, and identified some key capability gaps across the group: strategic HR, influencing others, project management and understanding financial issues. Assuming that the sample of 12 was representative of the wider need, it then set up a series of development workshops aimed at developing these skills across the function.

A second cohort has just completed the exercise, and the programme will eventually cover all 150 or so HR professionals in the Marine Sector.

Outcome

The programme encourages and supports open discussion about individual strengths and development areas, increases self-awareness and insight, and encourages a culture where giving and receiving feedback is the norm.' And at a leadership level, Kerry adds, 'we gained a holistic understanding of broader team development needs.'

The beauty of the CIPD's approach is its 'wraparound' nature, says Kerry. 'Assessment and development are intrinsically linked, the latter based entirely on what the former identifies.'

Some of the benefits were unexpected. For example, because the programme brings people together from different sites, this in itself is building relationships, an HR network and a common language, all of which contribute to standardising – as well as raising – the professionalism of the function.

We are starting to embed a consistent set of behaviours across all HR roles, which will have a positive impact on business, as well as HR, plans and strategies.'

'Throughout the programme we were tutored by HR professionals with a wealth of knowledge in strategic HR gained in multinational organisations. It has been invaluable to compare varying approaches in achieving long-term business goals with people at the forefront.'

'Bringing the learning back to our business will enable us to ensure we have a capable and committed employee in every role through strong business partnering and strategic HR practices.'

Victoria Large, HRBP, (Corporate Services), Marine Sector, Babcock

