Improving performance through better leadership at EDF Energy
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Good leadership is essential for any business that wants to achieve peak performance. Recognising this, EDF Energy - Britain’s biggest electricity supplier by volume and the UK’s largest producer of low-carbon electricity - has been running an innovative five-day leadership development programme since 2014. The programme blends in-person delivery, virtual sessions, digital content, one-to-one coaching, line manager involvement, psychometric tools and peer support, as well as social media and app support. It highlights the fundamental tools, models and behaviours that are needed to lead successfully in the business.

Called the Fundamentals of Leadership Programme (FLEP), it fosters trust, transparency and teamwork and helps individuals to lead with integrity, inspiration, inclusion and impact. The programme not only supports EDF Energy’s mission to be a responsible long-term energy business, it has also helped to create a more inclusive culture where all employees can perform at their best.

“How people are led has a significant influence on how they’ll perform,” said Phil Ball, EDF Energy’s Leadership Development Partner. “Successful leadership is about engaging and motivating others and building solid, successful relationships. This programme equips our leaders to lead better, by using their emotional intelligence to understand themselves and those around them.”

Three independent business units within EDF Energy

The FLEP is utilised by three distinct business units within EDF Energy, who each have the opportunity to send anyone who requires leadership skills onto the programme; this includes first-line and middle managers, project managers, senior analysts or anyone else who has a leadership role within the company.

FLEP evolved from a previous development programme that was delivered by Hemsley Fraser for first-line managers in the UK. In 2014, EDF partnered with Hemsley Fraser and redesigned that programme into a broader intervention that would deliver practical tools, knowledge and skills for EDF Energy’s leaders, with a particular focus on emotional intelligence.

To date, 463 leaders have been through the programme. Jointly-facilitated by EDF and Hemsley Fraser trainers, FLEP runs approximately ten times each year, for cohorts typically comprising 12 to 18 participants. The majority of these programmes are delivered at EDF Energy’s national training centre in Cannington, Somerset - a 12th century Benedictine nunnery was been restored thanks to a multimillion-pound investment.

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**Case Study – November 2018**

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FLEP begins with a pre-course webinar for each participant and their line manager, to agree the learning objectives and explain the manager’s role in supporting the learner’s development. The learner completes an initial psychometric tool which assesses their strengths at work and how these can be put to best use.

In three days of face-to-face training, participants learn about self-awareness, self-management and social awareness. They receive individual coaching and they discuss their personal strengths, their motivations and their values. Each participant writes an ongoing 120-day action plan which they update and share with their peers, via an internal social networking community that supports all participants throughout the programme.

To help embed their learning, the participants spend a month applying their new skills and behaviour in the workplace. During this time, they receive feedback from their manager and they have a one-to-one virtual session with a facilitator to discuss their experiences. To support the application of the learning, Hemsley Fraser designed four interactive eBooks which summarise the programme content and provide tips and advice. The participants also access digital content, modules and resources hosted on EDF’s online learning platform MyCampus.

“As participants apply their learning, they share ideas and experiences, as well as the challenges they’ve faced, with each other and with their line manager,” said Phil Ball. “They soon start to see the world from a different perspective, as they pay more attention to their own behaviour and the behaviour of others.”

The participants then reconvene for two further days of face-to-face training. Here, they cover aspects such as relationship management, unconscious bias, communication skills and ‘quality conversations’. Each participant creates a ‘100 day’ action plan with the goal of achieving a major breakthrough that will have a positive impact within their area of business. They meet regularly with their line manager throughout the 100 days to discuss their progress, whilst reconvening as a group via a couple of virtual sessions. They also have a 50-day coaching review call with a Hemsley Fraser facilitator. The delegates and their managers meet again at the 100th day point, via a virtual reconnect, to share their progress and individual breakthroughs.

To support the participants on their ongoing learning journey, Hemsley Fraser produced a pocket summary card, highlighting the main models of the programme. The card features scanable codes which unlock augmented reality content on a smartphone, via an app, including videos, exercises, illustrations and resources.

“FLEP has developed a very strong brand within EDF Energy” said Phil Ball. “It’s known as a programme that will help you achieve peak performance, by regulating your own behaviour and by managing others who may have a different perspective. This takes self-awareness, emotional intelligence and a recognition of people’s needs, as well as an ability to communicate effectively and build relationships. This programme enables our leaders to focus on issues they can influence, not on things that are outside of their control. We help them to make better choices and adapt their style to become more collaborative and more effective.”

“FLEP has developed a very strong brand within EDF Energy”
Although FLEP maintains a core ethos, the content of the programme is continuously reviewed to ensure it aligns with the priorities of EDF’s business. For example, the key messages from an internal transformation programme have been incorporated into FLEP. These aim to encourage leaders to think and act differently to achieve breakthrough results. Aspects such as diversity, inclusion and working towards a specific project goal have also been embedded. A video blogging tool is now being introduced to help participants create and share their learning journals. Alumni webinars on key topics, such as transactional analysis, are also run for all past participants of the programme.

“The programme helps us showcase the standards of leadership that we expect within EDF Energy and it has embedded a common leadership culture,” said Phil Ball. “The blended nature of the programme has logistical advantages as we don’t take leaders away from their office for long periods. The programme also brings people together in cohorts, from across the organisation, who wouldn’t otherwise meet. These are all positives. However, the real business benefit of this programme is that it equips our leaders with the tools they need to improve the performance of the organisation.”

Formal evaluations of the programme reveal excellent feedback from the participants and their line managers.

“People say that FLEP is the best example of blended learning that they’ve ever experienced,” said Phil Ball. “We have strong level 1, 2 and 3 evaluations and we can demonstrate the impact of the programme with specific ROI data in individual cases. We can state categorically that our leaders have changed their own behaviour and this has positively improved the performance of their teams. Perhaps the best measure of the success of this programme is its longevity. Ours is a cost-conscious business in an intensely competitive sector. Within that context, the internal demand for this programme has never wavered since 2014. The fact that this programme has gone from strength to strength in that time is a real testament of its success.”

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About EDF Energy

EDF Energy is the UK’s largest producer of low-carbon electricity. Its operations span electricity generation and the sale of gas and electricity to millions of UK homes and businesses. The company employs over 13,300 people.

Find out more at: edfenergy.com

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