

Short-listed finalists

- Barclays Business Banking Learning Team
- British American Tobacco
- EDF Energy
- IPC Media
- Nando's Chickenland
- Pfizer
- Somerfield Stores
- Thomson Scientific
- Wickes Building Supplies Ltd



Debbie Langford, from Barclays Bank Business Learning receives the award from Richard Barkey, CEO of Imparta

WINNER

BARCLAYS BUSINESS BANKING LEARNING TEAM

Background

Barclays Business Banking - Medium serves the banking needs of businesses with annual turnovers ranging from £1m to £10m. The key point of contact for the 76,000 business clients is the Relationship Manager (RM) of which there are 650 across the UK.

As the primary sales force they grow personal relationships with both new and existing customers and provide financial expertise to help them succeed.

In 2004 the existing "Academy" which was used to develop this group of managers was not meeting the commercial needs of the business and focused primarily on individual's personal development. Sixty-nine per cent of member's income results had reduced, with individuals moving down the peer comparison league table during their time in the Academy. Further external research was undertaken and indicated customers wanted a more professional RM who truly understood their business and could communicate at their level, echoed by the business' concerns around RMs credibility in the market place.

There was no formal structured career development programme to support both relationship and leadership roles together. Any personal career development was undertaken informally by an individual with support from both internal and external resources available within the business. The Best of the Best programme was designed to develop elite relationship skills and leaders of the future to support the Bank's commercial and succession needs and the individual's needs for stretching career development in their chosen field.

The initiative

In the first quarter of 2005, 40 RMs were selected to be assessed to join the programme, of these 24 were successful in joining the 18 month development project. An internal team of training professionals headed up the programme with external expertise brought in where necessary.

During the programme members were invited to attend both joint and specific events to give them an opportunity to work together as an entire group, specific groups of either relationship or leadership streams and individually.

The evidence from the selection and the initial requirements fed into the project and the offering over the 18 months was very varied. Senior business leaders

introduced the programme, with an 'Apprentice' style assignment of organising a charity auction; exemplars led master classes to provide an insight into their business challenges and practical placements provided an external viewpoint, this included a night shift at Billingsgate Fish market! Each member benefited from their own business mentors and coaches who were either existing leaders or managers in larger relationship roles within the Bank.

These interventions were chosen specifically to meet the business' commercial and individuals' personal needs by: encouraging members to move out of their comfort zones through different experiences and translate those experiences into working practice in their current or new role.

Results

All the members' financial performance was regularly tracked against their peers, to ensure results did not dip and they did not move down the peer comparison league table as had happened previously.

The graduating members were asked to individually submit an assignment detailing the difference the programme had made to them including their financial results, their customer or colleague relationships and their own development. This showed a significant return in three main areas income, career progression and confidence.

Graduating members gave specific examples of the difference the programme made to them both in a business and personal capacity. With numerous instances of how they now had the confidence to behave differently this in turn led to bigger deals, better career progression and more successful relationships.

With an eight times return on investment achieved, clearly this programme has reaped rewards for the business. It has also raised £45000 from the proceeds of a charity auction in aid of the Fifteen Foundation – yet another major achievement for the project.

What the judges say

This was a long-term programme and it demonstrated that reinforcement was built in as a key concept from the start. As a result of the initiative an additional £1.1m worth of revenue was directly attributed to the programme and a substantial improvement in the personnel development of the relationship managers was recorded. ■