

Mentoring for Managers ESI, Environmental Consultancy, UK

Context and Challenge

ESI are a UK leading independent scientific environmental consultancy. They have grown consistently over the last 20 years and now have offices across the country. ESI know that the expertise and knowledge of their consultants is what enables them to deliver results for their customers and is what gives them a competitive advantage in their market place. Like most consultancies or professional services the knowledge held by their staff is the business' most valuable asset.

ESI recognised that this knowledge and expertise was not always being shared effectively across the business and that staff development was dependent on the varied commitment of individuals and managers. ESI's Managing Director knew that a more structured approach would help the business with:

- Talent management and retention, particularly the development of junior consultants
- Business resilience, minimising the risk of knowledge leaving the business
- Finding new solutions to new challenges, increasing innovation, through the sharing of ideas and perspectives
- Devolved and therefore more efficient decision making, with more staff equipped to make decisions and less reliance on senior managers
- Better collaboration across project teams and industry groups, so that successes are shared and lessons learnt
- Staff well-being, research shows that developing yourself and connecting with others has a positive impact on mental health and motivation

The programme would need to have minimal impact on client projects and deliverables.

Our Solution and Approach

Leaderful Action worked with ESI to design a sustainable and structured approach to learning and sharing knowledge. We agreed that this could be achieved through mentoring, with all managers and key technical experts becoming mentors. These two strands were distinct in process and aims:

1. Management mentoring involving regular 1:1s with managers and team members with the aim of embedding learning, development and knowledge sharing in the approach and culture of ESI
2. Specialist mentoring involving 'when needed' input from technical experts with the aim of developing and managing talent for future leadership and expertise

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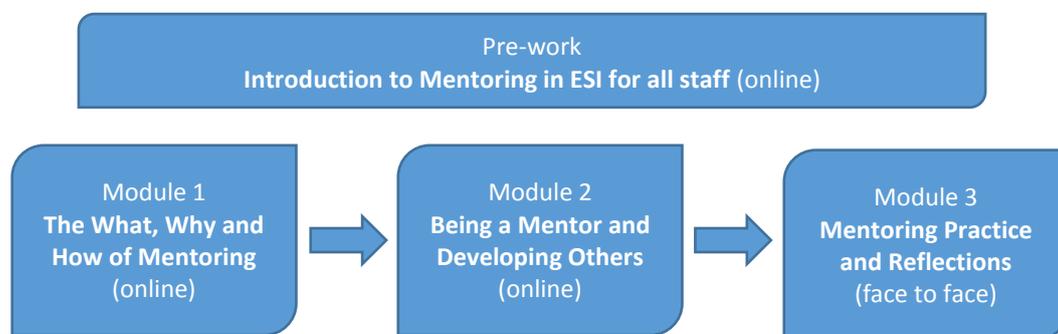
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All mentors undertook a mentoring programme to ensure they were confident, credible and consistent when mentoring individuals. The aim of the programme was to develop the collective intelligence of the business and the individual potential of all staff through sustainable, high quality mentoring. It had the following objectives:

- Develop the mentoring and coaching skills of all managers in ESI
- Enable managers to have valuable, confident, goal orientated mentoring sessions
- Provide clear expectations and processes for the consistent and equitable provision of mentoring across the business
- Build a team of mentors who are committed to developing and supporting others

The programme was a blend of virtual and face to face modules, with online screencasts covering the knowledge elements and the face to face workshop covering skills practice and feedback. The online modules provided flexibility, as managers could access them at any time. There was also a screencast for all staff explaining what they could expect from their manager, helping to embed the process from the bottom-up.



An online library of mentoring resources, was also created at no extra cost, to support the ongoing development of the mentors and provide material to refresh their learning. Follow up face to face sessions will form part of the quarterly managers' meetings, to maintain momentum and share best practice.

Results and ROI

The mentoring programme and approach were well received by managers and technical specialists - with method of learning and programme overall scoring 87%, and facilitator/online tutor 94%. This was particularly important as it was the first time that ESI had provided online training to staff.

Two months after the programme, managers had conducted appraisals in a different style, with more focus on individual development needs and gaining commitment to goals. Managers reported to feeling that the annual appraisal felt more like a more meaningful process. Managers are engaged with the initiative and are committed to being mentors. Most have begun mentoring, and all have sessions scheduled. Managers have also begun referring talented team members to specialist mentors, and the business plan clearly links talent management and succession planning with mentoring. ROI measurements focussed

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on organisational impact, were taken at the end of the programme and will be taken again after 12 months.

Client Feedback

On online elements:

“Loved the mix of verbal, video and powerpoint”

“Flexibility to do the modules in my own time”

“Great – an ongoing resource we can draw on”

On the programme overall:

“Time very well spent and provided really helpful insight which has provoked a great deal of subsequent thought”

“The facilitator was very good at putting everyone at ease despite the material being out of our comfort zone... She exhibited the good rapport building of our topic”

“The facilitator kept everyone engaged and involved and gave positive, constructive feedback”

From the programme sponsor, Andy Singleton, Technical Director:

“Thank you for preparing and delivering the programme of mentoring training. Having spoken with various attendees I feel it was very well received and has delivered exactly what we intended.”



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