

## Unlocking potential and encouraging innovation

**Groupe Aeroplan, the company that owns and operates the Nectar customer loyalty programme, trains 50 senior and middle managers to be in-house coaches to unlock potential within the business and encourage greater innovation.**

### Objective

We wanted to investigate different ways to enable our managers to empower their teams to take more responsibility for their own decisions and actions,” said Gabrielle de Wardener, HR Director at Groupe Aeroplan . “We see coaching as a key people management skill that our managers can use to tap into the skills and experience of their people.”

### Approach

Steps has run two half-day coaching workshops, using drama-based training to show the managers how to incorporate coaching into their management style as well as how to provide feedback and help coachees to improve their performance. After each workshop, the participants reconvene for one-to-one role plays with an actor, in which they have the chance to practise their coaching skills.

Steps developed the content for the workshop after interviewing managers and staff at Groupe Aeroplan. The resulting programme was called Coaching in Management, and the half-day workshop was delivered twice, with 25 senior and middle managers from across the business attending each session.

“We felt drama-based training was the right approach to use, to make this change, as it is such an enjoyable and practical way to learn,” said Gabrielle de Wardener. “Steps quickly understood our business and our requirements. Their actor-facilitators are very skilled and their approach is immediately engaging. They were able to supplement the drama scenarios with coaching and feedback models and practical frameworks.”

Steps actor-facilitators began by acting out a scenario (in a fictitious organisation), portraying a group of managers talking about the management style and culture of their company and about the empowerment and control of staff. The delegates were able to challenge and advise these characters on the issue of coaching and how they could improve as managers and coaches. Following discussions on effective people management and the benefits of coaching, the Steps team role played a second scenario in which a manager struggled to provide feedback and deal with the under-performance of a team member. The Steps lead facilitator presented a model for giving feedback in a specific and non-judgemental manner. The scenario was then re-run, with the audience providing advice to the manager to help him improve his approach.

Steps then introduced the GROW model of coaching - an established, four-stage, practical process which involves agreeing a specific topic, inviting self assessment and offering specific examples, making choices and committing to actions. The Steps team then ran a coaching scene involving a manager and team member, with the audience using the GROW model to guide the manager and help him to coach more effectively.

“All of the scenarios delivered in the workshop were very realistic,” said Gabrielle de Wardener. “The Steps team ensured that the learning content had high impact and was memorable.”

The workshop ended with a review of the key learning points. Each manager was asked to describe an individual and a situation from their own experience, in which coaching would be appropriate. Then the Steps actors brought these situations to life, a week later, in a follow-up session. Each delegate took part in a one-to-one role play, in which they effectively coached the individual they had described previously, with an actor playing the role of that person.

### **Outcomes**

These role plays were challenging but very helpful for the managers. It is one thing to be told about a coaching model, it is quite another to be on show and to have to put the learning into practice yourself” said Gabrielle de Wardener, “Feedback from the workshops and the follow-up sessions has been extremely positive. “ “Our managers are now much more confident about coaching and empowering their teams,” she said. “By developing our managers as coaches, we’re fostering a learning environment and hopefully helping to ensure we retain our talent. We also expect a bottom line benefit because an organisation that can readily tap into the skills and talents of its people will be more productive.”