

Cross-cultural working: building engagement and impact

Objectives

In a drive to become 'the best place to work', HSBC Private Bank in Switzerland were looking for a programme to support its 350 managers in achieving a cultural change. They selected Steps to deliver a programme championing four key 'behavioural principles' and reinforcing role-model behaviours. Steps designed and facilitated the workshops which were delivered in Geneva, Zurich and Luxembourg.

Approach

The four behavioural principles - progressive, passionate, partners and respect - were developed by HSBC as standards of behaviour which would complement the values and objectives of HSBC Group and Group Private Banking. *"We want to improve the customer experience and be a great place to work, as well as clearly define our local principles, so that our customers and colleagues know what we stand for and how we conduct our business,"* said Emma Whittaker, Head of Learning & Development at HSBC Private Bank (Suisse).

Steps visited the Swiss bank's offices and interviewed around 80 staff in order to develop realistic and credible scenarios for the workshop. Each session was introduced by a senior manager from HSBC Private Bank (Suisse) - to underline the top-level support for the initiative - and it featured a short film, created by the bank, in which employees described their understanding of the four principles.

Steps actor-facilitators delivered a number of scenarios depicting characters and situations in a fictional bank. These scenarios featured behaviours that contradicted the four principles and Steps facilitated a discussion involving the characters, in which delegates could challenge the behaviours, attitudes and motivations. We followed this with a forum scenario, within which the delegates interacted and provided advice and guidance to the characters, to help them overcome difficult situations.

A key objective of the workshop was to encourage the delegates to cascade the lessons and the behaviours to their teams. The 'cynic scenario' was designed to show them how to sell the benefits of the behavioural principles to any sceptical colleagues. It was well delivered and well received."

At the close of the session, delegates worked in small groups to review the implications of the four principles, both for the bank and for themselves. Each attendee was given a toolkit, including a PowerPoint presentation and guidance notes, to help them communicate and share the learning with their team. They also made written commitments to 'stop, start or continue' certain personal behaviours, in order to support the principles.

Outcomes/Evaluation

"The managers gained a genuine understanding of our four principles and the behaviours that underpin them," said Patrick Vyvyan-Robinson, organisational change specialist at HSBC. *"They're now equipped to communicate these best practice principles to their teams."* Emma Whittaker added: *"A key strength of Steps is their ability to get people to relax and to participate without feeling threatened. They have a great insight into the commercial world, they instil confidence and they are very skilled at designing and facilitating learning events and emulating behaviour."*

HSBC Private Bank believes the workshop has moved it closer to its goal of becoming an employer of choice. *"By encouraging our managers to live our brand values, this workshop will change behaviour and improve the work environment,"* said Patrick Vyvyan-Robinson. *"We believe it will not only increase levels of employee engagement but that it will also have a positive impact on the financial performance of the bank."*