

Developing the role of HR Business Partners

The Situation

An international f.m.c.g. company has for some time been developing an approach to Human Resource Management based on the 'Ulrich model'. As part of this development HR Business Partners (HRBPs) have been appointed and their role, working alongside business teams is becoming established. This is a significant change of relationship between Line Management and the business' HR community. In order to develop the role further, the credibility of the selected HR professionals as true 'business partners' in the HRBP role must be strengthened.

The Analysis

Working with the central HR team key knowledge, skills and attitudes are defined for the HRBPs including:

Knowledge

- company HR processes and how they can be integrated with the business environment
- key financial measures used by the business and how to interpret them

Skills

- applying LEAN tools appropriately in the business environment to improve operating efficiencies
- facilitating business meetings to improve outcomes and establish a valuable role supporting the business team

Attitudes/behaviours

- the importance of developing appropriate and useful business measures for HR (and other) initiatives
- understanding the urgency and pressure of timely service delivery in a challenging business environment

The Solution

A workshop design is developed by the central HR team which included internal input from senior HR professionals, who use both inputs and a workshop format to enable participants to develop and improve their local HR strategies. A company finance expert coaches the participants on the understanding and application of the available financial data.

In collaboration with these professionals, Richard Smith Associates apply a highly-immersive two-day operational business simulation which allows participants to experience first-hand the challenges and pressures of running a fast-moving, customer-facing business, while simultaneously using LEAN and related tools to analyse and improve the business. The simulation is also structured so that every participant facilitates team business meetings and receives structured developmental feedback. Each participant also refines their facilitation and feedback skills by observing and offering feedback to up to 12 colleagues, under supervision of senior professional coaches.

The Outcomes

Participants completing this development process, working with a wide group of international colleagues, score the relevance of the simulation to this development as 90%, with even higher scores for delivery. One participant has summed it up by describing key learnings as follows:

"Root cause analysis; people plan; change management; teamwork; HR is completely part of the business."

The development process has so far been repeated successfully in Italy, Turkey and Thailand.