

Self-Awareness: A key to senior manager success?

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Involving HR and learning & development specialists from a number of client organisations, Pearn Kandola recently piloted a workshop designed specifically to enhance self-awareness. This article focuses on some of the research that led to the development of this initiative and the impact of the workshop on senior managers.

The self-awareness development workshop was driven by a Pearn Kandola research panel, set up specifically to explore the most important factors in senior management development.

As a starting point, the research explored the internal and external factors that hinder or facilitate management development, both in terms of the organisation (e.g. culture, development opportunities, etc) and the individual (e.g. learning style, career anchors, motivation, etc).

Based on the initial research, the panel went on to investigate whether or not there were similarities in the values and motivations of individuals that were deemed to be making a significant positive contribution to the organisation for which they worked. The results of a large number of interviews with highly rated senior managers concluded that the strongest core values possessed by these individuals were integrity, honesty and respect for others. In addition, the research highlighted that the majority of senior managers interviewed also possessed a high level of self-awareness.

The findings are consistent with much of the research surrounding Emotional Intelligence (EI), of which self-awareness is one of four key attributes. Senior managers with a high level of self-awareness are better able to recognise and understand their own thoughts and feelings and the impact they have on other people. In combination with other elements of EI, this greater awareness of interpersonal style has, in turn, a positive impact on their leadership, decision-making and response to change.

The one-day self-awareness development workshop, based on the research findings from the research panel and our knowledge of the components of effective self-awareness, can be run as a single event or built into other management development programmes. For example, we use elements of the workshop in conjunction with our design of development centres for clients such as Johnson&Johnson, PwC and BG Group.

The workshop utilises a variety of approaches, including interactive exercises, personal reflection, one-to-one coaching and feedback, in order to:

- explore the degree to which the participants recognise their personal motivations, values and preferences;
- raise awareness of the implications and benefits of self-awareness in leadership and management;
- provide guidance on how to enhance self-awareness, and;
- highlight how personal feelings, and the emotions of others, impact on behaviour and the effectiveness of management decisions and actions.




Individuals are instructed on how to monitor self-talk throughout the workshop, recording the key thoughts and feelings they experience. This element of the workshop provides the participants with the opportunity to become more familiar with their 'internal dialogue' and to practise managing negative thoughts via re-framing, thought-stopping and self-challenge. They are also encouraged to consider key themes in their self-talk, such as whether particular situations promote a negative dialogue.

The senior managers who took part in the pilot were extremely positive about the structure and content of the workshop. In a post-event evaluation, they also reported that the workshop had helped them learn a great deal more about themselves. For example, individuals reported that they had a greater understanding of the need to recognise the impact of feelings on behaviour (both theirs and others) and how their self-talk in certain situations may influence their behaviour and success.

For more information on our research into the key factors of success for leaders and managers, please contact Stuart Duff who is our head of development and a partner at Pearn Kandola (sduff@pearnkandola.com).



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