



# Reuters

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HR SUPPORTING BUSINESS  
STRATEGY EXECUTION

## DEVELOPING FIRST-LINE LEADERS TO DRIVE PERFORMANCE

### ABOUT REUTERS

- > The world's largest international news and financial information source, reaching over 1 billion people a day.
- > Distributes its text, data, pictures and video to professionals and direct to consumers via online and digital services; its content feeds newsrooms and financial markets around the world.
- > Headquartered in London, England, Reuters employs 15,300 in 89 countries and had annual revenues of £2.4 billion/\$4.4 billion in 2005.

In 2003, Reuters 'Fast Forward' strategy was introduced to transform the business by making it less complex and more competitive, service driven, and efficient. Managers at Reuters have since experienced significant change in their business units through downsizing, outsourcing, and simplification. The strategy also meant redeployment of activities globally, resulting in the establishment of a major technical development centre in Bangkok, and a data centre in Bangalore, with many new, young managers brought in to manage these locations.

Whilst Reuters Fast Forward strategy is on track to deliver cost savings of around £1 billion by 2010, during this transformation it has continued to invest in management development, which it considers vital to equipping the management team with the skills and behaviours required to lead change.

### MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

A development programme for first-line managers was first introduced in 2001. This workshop focused on getting managers to reflect on their own management style and performance. 'But the organisation has changed and both the content and approach to development needed to reflect that', says Karen Reilly, Management Development Manager at Reuters.

The HR team were clear about the business rationale for funding the updated global programme: 'Our 1,200 first-level managers around the world directly touch half of our organisation,' explains Megan Healy, Project Manager, Management Development in the U.S. 'Each of them has six or seven direct reports, often spread across multiple countries and cultures. Many are in their late 20s and early 30s without vast experience or time in the business. We give them significant responsibility and expect high performance, so we have to do our utmost to support their success.'

Senior team support for the initiative was also driven by an understanding of the links between engagement, productivity, and business results. Megan clarifies: 'In the context of growth, it's imperative that managers are comfortable addressing performance issues. When everyone's at full stretch, performance problems can hold whole teams back, resulting in high performers becoming disengaged. So, teaching managers the skills they need to deal with these issues was critical.'

Karen adds: 'Many of our first-level managers are close to the customer and influence how they view our brand. When our managers change roles, including international moves,



# THE SKILLS TO SUPPORT CHANGE, HIGH PERFORMANCE, AND GROWTH

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**KAREN REILLY,**  
MANAGEMENT  
DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGER, REUTERS

they should know what’s expected of them and influence that brand perception consistently.’

Interviews were conducted around the world to help prioritise training needs to support the business imperatives of change, high performance, and growth. Megan says: ‘Before the redesign we gathered input from those who had attended the original program, and those new to the organization, and identified critical skill gaps. Managers talked extensively about the need to develop good coaching and delegating skills, as we expected, but the need to develop stronger influencing, communication, and change management skills also surfaced.’

## NEW PROGRAMME CONCEPT AND PARTNERING

The next step was an execution plan. Reuters HR wanted to create a learning experience which had sustained impact and provided continuous support to participants back on the job. They decided to find external partners who could support them around the world, with a combination of content, delivery resources, and e-learning tools which would engender a visible and permanent shift in behaviour.

‘We had been working with a supplier to deliver our existing workshop for some time, so it was a tough decision to change,’ Karen recalls. As well as involving five key HR/Learning representatives from across the business, we worked with our Learning Advisory Board (comprising senior business representatives) to ensure the decision would meet business needs.’

Karen and her team invited 10 organisations to tender for the programme. Confirming the partner for the post workshop e-learning/coaching component was relatively simple as few organisations offered what Reuters wanted, but choosing the workshop partner was much more challenging. Three organisations were selected to meet with Reuters stakeholders in New York, Singapore, and London. Karen explains: ‘We wanted to be sure

the partner we chose could support us at a high standard around the world, delivering in at least seven locations’.

Ultimately, the decision was unanimous: Global HR consultancy DDI was chosen. Karen cites five decisive factors: ‘Of course, we liked the DDI course content. Also, we prefer to have facilitators working with our managers who aren’t seen as HR people—the facilitators we met were business people. The solutions were set before us very pragmatically, which we liked; it was clear what was being recommended and what impact it would have.’

‘We also recognised DDI’s large, holistic research base in leadership development at all levels. We knew we weren’t going to be guinea pigs. Not least, we liked the emphasis on evaluation and measurement, giving us confidence that DDI’s focus would be on helping us change behaviours in a lasting way.’

## NEW PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Once delegates are identified for inclusion in the programme, the managers of these delegates are asked to commit to connecting with their people, both before and after the workshop, to helping them build focused and realistic personal development plans, and to providing feedback and resources to implement these.

Participants also complete a 360° questionnaire in the weeks leading up to the event to raise self-awareness. Megan explains the importance of this step: ‘Most of these individuals are high performers in their area of expertise, used to being at the top of their game, so they may be unaware of their shortcomings as managers.’

The first night of the workshop component of the programme, called ‘The Management Challenge,’ kicks off with each participant receiving his or her 360° feedback in a 40-minute, one-to-one meeting with a trained 360° coach, either a Reuters HR representative or line manager, or a DDI facilitator.

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PROJECT MANAGER,  
MANAGEMENT  
DEVELOPMENT,  
REUTERS

The next three days focus on key management challenges. Megan explains: ‘In our matrix structure, our first-level managers are often supervising both direct and dotted line reports, so one key focus was developing influencing skills managers can use without position power. A second is delegating, since we know that first-level managers often struggle to relinquish prior responsibilities as they move into their new management roles. A third area of focus is coaching, recognising the difficulties managers face in coaching versus telling, and in delivering difficult messages.’

Several further components were also incorporated. ‘Change is central to how we work as an organisation, so providing our first-line managers with the skills to lead change while preserving morale is important,’ Megan says. ‘We also have elements on setting performance expectations, energizing teams, and communication—both upward, and cascading information to teams.’

Throughout the programme, participants reflect on their learning, identify development actions they will take to build certain skills and behaviours, and outline the support they will need to seek from their managers. By the end of the workshop, each participant has a personal development plan (PDP) which is discussed and confirmed with their manager back at work.

As to logistics, DDI offers a pool of trainers in each of Reuters five regional locations. Megan says: ‘Utilizing a consistent pool of facilitators in each location has meant that they can take the experiences and learnings from each session and incorporate them into future rollouts.’ Local facilitators also make adjustments for subtle cultural differences and draw on any local business idiosyncrasies for added relevance.

While a powerful experience, Reuters wanted sustainability beyond the classroom. Karen says: ‘We knew we couldn’t get people back together for a refresher when they’ve come from many different locations. So we had to create some momentum within the workshop and then use other tools to sustain it.’ A 10-week online learning and coaching element called ‘The Management Challenge Online’ addresses this.

In this phase, an e-coach works with the group to stimulate and challenge thinking and give feedback during online discussion forums. E-learning is also included. Delegates formally report their progress

in implementing part of the development plan to the coach, whose sign-off is essential for graduation from the programme.

Of course, intent and compliance with the online component may differ initially. ‘This was a huge learning curve for us,’ says Karen, ‘and we’re still learning. For example, we now stipulate that participants must take part in a minimum number of online discussions and be active in the online environment soon after the workshop. These things take time to embed.’ At the conclusion of the whole programme, participants are given recognition with a certificate and a plaque.

## SEEING RESULTS

Now that the first programmes have been delivered around the world, Karen reflects positively on progress so far: ‘DDI’s dedicated project manager has ensured that the rollout has been pretty effortless on our part. We know we have a model here which is scalable and enables us to do things once, properly.’ She adds: ‘DDI has been awesome in getting up to speed with Reuters. We’ve had total comfort and familiarity with them in spite of there being the usual concerns about changing suppliers and how well they would understand our organisation.’

Feedback from participants has also been ‘incredibly positive’, according to Karen. “The Management Challenge” has lived up to its name! Delegates tell us it’s hard work but worth the effort. Further evaluation will involve looking at how we’re doing 12 months after the programme, when we’ll offer 360° follow-up.’

Of the impact thus far, Megan says: ‘The managers who have completed the programme, anywhere in the organization, in any country, now have a core set of management skills to build upon. It’s not as intuitive as one might think for technically skilled people to transition into managing others. Potential to lead is not the same thing as having the skills to do it.’

Megan adds: ‘In addition to developing critical management skills, managers get to network across the organisation. The networks formed in the workshops provide managers with a sustainable support system for ongoing development and offer them the reassurance that they are not alone when it comes to overcoming the challenges of management.’

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