

## Case Study // BAE Systems - Strengths-based Leadership Development and Coaching

### BAE SYSTEMS

BAE Systems is a global defence, security and aerospace company with approximately 107,000 employees worldwide. The company delivers a full range of products and services for air, land and naval forces, as well as advanced electronics, security, information technology solutions and customer support services.

#### The Challenge

The Air Support business unit of BAE Systems was undergoing a significant cultural transformation as their business model shifted. Air Support was essentially an engineering organisation that designed and built aircraft, but was moving to become a more customer-oriented organisation that provided maintenance and support.

In practice, this meant Air Support employees moving to work on RAF bases, working alongside the RAF, and managing RAF people in the process. The business unit employed c. 12,000 people in a variety of roles. These employees were being relocated from two major engineering centres to 12 RAF operating bases across the length and breadth of the UK. This required a significant cultural shift in leadership mentality and behaviour.

#### Capp's Approach

Our work involved working with the Senior Management Team (SMT) of 15 people to undertake this cultural leadership journey. We employed a number of methods in doing so:

- Data gathering interviews with SMT members and senior stakeholders
- Development of a Leadership Success Profile
- Individual and team development from a strengths perspective
- Leadership masterclasses on topics including engagement and communication, strategic management and focus, and strengths-based leadership development
- Individual strengths coaching, including the design, development and delivery of a coach selection and matching process, leading to the provision of one-to-one coaching over a 6 or 12 month period
- Senior team coaching and board facilitation for the SMT as a whole over an 18 month period.

#### Outcomes

As a result of the project:

- Leaders identified subtle changes in behaviour that they had made as a result of the interventions, and which had had a significant impact
- There was significantly greater teaming across the SMT, with people combining in a variety of different ways to deliver the outcomes that were needed
- There were observable behavioural differences reported by peers, staff and direct reports.

Sean Watts, Head of Resourcing for Air Support, said, *"It's all about business performance...What we've found is that because they've embraced it so well, we've got a degree of buy-in now. We didn't set out with the idea of becoming a strengths-based organisation, but we knew that it could pave the way for something that could become an organisational approach in the future... It's playing to people's strengths where possible, but it's also recognising that you need to be fairly robust, particularly at board level. It's common sense."*

## Outcomes cont'd

As a result of the project:

- SMT members reported feeling more authentic, engaged, energised and happier
- They were more focused on what needed to be delivered, and sharper in their decision making
- Above all, they delivered better leadership performance - which was what the project was all about.

This project was also the subject of a joint Capp-BAE Systems presentation at the CIPD Annual Conference in October 2007, and the subject of a *People Management* case study that was published in November 2007.

Reference: Smedley, T. (2007). The powers that BAE. *People Management*, 13 (22), 40-43.