

The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE)

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT - MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

The autumn of 2003 saw the realisation of a dream held for more than 4 years by two men living in very different worlds. Their vision was to join the world of experiential commercial learning with that of academia and create real recognition of work based learning by awarding a university degree.

Andy Carley of Response Development Training and John Wenn of Anglia Polytechnic University believed that organisations and individuals could benefit from an approach that recognises ongoing development within the workplace.

The opportunity arose through a network of providers headed by NBA Training Ltd and the tender for a leadership development programme with the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) in Berkshire, where accreditation of learning was a major requirement. At last the time had come to make the vision a reality.

Andrea Ede, Management Development Manager for AWE was so impressed by the proposals and the real benefits it would deliver to the organisation, she sanctioned the project.

Andrea says "Like many other UK organisations, AWE has recognised that quality leaders are instrumental to continuing to deliver business excellence. We want our leaders to pull the Company forward, not push it from behind! But with any development, the WIFFM (what's in it for me!) is a key driver to their engagement and subsequent outputs.

AWE is committed to recognising leadership as a profession within the organisation, alongside the likes of engineering and science.

In developing our leadership programmes we were keen to establish a vehicle for providing our participants with the opportunity to gain credible recognition for their learning.

With this in mind we have worked with our training suppliers and APU (Anglia Polytechnic University) to produce a staged leadership framework that delivers academic recognition.

Whilst we are at the beginning of the development process, our ultimate aim is to offer our managers the opportunity to complete a Foundation Degree that is driven from work based learning.

This we believe will provide all round benefits: the company with more competent leaders, and employees who can be justifiably proud of their learning achievements and professionally recognised both within and outside the organisation."

Pilots have been completed and the full programme rolls out in January '04 with at least 250 middle and supervisory managers expected to take part. It is this economy of scale which makes the accreditation process very cost effective on a per head basis.

The real beauty of this approach is that everyone wins because it can provide a clear development plan working on genuinely relevant work issues. It can also improve employee motivation through the recognition of their achievements. The other great benefit for the learners is that they have a whole suite of other learning available because for the duration of the programme they will be registered students with the University.

An open day to promote the programme within other organisations is planned for spring 2004 during which representatives from both AWE and Anglia Polytechnic University will attend.