

The British Library

The British Library is the UK's national library, and one of the world's greatest research libraries. The collection was founded over 250 years ago and contains more than 150 million items representing every age of written civilisation. The stock includes books, manuscripts, maps, music, patents, photographs, sound recordings and more.



Project background

Influenced by the UK Government, but also driven by commercial pressures such as increased competition, ever-changing technology and customer needs, the British Library was facing a range of different demands. It needed to compete commercially, while at the same time maintaining its historic position as one of the greatest research libraries in the world. Aiming to reduce costs and increase efficiency, the Library was undergoing significant restructuring.

In order to help the organisation adapt to the changes and challenges it was facing, the Library was already successfully promoting intervention and recommended

leadership as a continuous developmental journey for its managers. But the Library also wanted to supplement its existing programmes to specifically align the skills of senior managers in the organisation with its strategic requirements and goals.

These senior managers were considered to be integral in driving forward the delivery of the changes that were needed in the organisation, so their development was crucial.

It was believed that the development and self-awareness achieved by the senior management tier could be cascaded to staff members lower down in the organisation.

PUBLIC SECTOR

Business needs

- Identification and development of future managers
- Alignment of managers' skills with strategic needs
- Higher self-awareness
- Increased employee engagement

Benefits

- Better, in-depth understanding of senior managers' strength and development needs
- Increased self-awareness, motivation and drive
- Heightened awareness of leadership style

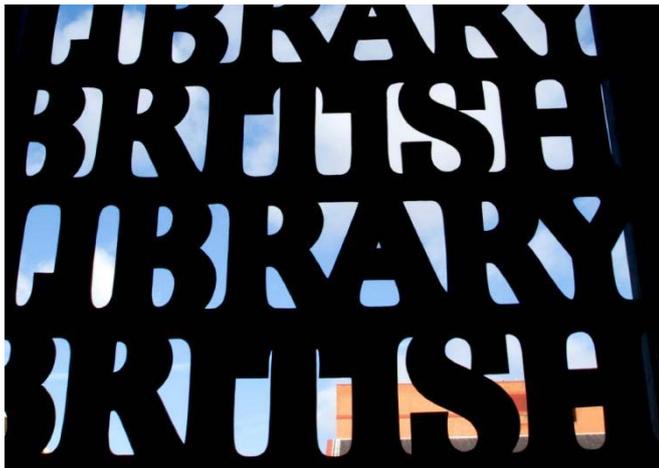
“Slowly but surely the development centres are helping senior managers to appreciate their talents and to provide a framework of support to address their development needs. OPP have played a huge role in making this happen.”

Alistair McIntosh
Organisation Development
Manager

The solution

Working closely with the British Library, OPP designed and delivered a development programme to stretch and test participants' current skills by exposing them to leadership challenges faced at senior levels in the organisation.

The largest part of this programme was a series of development centres for senior managers. The centres were based around a business simulation designed to reflect both the organisational culture and the demands of the working environment that senior leaders at the Library were facing.



The simulation centred on a fictional, newly privatised organisation seeking to achieve commercial independence. This was chosen to reflect the culture shift the British Library was undergoing, but to be sufficiently different from the Library to prevent prior experience or knowledge offering an advantage to some delegates.

The simulation reflected leadership issues that included setting direction and vision for the organisation, working with ambiguity, and managing conflicting stakeholder relationships.

Taking on senior management positions in the business simulation, delegates ran the fictional organisation for the day. Following the simulation, the participants received peer feedback from the other participants on their leadership style and the impact it had on others.

Drawing on observations from the business simulation, the 16PF™ personality questionnaire and a bespoke 360-degree appraisal instrument, OPP consultants also held one-to-one coaching sessions with each manager to discuss their leadership style. This was further supplemented by a detailed personal feedback report, which provided the basis for future developmental planning.

Finally, OPP collated the information at a group level to provide the British Library with an overview of their senior managers' skill levels in key areas.

Results

The programme has seen both individual and organisational benefits. Individually, delegates have been able to take ownership of their own development through increased self-awareness, motivation and drive. This will help them to develop the skills required by the Library to meet its future goals.

Organisationally, it has promoted an awareness of leadership style and a greater focus on the importance of these behaviours.

The group reports have helped the British Library to understand its senior managers' strengths and development needs in more depth.

This will directly contribute to strategic decision-making about talent management for the coming years and help to ensure that people are equipped with the skills required to tackle future challenges successfully.

Alistair McIntosh, Organisation Development Manager at the British Library, comments: "While development centres are not unknown in the public sector, they are relatively rare and are a first for the British Library. Slowly but surely they are helping senior managers to appreciate their talents and to provide a framework of support to address their development needs. OPP have played a huge role in making this happen."

Established in 1989, OPP is one of Europe's largest providers of business psychology solutions. Its market-leading personality assessments include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®), FIRO®, TKI™, EJI™ and Strong™ instruments.

This portfolio supports high-impact results for unlocking business potential and personal development, including team and leadership development, improving communication, building resilience and conflict resolution.

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