

Away-Day to Help Embed Change



Design and facilitation of an away-day for 70 members of the Finance Department of an executive non-departmental public body following a major restructuring of the department

Team Away Day

In 2019, South East Training was commissioned by the organisation to design and facilitate an Away Day for 70 members of the finance department following a major restructuring of the department. The purpose was to:

- Provide the opportunity for staff to voice what it feels like to work within Finance, to surface any issues of concern and identify any further changes that might be required
- Provide teambuilding activities to help enhance trust between senior managers and teams, and enhance engagement with and across teams
- Consider the results of a recent staff survey and gain staff views on possible improvements.

The Design

Our design principles for the event were that the away day should:

- Offer participants the opportunity to air their concerns in a safe space
- Focus on ways forward not just problems
- Be underpinned by genuine and demonstrable commitment from the leadership team to act on the outcomes
- Promote a feeling that participants have an equal voice and their concerns and suggestions are treated seriously
- Offer the opportunity to network and to reflect
- Offer the opportunity to bond as a team around meaningful activities
- Be set in an environment conducive to free thinking with open space and daylight
- Encourage participants to move and use the space rather than be sedentary
- Avoid didactic inputs from leaders or facilitators
- Allow participants some say in the way the event is organised

South East Training is the trading name of South East Training Network Limited

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The Agenda

Following initial discussions with senior managers, we offered the following agenda:

Arrival and refreshments – participants arrived to music, were welcomed and offered refreshments and the opportunity to network prior to the event starting.

Welcome and introduction – a few words from a senior manager about the aims, objectives and agenda for the day.

'Connections' – a short fun activity that helped participants connect or reconnect with colleagues.

Café Conversation – an exercise providing participants with the opportunity to express their views in response to a series of questions in a safe space without the fear of recrimination. The questions were:

- What is working well?
- What is not working quite so well?
- What aspects of working in your area would you change?
- What aspects of working in your area would you retain?
- What aspects of your work make you proud of what you do?
- What do you think could stop Finance from changing or improving?
- How would you or your customers describe Finance?

Prioritising Outcomes – a group activity that involved prioritising the issues identified during the previous activity and presenting back to the wider group. Groups were encouraged to be as creative as possible in their delivery, using acting, song and even mime to share their ideas.

Team building activity – Nuclear Accident – a fun activity with the serious purpose of illustrating the benefits of teamwork. Teams were asked to self-evaluate their team-working skills at the end by looking at the extent to which the following contributed:

- Clarity of the task
- A common focus
- Allocation of roles and alignment with skills and experience
- Level of motivation
- Mutual support and encouragement
- A sense of belonging
- Team spirit

Action planning – groups were set the task of creating a series of concrete proposals relating to the output from the café conversations activity using creative thinking tools.

Looking to the future – the day concluded with a short address from senior management explaining the next steps; how the output from the day would be used and how any decisions would be communicated to staff.



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The Outcomes

Participants fully engaged in the activities of the day and produced seven well-thought through presentations focusing on what Finance should stop, start and continue doing to make working in Finance even better and to enhance their capability to provide support to the organisation as a whole.

Follow-Up

Senior leaders within the department had the task of collating and considering the output to form a strategic focus for the way forward. South East Training facilitated the discussion during a session entitled 'Embedding Change', using the framework of FranklinCovey's Four Disciplines of Execution:

- Focus in the wildly important – WIGs
- Act on the lead measures
- Create a compelling scoreboard
- Hold each other accountable

This format represents a strategic approach to performance improvement extending beyond simply identifying what needs to be done to setting up a means of measuring completion of actions by each member of the group that will lead to the improvement and holding each other accountable for taking the actions to which they have agreed.

As a follow-up to the Embedding Change workshop, it was agreed that all senior leaders and managers within the department would receive one-to-one coaching to support them and their teams through the transition.

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