

## Case Study - Practical Leadership Programme for Network Rail Managers and Supervisors

### Overview

Network Rail has 13,000 personnel who work trackside, 24/7, in all conditions. Ensuring they are led by people skilled in engaging, motivating and making the right decisions in high risk situations is key to safety and high performance.

A business and training needs analysis assessed that a formal learning development programme that would, for the first time, focus on practical leadership skills was needed.

The Practical Leadership Programme (PLP) was introduced in September 2008 and is designed for all operational managers and supervisors within the Infrastructure Maintenance, Operations and Asset Management functions of Network Rail.

Designed and delivered by Benchmark Training Ltd at its national training centre in Moreton in Marsh, the training emulates the world that Network Rail's operational managers work in. The eight-day programme emphasises a highly practical approach to leadership development that allows delegates the opportunity to practice and re-practice essential skills in a safe but highly contextualised and challenging, outdoor learning environment.



### What the PLP Entails

The aim of the Practical Leadership Programme (PLP) is to provide a hands-on, dynamic, action -entered learning experience. This enables operational managers to successfully apply the key managerial and practical leadership skills essential to lead operational teams in the work place. From core capabilities such as leading, inspiring, motivating, communicating and decision-making to practical skills such as scheduling and allocating work, managing assets, engaging the team, dealing with conflict and getting the best from individuals, the whole focus is on ensuring that Network Rail provides a safe, reliable and efficient railway for the 21st century.

### Objectives

The PLP is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To provide delegates with stern, realistic scenario-based challenges that enable them to identify, understand and develop their leadership skills and the confidence to utilise those skills in the workplace.
- To train delegates in 'How to Think' and not 'What to Think'.
- To ensure that Network Rail's operational managers are fully trained based upon a competency framework that incorporates appropriate and relevant behavioural elements in a regulated high risk environment.
- To further improve understanding and integration between Network Rail's business-critical delivery units, maintenance and operations.
- For delegates to review the investment and identify the cost benefits.



# Network Rail

## Benchmark Training Ltd

Benchmark Training Ltd has been a Network Rail preferred training partner for five years. The Company delivered the highly successful SAF 6 Voice Communications Training Project over the period April 2006 to March 2009. Benchmark was selected for the PLP contract because they provide an expert and intuitive insight into leadership best practice. Benchmark undertook the course design, development and delivery of the PLP and, to-date, have delivered training to over 650 Network Rail operational managers. Benchmark have been immersed in Network Rail's culture, environment and understand the language and business issues facing the Company's employees.

Every PLP delegate receives a comprehensive written report identifying their specific leadership strengths and areas for improvement against Network Rail's high performance behaviours. These reports are shared with line managers and provide advice on how best to approach developmental needs. Additionally, all delegates return to Moreton some 4 – 6 months after their PLP for a one day 'Impact Day'. Facilitated jointly by Benchmark and Network Rail, delegates are able to share their post-PLP experiences and identify the PLP learning that they have actioned and its impact back in the workplace. The 'Impact Days' identify a return on investment ratio of some 7:1 which is a remarkable level of payback.

## End Results

One student described the course as a 'life changing experience' and another as 'the best course that I have ever attended in 17 years of service on the railway'. Powerful testimony and ones that probably best sum up the impact that the PLP is having on the moral, motivation and, most importantly, the decision-making skills and self-confidence of Network Rail's operational managers. Behaviours are being changed in a positive, dramatic and, we believe, lasting way that will enable the Company to produce a work force that is entirely capable of delivering its remit of a safe, reliable and efficient railway for the 21st century.



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