

Commercial in Confidence



Investors in People Assessment Report

People and Business Development Limited



Assessor: Dr Garry Hunt
On-site Date: 12th April 2010

The Assessment Network Ltd
Creating value through people

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1. Executive Summary

In my view, the key findings of the assessment indicated that People and Business Development Ltd meets the evidence requirements of the current version of the National Investors in People Standard. I would, therefore, like to recommend that the company should be awarded recognition as an Investor in People. The summary below represents the assessment findings within the context of identified strengths and suggestions for further development:

Key Strengths

- The friendly, open and informal atmosphere . a single team ethos is apparent and many people confirmed that there is no feeling of us and them in the organisation but that everyone's contribution is equally valued;
- The way in which people are empowered to make decisions, take risks and have ownership of their work;
- The leadership, support and sense of purpose given by the senior managers, and by managers generally;
- The focus on service to the client and reviewing and improving performance.

Suggested Development Areas

- Ensure that your objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound). In particular, make objectives quantifiable (measurable) and time-bound where you can so that you know when you have achieved them.
- Make sure that all staff joining the organisation, and those who change job role, have an early opportunity to discuss their key objectives, and the learning and development they may need to achieve them.

- Look for further ways to tighten up your evaluation of learning and development activity (we spoke about developing a learning and development plan which links to your business plan, for example). Ensure that staff are clearly aware of what learning and development should achieve for them, before they undertake it, so that they can assess whether the objectives have been met. Consider formalising your post-activity evaluation a little . perhaps by using simple questionnaires on return from I&d and then again 3 to 6 months further on. The key stages in such evaluation should include:

- a) agreeing learning objectives before the activity takes place;
- b) evaluating the learning on completion . was it effective in meeting the objectives?
- c) asking the learner what needs to be done now to enable them to put the new skills and knowledge into place - (what do they need from their line manager in the way of support?)
- d) 3 to 6 months on . how has the learning been applied? . has it been effective?
- e) asking ~~what~~ what are the measurable benefits for the individual and the Organisation?q

These principles align with the Kirkpatrick model of learning evaluation developed by D Kirkpatrick which we discussed briefly in the feedback session. see, for example: <http://www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm>

- Use the information you get from evaluation to further inform your strategy for staff development. Ensure that senior managers are aware of the investment being made in learning and development (in terms of money, staff time, etc), and of the benefits that accrue as a result.

2. Introduction to the Organisation

People and Business Development is owned and managed by Alison Midgley, a qualified teacher, and her husband Ross, a chartered accountant.

Their previous company was Crocus Early Years, a chain of three day nurseries which - at the time of its sale to the Bright Horizons group in 2007 - provided over 200 places and had achieved outstanding Ofsted results at each nursery. Alison and Ross invested heavily in training and development for their 75 staff at Crocus and this has given them a great understanding of what a training provider must do to succeed.

The company believes in quality, attention to detail and the effective use of technology. For work-based qualifications, it is strongly committed to electronic portfolios, which can be accessed securely by the learner, the assessor or verifier and the employer, anywhere there is web access. This can dramatically reduce the time needed to complete a qualification.

P&B Development is accredited as a centre by City & Guilds and the Institute of Leadership and Management and the company delivers a range of qualifications and one off courses, with particular specialisations in business management and early years practice. It employs only experienced trainers and assessors of the highest calibre.

The company is based in offices close to Haverhill (between Cambridge and Braintree) but covers the whole of Great Britain through a network of home-based assessors and trainers.

3. Assessment and Client Objectives

The objective of the review was to provide an external benchmark against the Investors in People Standard.

4. Assessment Plan

The assessment consisted of interviews with a total of 9 people, representing 75% of those in scope. All of the interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis.

I was able to take away a number of documents from the planning meeting and read these before the review. I was also given access to the company's intranet site which contains a number of additional documents. They included:

The company's Strategic Plan

The staff handbook

The staff charter

Staff lists

5. General Findings Relating to the Principles of the Investors in People Standard

Principle One – Developing Strategies to Improve the Performance of the Organisation

COMMENTS IN RELATION TO

- The strategies for improving performance
- Strategies for learning and development
- Strategies for managing people
- Strategies for leadership and management

P&B Development's mission and aims are clearly stated in the Strategic Plan:

Our mission is: to deliver top quality training and assessment efficiently and effectively to learners of all ages and backgrounds, helping employers to recruit and develop the skilled, qualified workforce which they need.

In order to deliver this mission, we have identified the following strategic aims:

Quality and profit: to develop a reputation for the highest quality and thereby build a sustainable and profitable business;

People: to recruit and retain the best people by paying them well, investing in their training and development and making them partners in developing the business;

Systems: to be known for the quality and efficiency of our administrative and IT systems and our commitment to electronic portfolios; and

Growth: to expand the scale and diversity of our operations without losing the personal touch and attention to detail which is our hallmark.

Whilst there are no formal representative groups as such, the senior managers have

worked hard to develop a structure which allows for consultation during the development and review of organisational plans and objectives. There are also more regular and informal reviews of organisational performance during staff meetings. The informal, friendly feel in People and Business Development lends itself to the informal review of objectives and of performance at the organisational, team and individual levels.

The senior managers and other managers were able to explain how they involve staff when planning and when discussing objectives generally. At the individual level, the organisation has a robust appraisal system in place with all staff receiving a review on an annual basis at least (though assessors, who make up the bulk of staff, also have a monthly meeting with the training manager). The reviews provide the opportunity for staff to discuss personal objectives, how these fit into team and organisational aims, and what learning and development they will need to meet them.

Whilst there are no formal representative groups in the company, all staff were able to confirm that managers maintain effective relationships with them. The inclusion of staff in team meetings and informal discussions, for example, has made them feel that they have a voice in the organisation and that they are able to make valid contributions to planning and reviews of performance.

All staff were able to explain clearly the objectives of the company. Generally, people said that the priority for the organisation was to provide a quality training and assessments service for their clients. All staff were clear that they had the opportunity to develop objectives and to review performance. Staff meetings provide a formal means to do this but there is also considerable informal opportunity for people to make suggestions for improvement.

The senior managers were well aware of the organisation's key learning and development needs, which are identified through the appraisal process, but also through informal discussion on an individual and team basis. They spoke in terms of improving assessment and training, including the provision and use of resources, session planning and presentation. This provides the focus for session observations and supervision meetings during the year. There are also some staff who have recently taken on additional

responsibility, or a new role. They are being provided with appropriate access to external courses and are being mentored by more experienced colleagues.

People explained that the appraisals provide an ideal opportunity to identify their learning and development needs. However, there is also plenty of interaction between staff and their manager throughout the year. The senior managers will observe sessions and provide feedback on performance and related learning and development needs. The organisation also has a strong team ethos and people will often discuss development needs during staff meetings and get ideas from colleagues about how they might be met.

The fact that all staff are involved in the review of the organisational planning and performance also allows them to identify common learning and development requirements for particular areas. Learning and development opportunities are also circulated to all staff and targeted for particular individuals.

Because of the links between objectives at the organisational and individual levels, and the identification of learning and development needs, all staff were able to explain what learning and development should achieve. Assessors/trainers spoke of activities which improved their subject knowledge, and of getting new ideas for lesson plans and learning activity. Support workers spoke about development which gave them a greater understanding of their role and of how to support candidates and colleagues.

Managers have encouraged an open, friendly and informal environment where everyone is encouraged to share ideas for improvement. They have also driven up the quality and scope of the performance management reviews . all staff now have regular meetings with their manager . and the senior managers regularly lead team meetings. There is also a clear ethos, driven by top management, of continuous improvement.

Managers were aware of the different needs and preferred learning styles of people. The performance management system is used, not only to identify learning and development needs, but also to discuss the best way of addressing the need. The open and regular circulation of training opportunities is also encouraged and staff are free to select their own, providing the activity addresses organisational or individual objectives and can be

supported financially.

People were able to give a number of examples of how they had been encouraged to contribute ideas to improve performance. The business has an open culture where everyone is encouraged to discuss their work and share ideas. Staff gave examples of feedback that they were able to give following their return from training courses, for example. The appraisal reviews also provide an opportunity to discuss performance and suggest improvement.

Senior managers were able to describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours they expect of others who have management responsibility. They rightly identified a common set of core skills and knowledge which all managers need. These include inter-personal skills, a proactive management style, being accessible and approachable and having a good level of knowledge relevant to their management area. There are also specific skills and knowledge requirements for each manager. This may include a more detailed knowledge of training and assessment requirements, an understanding of budgetary management, or knowledge of good practice for a particular area of work, for example.

Senior managers were also able to talk about how learning and development needs are identified for managers. This happens largely through the appraisal system. However, it was obvious from discussion with the directors that they know their staff, including managers, well. They will regularly discuss learning opportunities for managers and often adopt a coaching and mentoring role for colleagues new to management.

Senior managers also place great importance on the appraisal system as a means of discussing objectives, reviewing performance and working towards improvement through identification of learning and development needs. They therefore spoke about the importance of managers being able to contribute to an effective review (where applicable), using the framework provided.

Staff comments mirrored those by the directors. People spoke about needing their manager to be accessible and supportive, also to balance providing direction with allowing individuals ownership of their work and freedom to make their own decisions. Others

spoke about the importance of being able to look to their managers for models of good practice and for the provision of informal coaching and mentoring when needed.

Most also spoke about the need for good communication in the organisation and the important role their managers have in ensuring this happens.

Principle Two – Taking Action to Improve the Performance of the Organisation

COMMENTS IN RELATION TO

- The effectiveness of leadership and management
- Recognising and valuing contribution
- Encouraging ownership and responsibility
- The effectiveness of learning and development

Managers emphasised the importance of being available to colleagues as far as possible. The ethos in the company is one of friendliness and informality. Managers will often arrange ad hoc meetings with their team, or sometimes socially away from the workplace. However, there are also weekly staff meetings which provide opportunity for discussion and ideas to be shared.

The team ethos in the business is strong. Managers use staff meetings and informal discussions among colleagues in teams to drive up performance. They were also aware that suggestions from colleagues for improvement are often more easily received, and that this strategy leads to team ownership of objectives and performance improvement.

One member of staff spoke about how they had done some presentations in a team meeting and how they were now observing colleagues' training and assessment sessions and providing informal support as needed.

Managers spoke about the importance of the appraisal process and how they use observation and reviews to monitor performance, provide support and encourage improvement. One manager gave an example of how she had spent time with a colleague, providing informal session observation, team-training a group, and coaching to improve subject planning and delivery. However, managers said that they interact with colleagues on a daily basis and that there are plenty of ongoing opportunities for giving feedback.

They rightly identified that feedback can be most effective when provided at the time (i.e. during informal or formal observation) rather than, necessarily, waiting for appraisal reviews. One manager gave an example of how they had observed a colleague having problems with time management and organising their workload effectively. The manager provided feedback at the time and suggested that the two could work together on the issue. The member of staff subsequently attended some training but still receives coaching

from their manager.

People consistently explained how their managers were effective in leading, managing and developing them. All staff agreed that their managers were approachable and that they could easily discuss problems or ideas with them. Managers in the organisation give staff the opportunity to make suggestions and to try out their ideas. They also give scope for feedback during staff meetings and delegate work appropriately.

People also confirmed that managers support them in learning and development, often providing a coaching role but also helping colleagues to identify suitable learning and development opportunities and delivering some in-house training themselves. People confirmed that managers also provide a sense of direction and vision by agreeing organisational and individual objectives with staff and then encouraging people to work towards them.

Comments I heard during the on-site review and pre-assessment planning included:

~~A~~My [manager] is excellent, she is very supportive and approachable, always available if I need help and advice. But also balances that with allowing me to work on my own initiative and try out new things.q

~~I~~ve never known a boss to be so affirming.q

~~A~~My manager has been great . ~~I~~ve been allowed extra time to find out more about a particular training theme . I went along to another organisation and I have identified some further training which has been agreed.q

~~A~~Managers are very supportive and encouraging.q

~~A~~My manager is very responsive to suggestions and he is a good listener. He will always take time to talk to me, even though I know he must be busy with other things.q

People confirmed that the appraisal system is well embedded in the culture of the

organisation and that observations of work and review happen on a regular basis. Staff were positive about the process: that it provides an excellent opportunity to receive feedback on performance and that the reviews link appropriately with observations and other assessments of work.

Staff also confirmed that their managers are accessible and that they meet together, both formally and informally, on a regular basis. Whilst the appraisal system provides the main formal means for feedback, managers will also provide feedback more informally on a daily basis. Staff saw the comments provided by managers as being positive and constructive.

Managers said that they regularly give praise to staff. They consider that providing feedback on good performance is important. Again, the appraisal system does provide a formal opportunity for contributions to be valued and recognised. However, managers will also take time to acknowledge staff contributions during staff meetings. Managers also commented on how listening to staff, accepting their views and ideas, and acting on them where possible, makes staff feel valued.

People gave many excellent examples of how they contribute to the organisation. All staff spoke about supporting candidates learning and progress. Those who train explained how they are responsible for planning and delivering high quality sessions and that they are constantly looking at ways to improve performance. Office staff spoke about the support they provide for colleagues and how they help the company to run smoothly. All staff were clear that they make a positive difference to the business and its performance.

Anecdotal evidence revealed that managers are excellent in promoting a praise culture to ensure that all members of their team feel valued and recognised. Staff spoke about how the appraisal system provides a formal opportunity for their contribution to be recognised, and for praise to be given. However, they also explained that appreciation is shown in a number of other ways. These include mention of staff efforts during staff meetings, comments and letters from carers, senior managers and the occasional small gift or card. Staff also spoke about how their views are listened to and their ideas for improvement considered. This makes staff feel that their contribution is significant and taken seriously.

People spoke about team and whole staff meetings which are used as a means of discussing ideas and making decisions at individual, team and organisational level. Staff also explained how the appraisal system is used to encourage staff to take on personal projects and lead specific initiatives within their team.

The appraisal system provides a key means of ensuring that people's learning and development needs are met. Managers and staff review performance and assess the need for learning and development support.

Managers are actively involved in staff development . the company places heavy emphasis on coaching, mentoring and in-house training sessions. More informally, managers will be aware of development activities that become available during the year and will circulate details to staff, targeting specific requirements where necessary.

Staff were able to talk about a wide range of methods that have been used to meet their learning & development needs. They confirmed that managers are very proactive in providing support and guidance, and that the coaching style adopted by senior managers is effective and helpful. People also spoke about how they were positively encouraged to seek out development opportunities.

Other staff spoke about courses which had improved their subject knowledge or given them new ideas to try in assessment and training sessions.

People were positive about the induction process, which seems informal, yet well structured and effective. New staff spend time with the senior managers on their first day. They are shown around the premises (usually during the selection process) and receive ongoing support from managers and colleagues.

Existing staff who move to a new job role also have new objectives and learning and development needs addressed at an early stage.

Principle Three – Evaluating the Impact on the Performance of the Organisation

COMMENTS IN RELATION TO

- The impact of learning and development on performance
- Continuous improvement of the approach to managing and developing people

The business has some good management information which both helps to plan ahead for the cost of learning and development (in terms of staff time, cover and cost of training, for example) and enables an accurate assessment of investment in resources. In general, these projections form part of business planning and it is, therefore, relatively easy to see at a glance what likely expenditure and resource commitment there will be in any period. Top managers were clear, though, that they see the organisation's commitment to learning and development as an important investment.

Top managers were clear that learning and development has improved the company's performance. They gave examples of qualifications and assessment-related training which trainers and support workers had undertaken and how this has improved the quality of training and assessment outcomes.

Evaluation of outcomes from learning and development activity tends to be through informal discussion with staff on their return from courses and seminars. However, it clearly does happen. Top managers consistently review learning and development, including their investment in it, and use the review to inform future strategy. For example, past evaluation found that a number of the external courses taken by staff were not proving effective. Courses were often too general and also expensive (typically requiring staff cover, a course fee and travel expenses to be paid). The organisation has, therefore, moved to delivering some of its development in-house, either by bringing in a trainer, working with other bodies in the area or by using its own staff. This means that content can be tailored to the business needs and that several staff can be trained at once.

People were able to give a number of examples of how learning and development activity had improved their performance, that of their team, and of the organisation.

Trainers/assessors spoke about improvements to their practice, including group management, subject knowledge, being aware of student learning styles and using small

groups to good effect.

As mentioned above, top managers were able to give examples of how the management and development of people has been improved in the organisation. Evaluation of development activity also led top managers to conclude that some external courses were not as effective as they might be, for the money and time being invested. This has resulted in more in-house training being delivered, sharper focus on the learning outcomes from development, and expertise within the business being utilised.

People were very positive about improvements that have taken place in this area.

Comments included:

± Since I have been here, I have seen many changes and all of them for the better.q

± We seem to have an even better focus now . not that it hasn't always been good - on improving our performance . learning and development also seems to link more closely to the priorities.q

± really enjoy working here.q

6. Conclusion

Having conducted the assessment in accordance with Investors in People UK and The Assessment Network's guidelines, I am pleased to confirm that, in my view, People and Business Development Limited meets the Investors in People Standard. I would, therefore, like to recommend that the company should be awarded recognition as an Investor in People. May I also extend my thanks to all those who took part in the assessment process for their open and honest feedback in respect of their experience within P&B Development Ltd. It was a very pleasant and enjoyable day.

7. Recognition Panel Feedback

Congratulations on achieving recognition to the Investors in People standard. It is clear that everyone within your organisation has been actively involved in the process to easily achieve the standard as part of your business objectives. Your organisation seems to be exceptionally well-managed and, most importantly, a great place to work. We wish you the very best for the future - welcome to IIP.+

8. Next Assessment

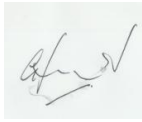
Recognition as an Investor in People is subject to reviews against the Investors in People Standard every three years. Therefore, People and Business Development Ltd will be required to be reviewed no later than 12th April 2013 although it is possible to be reviewed prior to this date. For guidance in respect of future Investors in People review options please refer to The Assessment Network Ltd (TAN).

9. Quality Assurance

TAN is responsible for the Quality Assurance of this assessment and will invite a representative from the organisation to complete a Quality Assurance Questionnaire. This

People and Business Development Ltd

questionnaire was devised and developed by Investors in People UK, with the objective of receiving client feedback in order to provide for a consistent approach to the assessment and recognition process. Further details will be forwarded by TAN in due course.



Signed:

Date: 18th April 2010

Dr Garry Hunt FRSA FIBC FCMI FInstLM FInstAM FITOL MIOB

APPENDIX I

REVIEW OUTCOMES MATRIX

STRATEGIES AND PLANS	Evidence Requirements Met (Y/N)	Evidence Requirements Not Met (List)
➤ The strategy for improving the performance of the organisation	Y	
➤ The strategy for learning and development	Y	
➤ Strategies for managing people	Y	
➤ Strategies for leadership and management	Y	
TAKING ACTION		
➤ The effectiveness of managers	Y	
➤ Recognising and valuing people's contribution	Y	
➤ Involvement and ownership	Y	
➤ The effectiveness of learning and development	Y	
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT		
➤ Performance improvement as a result of investment in people	Y	
➤ Continually improving the way people are managed and developed	Y	

APPENDIX II

Investors in People Assessment Plan

Assessor: Garry Hunt	Date submitted: 03/04/10	
Client: P&B Development Ltd	Assessment type	Please specify
	First Assessment	X
Project number: 10/0581	Standard Review	
	Full Profile	
Onsite dates: 12/04/10	Part Profile/NC	
	Other (e.g. models)	

Summary of Planned Activities

(Please include details of additional objectives and evidence requirements/themes from the framework e.g. Social Responsibility, L and M, Reward and Recognition)

This will be a review against the core standard.

Scoping Rationale

Number of employees/in scope: 12

Total number of sites: 1 (however, assessors are home-based around England)

Number of sites included via onsite: 1

Number of sites included via telephone: 1 (one assessor interviewed by phone)

Interviewee type (TM,M,P)	Number in scope	Number to be interviewed	Percentage
TM	2	2	100%
M	1	1	100%
P	9	6	66%
Totals	12	9	75%

Interview type	Number
One to one	6
Paired/group	1
Telephone	1
Total	8

Summary of Business Objectives linked to IIP Framework

Business priorities/objectives	Related people issues/measures	Links to IIP framework
n/a	n/a	n/a

Evidence Requirements Included in Assessment

(Only complete if assessment includes evidence beyond level 1)

- Included in Assessment
- Not Included in Assessment

Level 1 Evidence Requirements – Good Practice										
Ind \ ER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
Level 2/3 Evidence Requirements – Excellent Practice										
Ind \ ER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1										
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Level 4 Evidence Requirements – Exceptional Practice										
Ind \ ER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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NB: To change cell colour place cursor in cell, move cursor to left of cell and left click mouse when arrow appears to block in cell, right click mouse, select 'borders and shading', select colour and 'OK'. **Remember** F4 will repeat your previous action so if you want to change other cells to the same colour, click on relevant cell and press F4.