

‘I would recommend it to anyone!’ Transferring Leadership Development and Evaluating for Impact at Skipton Building Society

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The paper considers the evaluation of leadership programmes in Skipton Building Society. Recognizing the difficulties associated with achieving a measurable return on investment, the programmes were designed to ensure that evaluation served a variety of purposes including how learning could be transferred to the workplace. An impact assessment, completed five months after the end of the programmes, shows strong impact; the programmes have shifted the culture in support of development. There was a high recommendation for others to undertake the programmes and many examples of ongoing transfer. Critical factors assisting transfer are identified.

Key Words: leadership development, evaluation, transfer of learning

Introduction

Expenditure on leadership development can be significant yet there is difficulty in obtaining value from such an investment. As a classic open skill area, consisting of far transfer tasks (Blume et al., 2010), leadership development and training can only result in application through adaptation to varying situations and in different ways. Therefore, transfer is less likely when learnt tasks and situations are quite different from the transfer setting. Leadership development is a classic example of poor transfer in HRD, with estimates of between 10%-15% return on investment (ROI), even when learning events undertaken are based on good principles of design, content and sequencing (Baldwin & Ford, 1988) and positively rated by learners. As argued by Latham (2007), where learners cannot apply new skills and knowledge at work, there is a waste of ‘time, money and resources’ (p. 3) and this hardly advances HRD’s case in difficult times and especially when leadership development is considered to be a more costly form of HRD.

Of course, transfer in most areas of HRD is difficult, especially for such activities as leadership development, due to the complex range of influencing factors, referred to as the ‘transfer system’ (Holton et al., 1997). Such factors can include the expectations of learners, their preparation and beliefs for using skills, contextual factors such as supervisor and peer responses, and the opportunities for application in the workplace (Holton et al., 2007). But there are also more complex factors such as strategic linkage and accountability (Burke & Saks, 2009) which are more difficult to fathom and it becomes essential to give more attention to the way transfer is operationalized and measured to impact on its eventual reporting. This would suggest the

necessity to move both upstream and downstream of leadership development events to ensure that transfer becomes a consideration at key decision-making points (Blume et al., 2009). We argue in this paper that evaluation can play a crucial part in this process.

In this paper, we will argue for an evaluation model that is holistic to take account of how the wider system impacts on leadership development and vice versa. Following Thorpe et al. (2009) we argue for a model that acknowledges the importance of cause-and-effect connections in evaluation but also considers how learning is occurring within the leadership development events and, crucially, the impact of the wider system or context. In this paper we will report on the results of how holistic evaluation was built into six programmes of leadership development in Skipton Building Society over the last two years, as part of the ongoing process of 16 programmes. We will show how evaluation was used to progressively advance the process of learning for participants and provide data for key stakeholders so important decisions on leadership and talent could be made as well as providing the evidence of impact on organisation performance. We begin with a brief overview of the key ideas on transfer of learning.

Transfer and Evaluation

We argue that in areas of HRD such as leadership development, transfer of learning and evaluation need to be seen as two sides of the same coin leading to practices combined to reinforce each other. While evaluation may well have a variety of purposes, none of these will be of relevance unless there is evidence of transfer of learning taking place in the form of impact on performance and evidence to support impact. If then ends are concerned with the stages towards impact, the means need to provide a way of supporting the stages.

When we speak of transfer of learning, the concern is with the degree to which skills, knowledge and behaviours that are learned during leadership development programmes are “transferred into the workplace, maintained over time and generalised across contexts” (Chaiburu & Tekeleab, 2005, p. 604). Maintenance is concerned with the reproduction of learned skills and knowledge which persists over time (Blume et al 2010) and generalisation is how knowledge and skills which have their origin in a programme are adapted to different environments and situations. However, it has long been recognised in HRD that transfer is a problem which makes any link to a measureable return on investment (ROI) difficult to achieve. Across over 60 empirical studies, for example, Grossman and Salas (2011) found little evidence to support that training transfers into changed behaviours within the workplace, arguing that the act of learning alone, is not sufficient for training to be considered efficient. While there might be some immediate impact, there is evidence of a persistent trailing off of impact over time (Wexley & Latham, 2002).

Transfer over time is particularly felt to be the case with training in skills areas such as problem solving, leadership and management development. While some training involves tasks that are procedural, where tasks which are followed in the same order (e.g. computer software training), transfer is often successful, although adaptation of skills when the order or context changes might be less successful. Blume et al. (2010) refer to these as closed skills and near transfer tasks. By contrast, with open skills such as leadership and far transfer tasks involving the application and replication of skills, these will need to be adapted to varying situations and in different ways, so transfer might be more difficult.

Grossman and Salas (2011) have identified the most prominent factors known to influence transfer, organized into three categories as Trainee Characteristics, Training Design, and Work Environment. Trainee characteristics such as cognitive ability have been shown to affect the processing, retaining, and generalizing of skills learnt, along with such factors as self efficacy, motivation, and perceived utility of training. Training design involves creating a realistic learning environment, behaviour modelling, and the use of self-management strategies. Trained skills are more likely to transfer if practice scenarios encompass characteristics of the work environment and trainees can get feedback and learn from their mistakes.

Work environment, the third category, involves a range of factors such as learning climate, support, and the opportunity to perform or change performance. These are probably the most difficult to deal with by those involved in the delivery of leadership programmes. A recent programme of management training suggests enhanced transfer when the training has some resemblance to work situations (Van der Locht et al., 2013), but such manipulation may be difficult to achieve. The factors have been collectively referred to as the ‘transfer system’ (Holton et al., 1997, 2007) consisting of the key contextual factors that have been identified as part of the difficulty of transfer. Donovan and Darcy (2011) identified preparation for training, peer support, and organisational support as three of the most relevant factors affecting transfer of learning among HRD practitioners, along with perceived relevance of training and trainer effectiveness. Hussain (2011) also identified work support factors such as perceived organisational support, supervisor support, and the perceived validity of the contents of training as important in a person’s motivation to transfer learning. The way that a programme is framed even before it has even been embarked upon, the perceived utility to the trainees’ job role and supervisor support to implement and perform training whilst back at work are all key factors (Gegenfurtner et al., 2009).

A measurement of ROI may become too difficult to achieve or lacking in meaning if there insufficient attention give to key aspects of a work environment such as strategic linkage and accountability. Burke and Saks (2009) suggest that that accountability derives from the strength of links between:

- The pre-training expectations of trainees so they have clear goals and expectations for attendance and what they will learn;
- Trainees’ control over their learning and application into the workplace;
- A strong sense of personal obligation to attend and apply learning and clarity as to what they must do when they return to work to begin to use newly acquired skills and knowledge.

Probably the most important influencing factor on these is the ability and willingness of whoever is accountable for a participant’s work performance to provide clarity to inform expectations. This accountability may need to stretch further up the chain of command. Acceptance of this by senior managers can provide attention to the way transfer is operationalised and measured to impact on its eventual reporting (Blume et al., 2010). Part of the answer lies in the flow of data which emerges from evaluation.

There has been a long standing problem of evaluating leadership development. Working with an assumption of what Garavan et al. (1999, p.193) referred to as a “functional performance rationale”, the argument has been that a linear connection between leadership development,

successful performance, success in organisations and even national economic success can be proposed and sought. Therefore, evaluation should be concerned with proving the validity of this argument, even though, it has long been recognized that proving impact as a kind of cause-and-effect relationship is far from easy in leadership development, based on the difficulties of the “transfer system” referred to above. We need to argue that transfer and evaluation ought to be seen as part and parcel of a process to both show the value that is added by leadership development and contribute to how the value is enabled.

This would suggest that evaluation can serve a number of purposes. The proving purpose of evaluation is just one possibility, although it also matches a conventional wisdom on how evaluation should proceed in leadership development (Gold et al., 2010). However, it is also important to work with multiple purposes, including proving, improving, learning, and controlling, as identified by Easterby-Smith (1994) but also influence (Gold et al., 2010), where data collected can be presented as a revelation of real facts or the ‘truth’ (Clarke, 1999). Given the importance of accountability in the work on transfer, it becomes essential to align learning resources with strategic priorities, using a range of methods to evaluate the contribution of learning. This also assumes that strategic priorities have a role to play in determining which learning programmes are needed (Anderson, 2007).

There has, traditionally, been much attention given to staged or chain models of evaluation such as Kirkpatrick’s (1983) four stages approach and Philips (1996) addition of a fifth stage to measure net programme benefit. At each point, stage or level, data can be gathered to meet the different purposes, including feedback to participants but ultimately to show a ROI. These approaches can be seen as rather narrow which can also preclude consideration of the variety of interests and tensions that can be found in organizations. There have always been criticisms of such ideas for the evaluation of leadership development since it assumes a degree of causality between events on a programme and performance by leaders at work. This is an assumption that becomes difficult to justify when the wide range of variables that are likely to affect leadership performance in the workplace. However, this should not be an excuse to do nothing about measuring the value of leadership development because measurement counts and meets the expectations of a variety of interests (Anderson, 2007).

The difficulties that are associated with traditional approaches to evaluation in leadership development have led to a search for an approach which takes into consideration the different views and requirements for value to be shown as well as enabling the transfer of learning. Such an approach needs to be holistic allowing acknowledgement of cause and effect connection, where they can be made, but also to consider how learning is occurring in events so that impact on the wider context becomes possible (Thorpe et al., 2009). Figure 1 shows a representation of holistic evaluation.

The methods of data collection for evaluation can be chosen to show value of events on the programme but also to consider the impact on the system surrounding the programme or its context. Such evaluation can take account of different views so that it is ‘responsive’ but also oriented toward learning (Torres, 2006). As part of this process, leaders as learners on programmes can also reflectively consider how learning can be transferred but also why it cannot. We would suggest that action learning can play an important part in any process of leadership development (Pedler, 2008). In what follows we consider how holistic evaluation was employed in leadership programmes at Skipton Building Society.

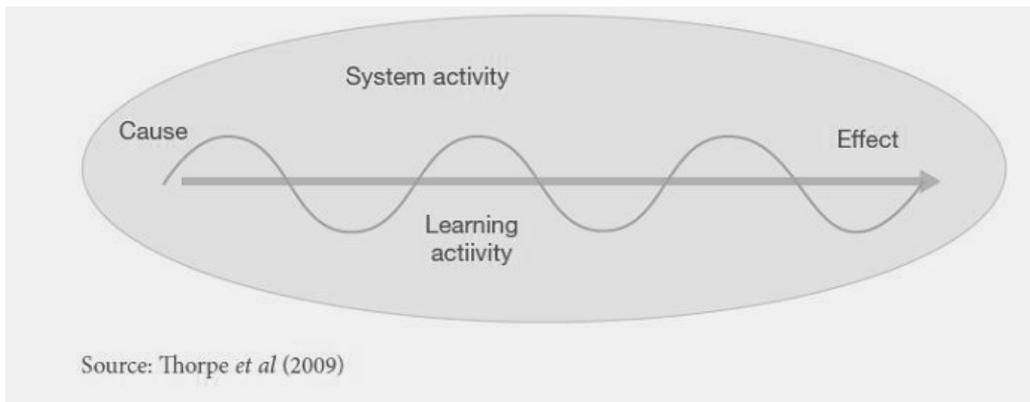


Figure 1: Holistic Evaluation

Background and Outline of the Programmes

Skipton Building Society, is one of the UK's largest building societies¹. Established 160 years ago it provides financial services for around 750,000 customers. It employs over 1,500 people. In 2011, a Modern Leaders Programme (MLP) was designed and launched. The aim was to develop leadership capability and to align leaders with organisational strategy. A key aspect was to develop culture in line with declared values of One Team, Ownership, and Trust. The backdrop was years of underinvestment in people when the organisation was focused on surviving the economic crisis. Leadership capability was variable — there were many talented people but they had not been supported and challenged to realise their full potential. MLP was developed to build capability and shape the culture — for example, by building relationships across the organisation. There was also a desire for a sustainable change and impact on culture by developing leaders as learners, self-directed in their learning beyond the programme.

MLP has run as a 12-month programme consisting of a number of elements. Leaders undertake 360 degree feedback relating to the Society's Values and Behaviours Framework. At the Orientation, they complete a range of activities including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality test, a timeline of their leadership journey, a cultural web exercise, and coaching and feedback skills. A three-way learning agreement is made at the outset between the individual, a coach, and their line manager. This was seen as a way of providing support to learners but also requiring line managers to accept accountability. Groups were also formed into cross-functional action learning sets, who meet every four to six weeks with the agenda created by the group.

Following Orientation, participants attend four strategic modules including People (a coaching workshop), Processes (lean and continuous improvement), Financial Strength (understanding how they contribute commercially), and Customers (customer experience and insight, channels, target customers, brand). With the exception of the People module, these modules are designed and delivered by leaders from Finance, Business Change, Products, Marketing, and Skipton Direct, rather than HR.

An exchange visit is arranged by the participants where they shadow someone from a different area of the business, building relationships between head office and the branch network. Relationships

are further strengthened through the most transformational aspect of the programme, a three-day residential. Here, participants design a cultural task of their choosing and work on it over the three days and beyond. They also give and receive extensive feedback on each other — developing self-awareness, building confidence and providing choices should they wish to adapt their behaviour in any way. Participants can attend a range of optional sessions based on their needs as they see them. They also have the opportunity to take some time out for themselves, with a Pilates class available.

The Aspiring Leaders Programme (ALP) was developed as part of a talent framework to prepare individuals for people management before they move into the role. The programme consists of a development centre and a number of modules built around our values of One Team, Trust, and Ownership. The group are also asked to undertake a group challenge of strategic significance — for example, how do we best communicate our annual Corporate Plan or how do we bring our customer strategy to life for our people.

The Approach to Evaluation

Modern Leaders Programme

The MLP has taken significant internal resource to deliver and the process by which we evaluate impact both for individuals and for the organisation has been woven into the programme design from the outset. Crucially, senior managers from the Executive team or ‘Exco’ are involved throughout. A Steering Group was set up before the programme started with a remit to both receive and provide challenge to the changes (both expected and unexpected) we noticed as the programme developed. We recognised that both quantitative and qualitative measures would be needed. The Steering Group comprises the Chief HR Officer, Chief Operating Officer & Distribution Director, Head of Organisational Development and the Leadership & Learning Manager. The Group met on a six weekly basis and reviewed impact of learning on performance across the Society. Data reviewed includes shifts in 360 ratings for leaders pre and post programme completion, trends identified through the Review and Assessment Process, EOS results. Early decisions for the Steering Group were largely around programme design and pace of rollout. This allowed us to make decisions regarding content, mix of groups to ensure maximum cultural impact e. g. a cohort’s blend of head office and branch distribution. We review the impact on culture in a number of ways. Firstly leaders complete a culture analysis at the start of the programme using the Culture Web (Johnson et al., 2012) and a cultural ‘word sort’. We are tracking the content of both medium and have noticed changes in the way the culture is described across the 15 cohorts engaged in the programme so far, e.g. a shift from “feedback is not valued” to “feedback is valued highly”.

Three-way contracting between a peer coach, line manager, and leader allows clear learning objectives to be agreed at the outset of the programme. A 360 rating on a behavioural framework, current development plan, and performance objectives contributes to the shaping of clearly defined learning objectives. This process is repeated at month 10 and distance travelled in the context of their performance/effectiveness in role is evaluated. We’ve noticed some 360 scores go down as more honest and challenging feedback is both asked for and provided by leaders; testimony to both their enhanced skill levels and recognition of the value feedback can have on shifting performance.

Peer coaching groups have provided leaders with the space to develop trusting relationships with colleagues from across the Society. Over the five peer coaching sessions required, leaders have been able to develop from a directive style of offering solutions and advice to colleagues to a more collaborative and then non-directive style of support. The value experienced is evidenced by the fact that some groups continue to meet long after completing the required number of sessions. There are also 'Alumni' events based on open space enabling those who have completed the programme to come together to create learning sessions with each other.

The Review and Assessment Process provides a clear statement of intent that learning and shifting performance is not optional. At month 13, the Review and Assessment is separate from the learning experience and the Head of OD & Leadership and Learning Manager are not involved in assessing the impact learning has had for individuals. This ensures leaders do not see time spent learning as purely about 'passing a test' at the end of the programme. Two Exco members are involved in of the Review and Assessment days and the highly supportive nature of the day and the time taken to provide high quality feedback has meant that leaders continue to learn through this experience also.

As greater numbers complete the Review and Assessment process, we're noticing where further support is required where leaders of leaders have not provided the support and guidance that their leadership teams have needed. This allows us to provide additional development support where required.

Aspiring Leaders Programme

As noted above individuals are identified and invited onto the Programme after their leadership potential has been assessed via a Development Centre. All individuals receive feedback from this. We evaluate the feedback from the Development Centres to understand what this tells us about our talent pipeline. Since starting the Programme we have noticed the capability of our talent pipeline has started to improve and a direct correlation between this and the fact their leaders have experienced the MLP.

To understand where individuals are starting the ALP, an agreement of learning is contracted with them and their leader. As part of this learning agreement individuals bring data from their current performance and development discussions and their feedback from the Development Centre. The content of the Learning Agreements are reviewed thematically and the design of the Programme is enhanced accordingly. For example, one enhancement has included more content and structured learning reflection added in as this was identified as a priority for a number of individuals. Individuals' learning agreements are revisited at the end of the Programme which supports the individual to evaluate what learning they have experienced, how they have applied this learning and what impact it has had on their current performance.

Alongside the Learning Agreement a 360 feedback based around our leadership behaviours is completed at the beginning and the end of the programme which enables individuals to evaluate progress of their learning.

The Team Challenge that the group work on is sponsored by two Senior Leaders (Director of Operations and Head of Customer Strategy). Regular checkpoints are planned into the Programme for the group to provide an update on progress. The checkpoints provide us with an evaluation opportunity to understand how they are applying their learning from the Programme and impact

on our culture. The content of the Programme is once again enhanced as a direct result of this evaluation to ensure all individuals are optimizing their learning and the impact of the learning is meeting the desired outcomes for the programme.

Impact Evaluation

Both the MLP and ALP have been designed to enable evaluation and transfer of learning to be mutually supportive. As can be discerned, there were some vital elements placed into both programmes to accommodate the variety of purposes of evaluation but also to promote transfer into work performance. These include:

- a. Sponsorship, support, and attention from senior managers.
- b. Use of models of assessment for development that link to the organization's strategy.
- c. Responsiveness to the needs of participants.
- d. Agreement with line manager, coach, and participant on learning direction.
- e. Peer learning to allow articulation of learning and value gained.
- f. Review and assessment involving senior managers to re-set the direction for learning and performance at work.

On conclusion of the formal programmes, the question remained of whether there would be transfer and impact in work performance. These questions formed the basis of an independent impact evaluation, completed with a sample of participants, five months after the completion of the programme.

Aspiring Leaders Programme

For the ALP a group discussion was held in which eight participants were asked to identify three significant sources of impact on their performance at work that they could attribute to the Programme. They were then asked to provide further details of what the impact was, why it was significant, and what value it added to the Society.

Participants were also asked to provide an overall impact assessment and how far they would recommend the Programme to others. The results are shown in Table 1.

Overall impact 1= low, 5= high	4.3
Would recommend to others 1= low, 5= high	4.8

Table 1

There was a good indication of impact on performance, some five months after the end of the Programme. There was also evidence of progression in the Society with movement to new

and higher positions of responsibility, with 79% of participants being promoted into their first Leadership role. This demonstrates a return on investment through a direct reduction in the recruitment budget.

When participants were asked to consider how ALP had impacted on their work by identifying significant incidents, why incidents were significant and what were the benefits for the Society, some interesting themes were revealed.

a. Awareness and confidence

Identified by most participants, there was good evidence of how the Programme boosted confidence and raised self awareness and awareness of others. Connections were made to how action learning in ALP had provided a chance to do something different and boost confidence. For example:

- More consideration of impact on others, how they feel and what the consequences are. Thinking before speaking. Use in many places, branch meetings, sales meeting. The significance is more constructive delivery, no defensiveness and making a difference. This has improved results and built good relationships.
- Movement from sitting in meetings and not speaking through fear of putting views forward, to realizing opinions are valued and able to speak up. Terrified of speaking in front of a group but now happy to hold team briefings and have done the presentations elsewhere. Confidence to hold conversations with others on different levels. The Society saw “something in me that I didn’t see”.
- Understanding differences in styles and personality, allowing identification of strengths and weaknesses which could be put into work, along with dealing with weaknesses. Improvement in teamwork and working with others.
- Identifying development areas with concrete objectives. Having an impact on clients and changing styles to gain understanding.
- Continuous self development, feeling frustrated but now enthusiasm.

b. Feedback, coaching, and dealing with performance

Recognition of how attention to appropriate feedback can result in more honesty and trust, making for a more open culture. Coaching for development and removing problems is contrasted with a telling style of managing. For example:

- How to pitch feedback to individuals, managing workloads to improve performance.
- Coaching to remove problems, developing staff styles rather than telling.
- Importance of giving feedback as communication, raising important issues. Encouraging a forum for feedback leading to more openness in the culture, increasing motivation and team work.
- Honesty with the team, making the right decisions.
- When dealing with under performing, able to consider motivation and desire to succeed at a personal or team level. Results showed the team felt more confident

and motivated shown in an uplift in results despite ‘real’ difficulties in staffing. Team have fed back they are more inspired and engaged.

c. Leadership

An important factor of impact generally agreed in discussions was the development of skills but also understanding the difference between leading and managing. Most did not know the difference when the Programme began. For example:

- A good leader can have stronger impact. We shared our experiences of good and bad leaders and the impact this has had on use. Teams work better with good leadership — they are motivated, empowered, and enjoy work. The skills to make this happen can benefit the Society.
- You need a good dedicated leader to make a good, dedicated, and committed team to produce good results for the Society.

d. Teams

Most participants were in team leader roles, so the Programme impacted on how they related to teams. For example:

- Spending more time to consider how I can motivate the team. Also aware of connecting to the ‘bigger team’. Better results have followed.
- The team are more engaged and willing to see the bigger picture. Connections shared, colleagues invited from Head Office to help develop a rounded view of the customer approach. Visits to Head Office to find out more about working together.
- Assessed team members learning styles before setting out my leadership stall.

e. The Wider Business

During and beyond the Programme, awareness of the Society widened. For example:

- Action learning “opened my eyes” to a wide view of the business. Involvement in the project allowed exchanges of best practice and understanding the impact.
- The ability to work with a larger group from across the business but with varied opinions, sometimes contradictory, although delivering feedback in a constructive way.

Modern Leaders Programme

For the MLP, impact evaluation is taking the form of interviews with a sample of participants from each cohort. To date, 23 participants have been interviewed from five cohorts. The interviews take place five months after the completion of the Programme when a review assessment took place including the setting of a development plan. Each person was asked to identify three features of impact and how this affected behaviour and where possible, measureable results.

Participants also complete scores for overall impact and recommendation of the Programme to others, shown in Table 2

Overall impact 1= low, 5= high	4.1
Would recommend to others 1= low, 5= high	4.8

Table 2

There were a number of themes which became evident from the interviews.

a. Self awareness and skills development

This was a significant impact factor for most. The value of the 360-degree process in the Development Centre and then in the review process was highlighted, allowing the opportunity for reflection on direction and skills to be developed. For example:

- 360 feedback at the start and the end gave me confidence to stretch myself. I am developing strategy and changing our direction.
- Working on setting clearer goals, spending time on myself which allows clarity
- 360 and MBTI provided insight, leading to avoidance of habits. I am planning my legacy and coaching others, with improved results.
- Failure to consider the full picture affected relationships. The chance to step back and plan has had an impact on the team, and process improvement. More fully prepared.
- Move from telling to less directive style involving more listening rather than ‘do it myself’. We are exceeding targets and staff are empowered.
- I was ‘railroading’. Trying to give others a voice now. Other managers also doing MLP, so there is joint journey and the impact is felt in our contribution.
- I have been a teller and a doer. Now I enable others by adapting my style to suit them.
- I consider how I want to be remembered in interactions. This becomes a health-check and it makes a difference in meetings.
- I am maturing and more aware of what my leadership behaviour looks like.

b. Behaviour changes

Covering a range of efforts to change such as assertiveness, tolerance, defensiveness, support for others and consideration. For example:

- I am less defensive, responding to feedback constructively, thinking through before acting.
- I have ‘permission to try’ rather than becoming frustrated and nervous. I am speaking more, trying little things, with impact on relationships based on clearer understanding.
- I find time to develop my skills, spending time on myself and gaining confidence.

- I am less critical, scoring myself more highly on 360 after feedback from others. I held myself back but found my problems were the same as others. We can aim for higher performance.
- Looking for opportunities to stretch myself. More involved in projects. No panics when trying new behaviours.
- I am more considered when challenging. I think about the angles, listen more and take time to present to the business. A strong impact on a recent project, now being rolled out.

c. Confidence and discipline

Beliefs in capability and having the focus to complete tasks. For example:

- Seeking opportunities previously avoided. Less sensitive and happy to take feedback.
- Planning ahead allows control and builds confidence. Diary now in control and a rolling plan for 12 months. Impact through the team who are better supported.
- Energizing rather than scatter gun and making people feel small.
- More discipline and care to explain direction and enabling the team to see it. Renewed every Monday.
- Confidence from reflection and seeing the bigger picture. Gained promotion through MLP.
- Viewed planning as pointless, now see the value. More control and less crisis. Budgets not exceeded and feeling comfort.
- Focus on development and more push. Proactive engagement, supported by managers. MLP has kept alive.

d. Non-directive coaching

This was a key feature of MLP. Coaching as an approach to everyday managing and leading, with a move away from telling to non-direction. This was referred to by most participants and had become part of a culture shift in the Society. For example:

- Move from telling and patronizing to non-direction. Dealt with underperformance through talking through options. Developing further through the Coaching for High Performance programme. It is changing culture.
- I was a 'strong doer'. The change is from 70/30 to 30/70 in terms of my talking. Others now taking on ownership, 'buying in' to their own learning.
- Helping development of a new team. Being asked to coach others outside my team. Applied as a school governor and now a habit to coach. Impact on ownership of performance and relationships.
- Fits well with delegation but able to feel fulfilled rather than imposed. Empowering.
- Shared understanding of the model, getting people to find their own solutions. The team are more positive, the culture is shifting and the awareness of leadership is shared.

- A mandate for skill development. Comfort with a coaching style.
- Coaching to strengths, building confidence. Less reliance on me and coped with a key period with good feedback from the business. Creating a Career Progression Club in the wider team.
- Direct reports now tackle the issues, finding their answers. Comfort with the conversations. Directive when appropriate.

e. Impact on the team

Most participants were managers of teams and these usually formed the focus of impact of MLP. For example:

- Through coaching, ownership of the team has been strengthened with improvements in measurements of results that exceeded expectations
- Empowered through setting a vision, gaining recognition for the branch, exceeding targets, and creating pride in the work. Significant rises in results over three months.
- Working with the team to map processes, peer working, and becoming an open way of working rather than top down. 30% improvement in results
- More in tune with the team. Direct reports in the team of 20 have chance to develop. Costs reduced and new ways of collaboration found.
- Close team all doing MLP, creating trust, unity.
- Use the 360 report to shape conversations. All managers doing MLP creates a joint understanding. MLP is creating a culture for openness to change. Team performance improvement.
- The team became aware of MLP and through my participation, wanted to apply too. A process improvement silver award was gained. There are continuous improvements made. We won a further award in March. The team are proactive in finding benefits.

f. The wider business

The covered key aspects of building relationships across the Society but also beyond. For example:

- Located at a distance from Skipton but the connection with HQ has improved and they have taken on board our feedback. Clearer reasons for change provided and proactive feedback in both direction.
- Broadened horizons, better understanding of finance and closing of 'gaps'. Contact continued with others on MLP.
- Removal of silos, understanding the core of the business. This has raised our profile in the business. Faster responsiveness has saved £20k per year.
- Our team briefings are open to others and vice versa. Raised our profile and seen to be leading by example.

- Understanding our stakeholders, becoming a pivot role between teams and joining up commercial plans with products and treasury. Understanding the languages of each team and translating. Impact of a joined up commercial plan providing a unified voice for the Society.

Discussion and Summary

There have been some crucial business benefits which we argue can be attributed to the ML and AL programmes. Individual learners, senior management, and the Society at large all speak positively of the cultural changes the programmes have effected, including more collaboration across business areas, more feedback, more coaching, better performance management, more openness and challenge. A member of the ExCo has commented that “We don’t know about the issues and problems that would have arisen and had to be dealt with by the top team had we not done this and benefitted from better relationships”. Employee Engagement has risen over the last three years from 77% to 83% as measured in an employee engagement survey which shows the Society is above the norm for Financial Services organisations. 79% of the participants on ALP were promoted in the 12 months since the programme completed. 88% of leaders on MLP gained an Effective rating or above in the Review and Assessment. As the appetite for learning and credibility of the Organisational Development team has developed, the team has grown by 50% and an expansion of Training Room accommodation has been agreed. The organisation itself has been significantly more profitable in the last two years, with a growing customer base and has been ranked 36th in a list of top brands for customer service by an independent survey.

Considering the evidence from both programmes, we believe that there are some key elements that have made a difference in terms of transfer of learning and adding value. Continued and qualitative support from Exco has been critical with support from Orientation to Review and Assessment and beyond. This has also given Exco members the opportunity to get to know leaders in parts of the organisation that they would not normally meet.

Ensuring Head Office & Distribution leaders learn together has been a powerful way for the sharing of learning and the development of a One Team Culture. Line Manager engagement at the outset and programme completion through the three-way learning agreements has meant that line managers take a far greater responsibility for the development of their teams. Throughout all elements of the programme, the delivery team have engaged with leaders and stakeholders in an Adult/Adult way that has engaged even their most cynical colleagues.

A crucial feature of both programmes has been the culture of support. Developing trusted relationships with peers has provided a foundation of support for individuals, not only during the programmes but beyond. These relationships have developed by offering opportunities for individuals to practice and apply their learning in real situations, (coaching practice, peer coaching, coaching pairs, open space). This support has been beyond an individual’s participation programme with informal learning networks emerging. Aspiring Leaders benefited hugely from mentoring support from more experienced leaders giving them the space to reflect, understand how to apply learning and raise their awareness. Those on MLP became very aware of the importance of peer support, a process that has continued beyond the formal completion of the programme. Throughout the programmes communications such as videos and blogs have enabled individuals to share their personal learning journeys and become a story in the culture. This has helped provide reassurance to others with their own development.

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Note

- 1 Building Societies in the UK are financial institutions owned by their members as a mutual organization. Building societies offer banking and related financial services, especially savings and mortgage lending.

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