Management development strategies at Fujitsu Services

Creating a management training academy for higher-impact employees

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In 2005, FUJITSU SERVICES, a professional IT services organization, launched an ambitious management development program: the Fujitsu Management Academy. Involving 2,200 managers based in 13 different countries, participants were able to follow the same, three-stage program delivered in 11 different languages.

The aim of the Management Academy was to develop the company’s existing employees into more effective people managers.

Seeking a multi-dimensional, global approach
Fujitsu Services made this major investment to develop our people managers, many of whom are primarily “technical experts,” rather than specifically trained line managers. The aim of this venture was to improve individuals’ capacity and capability to ensure an increase in their contribution, and help maintain the performance and growth of the business.

Fujitsu Services worked in partnership with a range of organizations to assist in the construction and delivery of this extensive people-development program, including leadership specialists, the Danish Leadership Institute (DIEU).

Local impact on a European scale
As a professional IT services organization, we sell the quality, expertise and excellence of our people. In a market where we sell our integrity, professionalism and reputation, we needed to invest in our people development in order to achieve and improve on our business goals. We recognized that enhancing our people manager capability was key to enhancing the business – results from our employee-opinion survey and feedback from external assessments indicated that this was a key area for us to address. Many of our managers are technical experts by nature and in some cases require people-management training to ensure they’re effective in these key roles.

In 2003, we ran a management-development program for our people managers because we recognized a business need to support this group of employees. Feedback from this program showed us we needed to continue developing this key group of people. This program was very much a “one-size-fits-all” approach and while it was successful in delivering knowledge and understanding, it was clear that a greater definition of leadership and management capability was required and that the organization would benefit from further and continued investment in its managers.

Introducing new management initiatives
As a result, I spent some time talking with key stakeholders including senior management, and consulting a number of external reference points via The Corporate Leadership Council1 (a membership of
senior executives with a shared commitment to steward enterprisewide HR management), to identify where management development might make the most business impact. These investigations identified an obvious need to be more direct with each other and have honest and appropriate conversations with colleagues, clients and stakeholders. Failing to have “difficult” conversations can impede our ability to do business and needed to be addressed. We also identified a need to invest in our company values and beliefs and recognize what differentiates Fujitsu Services from its competitors.

The Fujitsu Management Academy
In January 2005, the Fujitsu Management Academy was created following these investigations. The resulting program has a broad remit for what it will address over a three-year period. People are expected to have more skillful, productive conversations; to request feedback on their leadership style and address leadership challenges; and to develop their understanding of teamwork in the context of Fujitsu Services.

It's certainly ambitious in its scope, so we felt that the most appropriate solution for the program was a consortium approach, working with DIEU and also Oxygen Learning, leadership and teamwork specialists, and Track Surveys, specialists in the 360-degree feedback process. DIEU provides an understanding of leadership's impact on the business and has helped in creating the modular structure.

To ensure a common approach throughout Fujitsu’s territories, an academy “format” was developed, with relevant websites and supporting material maintaining the same style and structure.

Academy structure
Line managers were interviewed before the design of the Academy, to discover what areas would be most beneficial for future participants. This investment of time early on helped to collate information about previous ways of working and helped the Academy designers to create role-plays for the modules, based on actual challenges that regularly confront people managers in the business – for example, dealing with under-performing employees and under-met customer needs.

The result of such research was the development of modules that link theory directly to the business context, and provide activity-based elements which clearly demonstrate to participants what constitutes best practice in a global company.

The Fujitsu Management Academy is described as “rigorous and demanding” and built around three modules (see Fujitsu Management Academy modules’ sidebox, right). The company is currently at the end of module two and is due to roll-out module three to participants in early 2007.

Distributing ideas and matching business needs
The program was designed under quite stringent time constraints – leadership demanded that the content have immediate relevance to, and positive impact on, the business. In a fast-moving industry like IT services, it’s imperative to deliver business results quickly.

By using e-mails and numerous conference calls, the program facilitators across the different territories share ideas without
necessarily being in the same room. There’s also an internal Fujitsu facilitators’ website on DIEU’s server for content and knowledge sharing, which ensures a high level of consistency and sharing of processes that work really well.

During the Academy’s roll-out, continual minor adjustments to program content and delivery have been made. For example, developing additional role-plays to keep the content current and relevant, and building in extra time on module two for 360-degree feedback at the participants request. This has helped the program to be adapted to different country situations – for example, adapting to the subtlety of leadership in France.

Furthermore, a variety of measurement tools such as our Employee Opinion Survey and pulse surveys were used to gauge impact, quality and organizational shift resulting from the introduction of the academy. The surveys have revealed a five-percent uplift in people manager approval – representing a significant shift in employee opinion.

Creating a one-company culture
Rob Pols is country operating officer for Fujitsu Services in the Netherlands. He’s a keen supporter of the Fujitsu Management Academy and was involved in the pilot programs. “The Fujitsu Management Academy is a significant investment in development, but if you want to be the biggest player in the market you need to act as one company, not as separate country locations. To get this message out we need a people-development program that enables all employees to share a common language, management behaviors and attitude,” says Pols. A pilot academy is run prior to final roll-out, including a diverse group of people in order to ensure content is relevant, and that the content, design and methodology meet the learning objectives.

Having difficult conversations, as focused on in module one, gives you real insight into how you act as a manager and a colleague and gives you the opportunity to review how you respond to others. Many participants of the Fujitsu Management Academy found it insightful that there’s a push to be transparent within the business.

“The 360-degree feedback exercise was a valuable opportunity for participants to understand their behaviors that other people see. Although they might have been aware of these behaviors at the back of their minds, it was refreshing for them to confront their behavior and they were forced to think about their attitude,” says Pols. “The Fujitsu Management Academy has encouraged a ‘one company’ culture and in Holland, I’ve been conscious to emphasize when we talk about Fujitsu Services that we’re one unit, not individual operating countries: we may build teams locally, but we’re part of a global company,” he says.

Addressing “difficult” concerns
Despite being midway through the program (see Figure 1, left, for a timeline of the program so far), the results are already positive. We’re starting to see a readiness among the management population to have “difficult” conversations with teams, colleagues and clients. This shows how the program is impacting on individuals’ people-management capabilities and addressing their varied needs,” says Paula Graham, Fujitsu Management Academy program manager (UK, EMEA and Nordic).

The business has proved itself to be up to the challenge. The anecdotal feedback we’ve had from participants, on their learning outcomes from the program, for example, has been very positive, and participants have easily been able to identify how the program has impacted beneficially on their work. This type of informal feedback has been collated by the project team after every module and fed back to the board.

Evaluating the academy’s impact
The evaluation of the program becomes more sophisticated following module two because of the use of the 360-degree feedback. We’ve aligned the 360-degree tool and feedback to the business’ “Reputation Program,” which communicates the organization’s values and beliefs, as well as desired management behaviors and reputation-building factors, to ensure the Management Academy is wholly relevant to the needs of the business.

To achieve a real understanding of how the program has impacted on individuals and the business, the results of the module two 360-degree feedback will be compared to another 360-degree feedback taken after module three.

Matching real business needs
Paula Graham says “Our people needed to be able to match the needs of the business and the challenges presented to them. Despite its size and geographical
reach, the Fujitsu Management Academy is a straightforward program that’s driven by the needs of the business. Good people managers will enable us to become more effective as a business and we anticipate that the program will grow and adapt with the changing business priorities.”

The Fujitsu Management Academy is one of the first development programs within the business that relates to – and is applicable to – all managers across Europe. This approach reflects one of our key business principles: more than one-third of our employees are based outside the UK and this encompassing program will enable a shared outlook and management values to emerge.

Future implications and plans
Approximately 95 percent of all the Fujitsu Management Academy participants so far have said that they would recommend the program to their colleagues.

Taking more than 2,000 managers through the program in their local language across most of Europe was a huge logistical exercise that required impeccable organization and took the program beyond a traditional business-school model or solution.

Following module three, we hope to assess what other development activities are appropriate for our people managers and keep the program moving forward.

EMLOYEE FEEDBACK ON THE ACADEMY

Kevin Hutchins is a service delivery manager with Fujitsu Services and has completed modules one and two of the Fujitsu Management Academy. Here, he provides an account of what he’s learned so far:

Module one:
“This was all about challenging conversations and having conversations you don’t want to have, but that are a key part of moving the business forward. I was subconsciously aware of the importance of doing this course to improve my skills as a line manager, but I think that the program heightened my awareness of it. That’s one of the core elements of development programs like this: you can get stuck in a routine so it’s good that the principle of straight-talking and honesty are reinforced and brought to the fore.”

Module two:
“By encouraging me to reflect on my leadership style, module two definitely made me focus on what I do and how I use my time on a day-to-day basis. Some of the activities during this module encouraged me to review the activities I do each day and categorize them – for example, as people-management or business-development activities. Looking at my use of time in this way has enabled me to make choices about how I use my time and be more decision-led than reactive in what I do. As a result, I also now spend at least 30 minutes each day on my personal knowledge acquisition, which ensures I’m more aware of sector and industry issues and, as a result, makes my interaction with customers more valuable.”

“The feedback from the 360-degree tool was managed excellently. Module participants were brought together in a group that didn’t include our immediate colleagues, so we were able to discuss issues arising from the feedback in a secure and safe environment. The feedback I received was useful and insightful and has enabled me to reassess and refresh my approach to people management. I look forward to doing the 360-degree feedback at the end of module three to see how much things have changed,” he says.