

	<h2>Next Generation Learning @ Work in</h2> 
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Award winning - Truly Global Innovative Blend by PLAN

LMatters
Leadership & Management


UK Winner
National Training Awards 2008

 **HARVARD
BUSINESS
PUBLISHING**

Introduction

This is the story of how a blended management development programme successfully improved the behaviours of managers, based around the globe, in developing countries. Anyone planning a management development programme can learn from this ingenious blend of pre/post 360 degree feedback, online learning, online collaboration and face-to-face workshops.

The Business Challenge

Plan is one of the largest international development agencies in the world, focused on helping children in developing countries. The organisation is growing by 20% yearly and has nearly 8000 employees and 60,000 volunteers: most of whom are in the field making a difference to the lives of more than 1.5 million children and their families. If an organisation like this can cost effectively develop management behaviours, anyone can!

Plan has operated Management Development Programmes since 1993. In 2004 however, following extensive evaluation, the programme was put on hold due to a

lack of clarity regarding how the programme worked; no clarity around ownership by different stakeholders and limited integration into activities and objectives of the organisation and lack of strategic direction.

Clive Moore, HR Director at Plan explains *“If an initiative isn’t working to the high standard we expect, we commit to making it better”*.

A comprehensive Global Training Needs Analysis was initiated by Clive in Jan 2005, which evaluated staff in 37 countries. The Learning and Development team analysed a daunting 30 urgent development needs and prioritised them in 4 key disciplines:

- **Developing as a Leader:** e.g. ‘Strategic Thinking’ and ‘Giving Direction.’
- **Working with People:** e.g. ‘Nurturing and Developing Others.’
- **Communication Skills:** e.g. ‘Negotiating and Influencing.’
- **Business Skills:** e.g. ‘Building Partnerships’, ‘Resource Mobilisation’, and ‘Participation Skills.’

The team at Plan knew that there was a lot to be learned and that students could not be taken away from their jobs for long. As much as face-to-face training was not an option, pure e-learning was unlikely to deliver the required change in behaviours without discussion and practice. So the challenge was to find a combination of learning interventions which would cost-effectively deliver all 30 learning objectives in a way that didn’t just improve knowledge and skills, but developed behaviours as well.



Women attend micro-credit savings group meeting in Tillaberi, Niger

Women in Tillaberi, Niger (a Plan programme country) attend a micro-credit savings group meeting.

Plan is committed to continually evaluating and improving performance, and they acknowledged that previous programmes had limitations including a lack of local delivery, insufficient support and lack of strategic direction. Drawing on this experience they knew the programme would need:

- Local delivery
- Support from the line manager to implement it
- HR support to manage learning experience throughout its duration
- Learning which is aligned with strategic imperatives

Plan had to solve a series of problems including:

- Offering a consistent approach to developing management to recognised standards of competence
- Gaining international credibility
- Aligning the content to HR policies
- Peer-to-Peer collaboration and engagement
- Gaining line management support
- Minimising periods away from the operation
- Supporting online delivering of content
- Supporting comprehensive evaluation
- Enabling in-house programme management

The Learning Solution

Partnership was seen as key in developing a carefully chosen blend and **Clive Shepherd** (an internationally renowned expert in blended learning) was drafted in to mix and match modes of learning and evaluation to meet the challenge. As the programme was all about behaviours, an important decision was to top and tail it with 360 appraisals (from **TrackSurveys**) allowing each learners' behaviours to be scored by their direct reports, peers and manager.

Line manager support is always essential in distance learning, and this programme also required their input in validating the application of learning – a requirement of graduation. So line managers would be given contracts to sign and offered online learning in coaching skills.

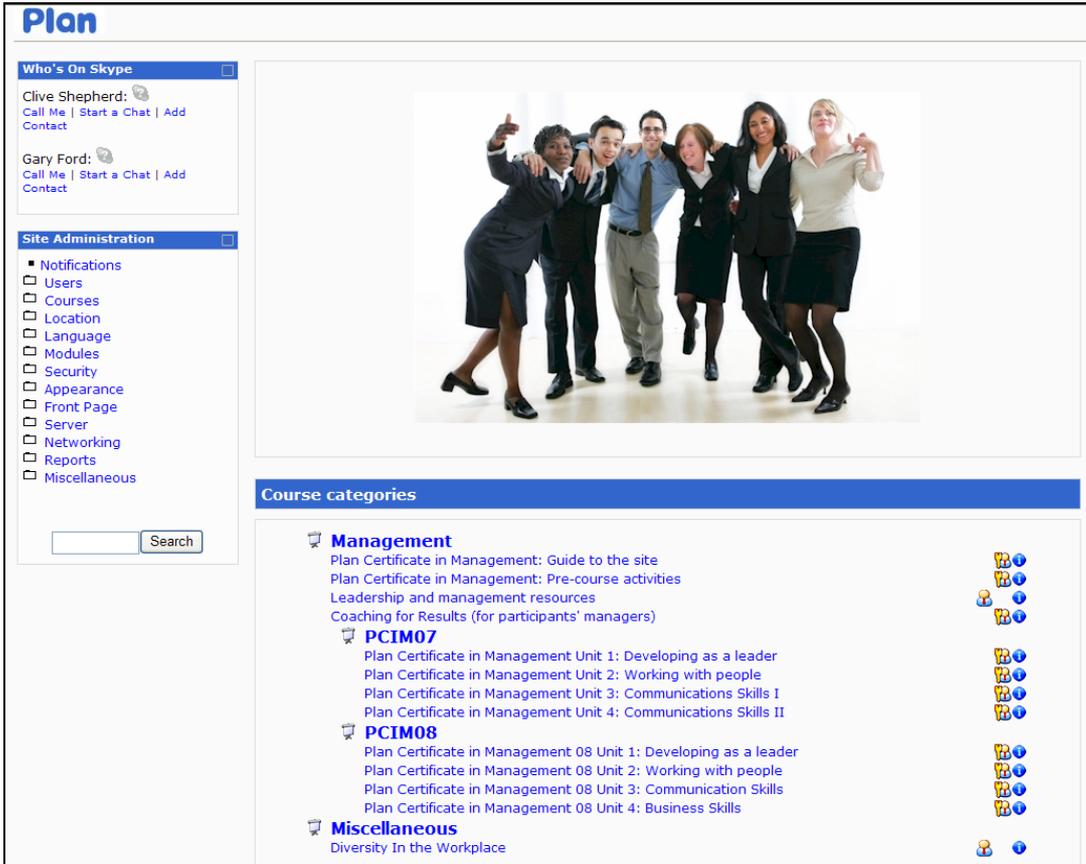
It was then agreed that a blended distance learning programme, (both e-learning and online seminars) had tremendous potential, offering credible, consistent and affordable training. For the online collaboration, Plan used the shareware tool 'Moodle' provided by **pteppic** and invited in a host of expert speakers.

Karen Coleman from Plan's Learning and Development team chose online learning materials, produced by **Harvard Business Publishing**, called Harvard ManageMentor® as they were considered more credible and the materials more comprehensive and easier to absorb than other options in the market place. In

collaboration with Harvard Business Publishing's UK partners, **LMMatters**, Plan then mapped the Harvard ManageMentor modules to their identified key disciplines and behaviours. Finally, there needed to be actual face-to-face learning in the shape of a four day practical workshop, including a series of business simulation exercises, this was designed by working with **Management Centre (=MC)**.

If the Learning and Development team and accreditation board agreed that all the learning objectives had been met and exercises completed, then the students graduated. After graduation it is important that the individuals have the opportunity for continuous development and support. During the course the candidates had found the steps, tips, and tools in Harvard ManageMentor particularly helpful to assist their day to day business activities with their teams, so they now have ongoing access to Harvard ManageMentor.

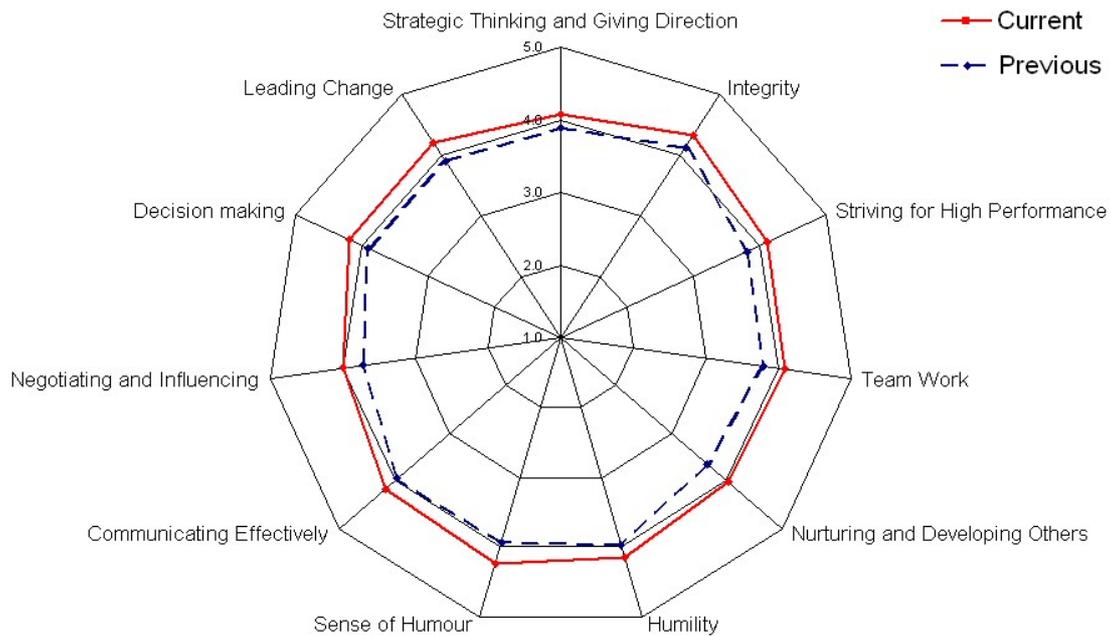
Roll out - The first programme in November 2006 had 21 learners and, with a maximum of 30 students on each intake. At the time of writing, 107 students have now been enrolled. Of the first two groups to complete the programme only 4 of the 48 learners dropped out, meaning a 92% retention rate. Most importantly 33 of the 48 learners graduated by July 2008 (69%), and 9 of the remaining learners are still actively studying, having transferred to subsequent groups.



Example of the Online Course Structure (Administrator Menu)

The impact on staff

The 360 feedback demonstrated just how much of a change there has been in management behaviours. The line managers of the learners, in particular, have observed an average of 45% improvement across the behaviours being developed. Highlights include Leadership & Management and Decision Making improving by 61%, and Leading Change improving by 54%. Immediate Impact on Management Behaviours is shown below:



Plan is delighted with the success of this programme, both in terms of take-up and impact. This is particularly impressive considering just how pioneering the programme has been.



Next Generation Learning @ Work

This programme provides a highly supportive and collaborative distance learning experience featuring:

- Empowering & Informing from the Start
- Self-managed learning
- Line Manager Engagement
- Collaborative & Workplace learning
- Learner Support
- Face to Face Learning

Clive Shepherd, (Fastrak Consulting and Chair of eLearning Network), concludes:

“This is the first example I’m aware of, of an international charity implementing a training programme of this scope successfully. It’s not uncommon for charities to implement programmes that last a few hours; but a year long programme of learning, involving e-learning, collaborative online learning, workplace assignments, coaching and face-to-face work is unheard off.”