Leading the way in this brave new world

“This stuff makes a real difference” says Phil Davies, Social Enterprise Manager at Impact Housing Association based in Workington.

The “stuff” he refers to are the tools and techniques offered by CIH Training’s Four Day Manager Programme. Phil is one of 36 managers and supervisors at Impact who have just completed the four modules as part of the Association’s commitment to innovative leadership; driving and cementing the creative spark that features as a key ingredient to facing up to the challenges ahead.

HR and Corporate Services Director, Steve Holliday explains.

“We spent a large part of 2010 restructuring the teams to ready ourselves for the next five years. We wanted to reinforce our strong performance management culture and ensure that our managers build on their strengths to plan, support, lead, develop and motivate their teams with confidence. CIH’s Four Day Manager fitted the bill exactly”.

This view is echoed by Chief Executive, Mike Muir. “We face a future that requires exceptional leadership. We are absolutely committed to the view that our residents and customers will be better served as a result of this investment in aligning leadership, management and team development to boost long term effectiveness”.

The Four Day Manager has been offered by CIH Training since 2008. Its reputation as both an open course and an in-house course has grown year on year. “We set out to offer a programme the gives managers the opportunity to explore what it is to be a manager and leader; a chance to sharpen and hone those skills and abilities that are really going to make a difference and add value. The programme works on both the practical skills and the emotional intelligence of leaders, finding the essence of who you are as a leader so that others are inspired to follow” says Andrea McDonald, CIH Training Manager.

Phil Davies again, “The reaction level evaluation at the end of each module was amazing. The sense of what’s possible with existing resources, finding common ground and common purpose and having some great tips to tackle tough discussions and difficult decisions left us all with a confidence for upping our game. Barry Smith, the facilitator for CIH Training, has since undertaken a sample evaluation of the program and looked for behaviour change, business gains and outcomes that can be attributed to the programme.

For my part, it gave me more confidence to have a number of ‘powerful conversations’ around performance in which I tackled difficult issues head on, rather than tip toeing around the problem. It also created new “ground rules” for the team – setting the bar higher than before and securing 100% buy-in. Barry ran a great session on ‘coaching’ as a technique for helping managers get the best out of their staff by building on the sometimes dormant, unrecognised strengths of the individual. As a consequence, this clearly built stronger relationships between myself and the staff member, as both of us got a clear sense of progress. Unlike many other learning and development programmes, I’ve been finding that the ideas from the Four Day Manager embed themselves immediately in the way I work and manage staff. With a strong peer group support system around me in Impact, comprising my colleagues who also attended the programme, it means that the
shared learning experience has also bonded managers together in a way that I didn’t think was possible”.

The course is run over four days with space in between the modules for delegates to try out the ideas, tools and techniques back in the workplace. It aims to bring a confidence, ease and flexibility about people’s management and leadership style and offers choice when unlocking thinking and giving fresh perspectives on the issues facing delegates.

The programme’s customer base is growing with strong word of mouth referrals encouraging take up. Open courses are regularly run in London, Birmingham and Manchester and CIH Training has responded to the demand by designing a much wider suite of Management and Leadership Programmes to complement the need for growing demand in light of sector change.

Barry Smith, who facilitated the Impact Programme, has no doubt about the value of the programme’s success. “We designed the course to offer real world experiences and a challenge for Managers and Leaders to go beyond their often self-imposed limitations. We create an environment for success and a framework for enquiry that is quite unique in a programme of this nature.

Aside from the various feedback and evaluation reports, I know that we have got it right when 5 Impact delegates walk across 1.5 miles of snow laden fields in the Lake District (as happened in November 2010) to ensure that they did not miss a module”.

At Impact the next stage is underway with an Executive Leadership Programme and an action learning style programme to keep the creative spark alive and embed their outcomes focus. Mike Muir “There has never been a more challenging time for organisation’s like Impact to engage with fresh thinking. Building sustainable internal relationships, growing trust and freeing up our leaders of today and tomorrow will deliver greater value to all our stakeholders and ensure that we are well equipped for the future”.

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**Case Study**

**Lynsey Buckle, Recycling Manager, Impact Furniture Services**

My team are responsible for running a highly successful social enterprise within Impact. We take donations of mostly used furniture, office equipment and white goods from the public and businesses and then resell these, helping first and foremost those on low incomes to furnish their homes.

All 5 of my management team attended the programme. What we gained was:

a stronger team bond with more openness and trust in what we do

more creativity across our social businesses and furniture projects. (It wasn’t so much thinking outside of the box – we just threw away the box entirely!)

a willingness to tackle difficult issues of performance with staff, in an affirmative and clear manner that takes staff with the managers, not setting individuals against them
an understanding of how to manage change (really important in these difficult financial times)
a deeper understanding of our different styles of management, such that we could adapt these to get the best of our staff members

Lynsey summed up her experience of the course by explaining “As far as training goes, this was something quite special. The growth in confidence and performance of the team managers is palpable. My managers are a healthily sceptical bunch, so they weren’t that sure about taking four days out of their busy schedules to attend. But the experience has paid off tenfold. There’s a feeling of empowerment in the team now, not in the traditional sense, but in the way the Managers have since been able to get the best out of their staff, to create teams within teams, to get everyone feeling more valued and ready to bring forward ideas. I have to say, it’s been much more than just useful – it’s been transformational. Impact as an organisation, Impact staff and ultimately our tenants and customers are going to benefit from this, I’m sure of it”.

Four Day Manager Programme

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For more information about Impact Housing, visit the website www.impacthousing.org.uk. Or contact Phil Davies, Social Enterprise Manager on 01228 633647.

To find out more about CIH Training’s Offers:

- Introduction to Management
- Four Day Manager’s Programme
- Essentials of Leadership
- Performance Management
- 360 Degree Feedback
- STEPS Change Management Programme

Contact Susan Emerton on 024 7685 1772 / susan.emerton@cih.org or look at our website www.cih.org/training/manleader.htm