

Tees Valley Engineering Partnership

First Line Management Training Programme – Case Study

Michael McCabe – Uponor

Background to Introductory Certificate in First Line Management

Following extensive consultation with the engineering sector, Tees Valley Engineering Partnership (TVEP) identified a genuine gap in skills training at first line manager level.

In partnership with MacFarlane (Leadership) Ltd, TVEP has created a practical work-based learning programme, which supports individuals promoted from shop-floor positions into management with little or no leadership training.

The programme, which is accredited by the Institute of Leadership & Management, addresses the behavioural elements and practicalities of being a manager.

The course provides a professional qualification, accredited to NVQ Level 3, in addition to a specific comprehensive vocational first line manager programme.

Case Study – Michael McCabe

Based at Uponor's Aycliffe site, Michael McCabe became the company's first employee to enrol in the TVEP first line management programme. One of four Extrusion Shift Supervisors, Michael, 40, has been with Uponor for 23 years.

"Michael is an ideal example of a promising extrusion operator being given a promotion into a supervisory role, but having to develop his man-management skills 'on the run'," said Michael's manager, Andrew Frifft.

“The need for professional development became a significant issue for Michael as he struggled with the man management of some of the more challenging members of his team.

“To help him with his challenge, Michael agreed to be the first Uponor candidate to trial the approach promoted by the TVEP and MacFarlane (Leadership) Ltd,” he continued.

Uponor had identified a requirement for a Supervisory Management Development programme after recognising that, while most of the front line supervisors had significant strengths in terms of task-based knowledge, there were weaknesses in the knowledge and application of softer team development and leadership skills.

Several training courses were run with the aim of providing up-to-date knowledge of regulatory requirements, world-class manufacturing and management methods and the skills necessary for the adoption of a coaching approach to supervision.

“Through this process we identified a key failing with this training was the lack of opportunity for the supervisor to involve the team in identifying and addressing supervisors’ personal ‘professional management’ behaviour and coaching skills development,” said Andrew.

He continued, “Until we considered TVEP’s programme, this proved to be a difficult issue to resolve, because it went against many of the conventional approaches available at the time.”

The workshop-based structure of the TVEP course offered a highly practical solution to Uponor and Michael’s challenges.

A combination of theory, practical exercises and real work on key issues that are tailored to individuals going through the programme, ensures a

comprehensive approach to skills development.

During the training Michael utilised the 'tool kit' provided by the training programme to establish how he is viewed in the eyes of his team, his peers and his line manager.

"This made a real difference to me," said Michael.

He continued, "As the programme progressed I was becoming increasingly more confident and began enjoying my supervisory role. I had never gone through training like this before but, although I was nervous at the start, the 'hands on' nature of the course and the support of my mentor made the programme really effective."

One of the key advantages of the programme is the peer feedback at the start of each guided learning session.

Each individual gives feedback on work done, the challenges they face and their positive actions.

This offers the opportunity for every course delegate to understand that their individual challenges are not necessarily specific to them alone.

The sessions allow delegates to discover how much in common they all share, even though they may work in different organisations.

At the start of the course, most of the feedback and advice is given by the course tutor, however this balance soon changes and delegates are encouraged to offer advice on how they would handle those challenges themselves.

The structure of the programme allowed Michael to concentrate on building up positive behaviour as well as the opportunity to work on some of the aspects

of his management style that were perceived as negative.

“Michael is steadily developing a more mature and considered style of leadership,” said Andrew.

“Based upon feedback from his team members, he is encouraging a higher level of trust and respect within the team.”

Uponor has committed a further two supervisors to attend the course following Michael’s successful completion of the programme and his ongoing leadership development.

The company is also planning to put the remainder of the supervisor group through the programme in the near future.