

Developing Management and Communication Skills through Coaching

Jackie Williams - Rail Safety and Standards Board

Jackie Williams is the HR Advisor for RSSB (Rail Safety and Standards Board) and has worked in her current role for two and a half years. Jackie and her team are responsible for a personnel of around 180 people. A recent performance review identified a need for Jackie to be more challenging in some of her communication with senior management. Jackie's Line Manager, recommended coaching as a direct and effective way for Jackie to deal with these communication issues.

Jackie spoke to Peter Freeth, Director of *excellerate* and agreed on two 1:1 sessions, around a month apart. Jackie very much enjoyed the sessions and found that many of the solutions came from her talking about the situation and being able to rationalise it

“Peter was very professional and extremely intuitive, he picked up on the (negative) language I was using and was very skilled at making me assess why I thought in a particular way and that I need to take responsibility for my own thoughts and behaviour”. Jackie took the learning from her first coaching session and used it in her communication with senior staff, she then took these experiences as examples to be used in the second session. Jackie also found that the impact of coaching did not just make her a better communicator at work, but the insights learned had a positive impact other areas of her life too.

When asked how she would compare training to coaching, both in terms of learning and value for money, Jackie says “Having 2 coaching sessions was a lot cheaper than a 2-day communications course and I gained a lot more from the sessions than I would from a course. Training is good for technical and knowledge based skills but less effective for personal development and softer skills”.

Being coached by Peter also helped Jackie to work more effectively with her line manager to establish and clarify her own role and responsibilities and feel more empowered as a result. Traditionally Executive Coaching is seen as a ‘luxury’ for Directors and senior executives, but Jackie can see that coaching will benefit all levels, particularly new or junior managers leading their first team.

Would Jackie recommend coaching to others? “Yes, definitely for soft skills such as communication and leadership and where a specific training need has been identified”. Jackie is now keen to further develop a coaching culture within RSSB, enabling others to focus more on the ‘how’ rather than just the ‘what’.