



## 54 Degrees Project Training Premier Foods



### **Action Learning for Project Management**

#### **Project Client**

Sarah Wilson trained internal staff from Rank Hovis McDougall (RHM) across four sites on the use of their new PRINCE2 based approach to project management. When RHM became part of Premier Foods two years later, they approached Sarah to help with the process of updating skills to the new Premier/RHM style processes.

#### **Project Aim**

The staff at one particular site needed support in turning theory into practice. These were the operational staff, the ones making the cakes, who did not see themselves as project managers and the process did not come naturally, therefore a practical approach was needed to suited their learning style.

After a process of facilitated discussions and based on recommendations from Sarah, the training became action learning and was carried out in small groups. Each person to be trained was leading a small to medium sized project and would be coached through the project in short sessions

alongside other members of their action learning group. At each of these sessions action points for a project would be agreed and worked on prior to the next session.

To get the best value out of the coaching, the action learning groups met between sessions to support each other and to agree on queries to bring to the next session. Each coaching session was then led by the queries or areas of concern raised by the group, and individuals facilitated their own solutions to each other's issues.

There are many benefits to this action learning approach, one being the development of a self-supporting group of project managers who can then be used to support new project managers coming through the organisation.

#### **Project Result**

There were numerous reasons for the success of this approach to the training:

1. It allowed a very hands-on, practical approach to applying the internal processes, and for the delegates it was the



perfect learning environment.

Each session took only 1½ hours out of their day and enabled them to move their project forward

2. It allowed them to cherry pick the most appropriate elements of the standard process and apply them to these smaller projects. This eliminated the bureaucracy which often frustrates the manager of this type of project.
3. The projects moved at different speeds throughout the coaching process. This allowed new skills and techniques to be embedded as they were reiterated.
4. The small group approach left the organisation with a sustainable project support network.
5. The use of real projects ensured that each individual could see the approach applied to something meaningful to them and they could apply it in real time to real project challenges. There is no better way to learn – and as an added bonus, business is getting done during the sessions!

*“Sarah was an invaluable asset during the introduction of the new processes. Her enthusiastic and skilful approach to the training encouraged everyone to have a go with the new tools. Sarah’s experience, creativity and ability to adapt to the needs of the customer gave us a completely new way of introducing the tools to new project managers, which has been very successful.”*

**People Development Manager, Premier Foods**

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