

Peel Energy

The Peel Group is a leading real estate, transport and infrastructure investment company with assets under management of £6bn, employing some 5,000 people.

From April 2002, the UK government introduced a new Renewables Obligation, which requires that all electricity suppliers in Great Britain are obliged to take a specific proportion of their electricity from eligible renewables, currently standing at 20%. Given that suppliers must pay extra for green energy or else face a steep fine, this has made green energy both in-demand and lucrative.

Peel has a UK Property portfolio that consists of over 9 million square feet of investment property and over 27,000 acres of land. Much of this land is in locations such as Scotland, Yorkshire and Kent – prime sites for renewable energy. In addition, Peel has a heritage of supporting low carbon energy projects over the last 20 years. As a result Peel recently made a corporate decision to place themselves at the forefront of delivering low carbon energy to the UK by bringing together a series of low-carbon energy projects from a variety of their group businesses to create a new enterprise called Peel Energy.

The Challenges

Owen Michaelson, Peel's Corporate Development Director, was charged with building the Peel Energy enterprise. In doing so, he inherited different members of the top teams from various Peel group companies. It was therefore one of his main priorities to bring the team together as a high-performing unit, but he found himself faced with three challenges. The first challenge was that no members of the team had worked together before. How could they start a new business enterprise when the whole group had never even met?

Owen's second challenge was how to best distribute work throughout the team. He had not worked with most of the team members before

and the company structure meant that even while he was spearheading Peel Energy they would not report to him directly. How could Owen delegate work efficiently within the group without knowing the strengths and weaknesses of its individual members?

The final challenge was to begin to integrate training and development into Peel Energy. As a company, Peel does not have a large training section; the company started in 1920 from an old Lancashire Mill and has remained traditional in its approach to human resources. Owen quickly saw that his pressing need to bring a team together could also provide a catalyst for Peel Energy to dip a toe into motivational training and assess whether this approach could reap benefits for the company.

Enabling Visions

Enabling Visions is a performance development company that works with leaders and teams to maximise their success. **Enabling Visions** specialises in helping teams become more effective in meeting their shared goals through the use of team coaching, leadership coaching and psychological profiling.

Owen Michaelson had met with Trayton Vance, Managing Director of **Enabling Visions**, several times over the past few years. He felt that Enabling Visions broad portfolio of skills was a good match for his business challenges and he was also impressed by Trayton's pragmatic and authentic approach.

The Event

Owen and Trayton worked together to plan a two-day event for the top team that would encompass a combination of psychological profiling, group tasks, individual presentations and an examination of communication skills. Owen knew that in order to achieve his goals everyone would have to give one hundred percent during the event. His main concern was that some individuals had been working for Peel for as long as nine years without undertaking a training course; would they feel the



off-site was a waste of time and hold back on constructive input?

To minimise this risk, Owen agreed for the event to be held off-site in the Peak District, despite the fact that Peel has its own venues, hoping that the change of location would encourage people to give their all. In the event, Owen's concerns were unfounded; under the facilitation of Enabling Visions all his team contributed fully to both days.

Psychological Profiling

For Owen, the most useful and fascinating part of the event was the psychological profiling. Before the trip, he knew that he had to make decisions about what roles to allocate to his team members and was concerned that he knew so little about them he would have to make the decisions virtually blindfolded. As a result of the profiling, he felt he got a good grasp of the team's individual strengths and weaknesses, allowing him to gain a better understanding of their potential capabilities. This improved his judgment when he returned to the office and began assigning tasks. In two cases it even gave him the confidence to promote members of his team after realising they were capable of performing at a higher level than their previous roles had allowed.

Communication Skills

Another part of the day that had a positive effect was the delivery of exercises on communication skills. In the past, some members of the team had an overly blunt communication style, simply sharing their message in a rudimentary way and then feeling that their work was finished. Using knowledge gleaned from the psychological profiles, Trayton taught the team techniques which reinforced the fact that communication must be a two-way process, to ensure that knowledge is fully understood. Since the event, the team has been consciously trying to adopt the new communications techniques they learnt, improving their ability to share information in service of group objectives.

Results

The event exceeded Owen's expectations, completely overcoming all three challenges that he faced. He now better understands his team members and has assigned new roles accordingly. This knowledge of how best to use individual strengths has spread throughout the business; two senior directors have since realised that they can delegate the monitoring and leading of meetings, freeing them to participate more fully.

Owen has also had the opportunity to bring a new level of training into Peel, and in 2009 plans to apply for budget to extend the project further. Even in hard economic times, Owen feels that the training is worthwhile – after all, a team that manages itself badly tends to complain of overwork and so recruit costly and unnecessary extra personnel.

But perhaps most importantly for the success of Peel Energy, Owen now has a top team that pulls together towards their business objectives. Team members are genuinely interested in each other's work, and performance has improved. Before the event, the group was struggling to win two large and important contracts. After the event, they began to see how their individual roles in winning the contracts were part of the group's wider objectives. Shortly after their off-site team meeting, they managed to win both contracts and even threw in a third for good measure!

