

PRUDENTIAL

Learning from the Best

Mission Excellence creates dynamic launch pad for Prudential Assurance change management strategy.

Prudential Assurance is part of Prudential plc, one of the UK's leading financial institutions and a significant global player with over 16 million customers and 20,000 employees worldwide. In 2003, the company initiated a 3 year strategic change programme across all its business units with the ultimate aim of achieving and maintaining market leadership well into the 21st Century.

It fell to the Prudential Business Transformation Unit to develop and execute crucial elements of the programme.

The Brief

Following definition of the strategy at executive level, Business Transformation was faced with the significant challenge of delivering the change management programme. As part of the launch strategy Mission Excellence were approached to design an innovative "kick-off" event to motivate and inspire over 300 Business Transformation staff throughout the UK.

Key messages were interwoven with an introduction to some thought-provoking tools and concepts, adapted from the techniques used by fighter pilots to execute complex plans in extremely dynamic environments. The focus was to be on encouraging excellence in project management, project execution and team-building within Prudential.

In particular, delegates were introduced to:

- the Fighter Pilot's Mission Planning Cycle - a combat-proven technique for developing deliverable plans for complicated scenarios.
- the concept of 'Selective Dynamic Focus' to aid execution under pressure.
- the Culture and Techniques of Debriefing, the fighter pilot's most powerful tool for improving performance and sharing best practice, which were explained using the Red Arrows as a case study.

The Objectives

The objectives of our brief were to:

- Provide a high-impact, interactive event to be repeated for both northern and southern teams.
- Align key messages with both short and long-term business objectives.
- To facilitate teambuilding whilst simultaneously delivering real business value.

The Solution

We began by researching and analysing the key issues facing Business Transformation through a series of questionnaires and interviews with personnel at all levels. As a result of this "Training Needs Analysis" we were able to design a bespoke half-day seminar for delivery to the two regional teams.

Delegates then had the opportunity to exercise the tools in a unique competitive mission planning exercise, assessed and debriefed by a team of facilitators.

Initially two events were delivered to over 300 people.

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The Results

The relevance and applicability to a commercial environment was readily accepted and the events were regarded as an outstanding success by both management and delegates. In particular the issue of effective debriefing was identified as an essential and relevant tool.

Alan Wright, Head of Business Transformation Programme Office commented;

"Mission Excellence has a wealth of tools and techniques which are very applicable to the business environment and particularly relevant to the project management community. The exercise was well constructed, relevant and consistently facilitated across over 100 staff at each event."

Whilst Lisa Walden, Prudential's Head of Internal Communications said:

"What differentiates this activity is the fact that there is an immediate benefit – people actually learn something about briefing and delivering a plan in a way which inspires them to take it back to the office. It's hard to coach people on the subject of trust and making judgement calls, but this approach captures the real experiences of the pilots and in doing so brings these difficult concepts to life – it really made people sit up and think."

The Business Transformation events proved to be the start of a very successful year for that unit and we were subsequently invited back to deliver a number of follow-on events, including some for other business areas such as Sales and HR.

Alan Wright commented further: "We wanted to re-create the buzz we got the first time, to re-cap the learning and provide continuity with the previous events. The alignment of the material was very good and the event was both high-impact and value for money."

The Ongoing Programme

We have subsequently been invited to develop a longer-term series of workshops, in partnership with Prudential Assurance, to ensure that lessons from the seminars become embedded in the workplace. Furthermore we were asked to deliver a bespoke training event for the Executive Board and graduates of Prudential University based around our "Delivering Strategic Success" module.

About Mission Excellence

Mission Excellence is a consultancy specialising in execution. We help clients to deliver operational change through embedded personnel, development programmes and consultancy. We have 2 key areas of focus: Operational Excellence and Risk and Safety Management.

You can expect from us: relevant, tangible and practical outcomes; passion, objectivity and the relentless pursuit of excellence; the highest professional standards; subject matter expertise; and an enjoyable experience with people who are easy to work with.

We have a proven track record throughout the public and private sectors, in professional sport and support of academic programmes. Our client list includes 3M, Accenture, BP, GlaxoSmithKline, HSBC, IBM, Procter & Gamble, the National Health Service, Staffordshire County Council, British Cycling, Formula 1, Cancer Research UK and the University of Oxford.