



Application: Building effective relationships

Organisation: Food manufacturer

Background

A food manufacturer wanted to develop the role of its Technical Managers in managing relationships with customers. Technical Managers are typically responsible for developing and maintaining the quality of products and have very frequent contact with their 'opposite number' in customer organisations, typically the large supermarkets. The business had noticed that they often approached these relationships in an overly deferential way and were inclined to agree to customer requests for changes to product formulation or production without fully explaining the consequences to the customer.

Process

We worked with the manufacturer to develop a training programme for Technical Managers to improve their ability to influence others by building credibility, understanding the other person's point of view, connecting emotionally and presenting information effectively. This incorporated all 11 cdaq dimensions to help develop their influencing skills. Two examples of cdaq dimensions that were particularly important are:

- 'Global – Detail' provides an insight into how people get to grips with new information. People with a 'Global' preference need to have the overview first; those with a 'Detail' preference will need to understand the specifics before they can move to the overview. The training helped Technical Managers to improve the way that they influence others by presenting new information in a way that matched the recipients' (rather than their own) preferred style
- 'Towards – Away From' is an important factor in effective communication. Many Commercial Managers - both within the manufacturing business itself and in its supermarket customers - have a 'Towards' preference and are energised by what something will achieve. In contrast, many Technical Managers have a strong 'Away From' preference; they are energised by avoiding risks or problems. The programme helped Technical Managers to understand this preference and adapt their own language and approach to deliver information and suggestions in a way that would be more compelling for colleagues with a 'Towards' preference.

Outcome

The programme has now been run many times and is seen as highly successful. Feedback - including some reactions from customers - describes interaction with Technical Managers who have been through the programme as less confrontational and more collaborative, and as being more able to build long term business relationships, rather than just give technical advice.