



**“This Leadership Programme stands head and shoulders above other programmes I have experienced, such as those at Cranfield and Harvard.” MD Experian Business Intelligence**

Experian is the UK’s leading global information services company, providing data and analytical tools to clients in more than 65 countries. It helps consumers monitor their credit reports and delivers critical information to enable them to make financial and purchasing decisions. In the UK, Experian supports over 100,000 clients across a range of vertical markets.

With the world economy uncertain and a number of mergers and organisational re-structures, Experian had seen unprecedented levels of change through globalisation as well as the rollout of a new matrix structure.

They needed to set themselves apart from their competitors and the pressure for senior leaders and managers to perform beyond their current skill level was immense. Previous leadership training had started the process of upskilling senior people, but it was recognised that changes to behaviour, style and culture had not been sustainably embedded.

#### **Blue Sky: the partner of choice**

Through strong recommendation from Sage UK, another Blue Sky client, we were selected to partner with Experian and the HR team to transform the leadership population to help create a new leadership culture. Kayte Brook-Simpson, Director of Leadership Services at Blue Sky outlined *“Experian has always been a hugely successful business with an incredibly strong brand. However, competition in this current market is tough and consequently a new mindset was needed within the leadership team that could influence through personal as opposed to positional power”*

This was about taking people from ‘good to great’ by creating a culture that would bring the best out of people at all levels.

#### **Creating the vision**

Following an in depth diagnostic it was clear that success

would primarily lie in creating a clear and defined vision to determine what great leadership needed to look like.

By identifying the constraints to change, it became evident that leaders needed to build personal conviction and choose to take the responsibility to make lasting behavioural change. Leaders would need to be developed to broaden their skills to enable them to do this in a way that would create the right impact. The programme needed a strong internal brand to ignite the staff and really bring it to life. As Fiona Moore, Head of Development at Experian comments *“this programme is unlike any traditional leadership programme. It’s not about strategic thinking sessions and marketing but about allowing every leader within the business to be the best leader they can be by identifying key talents and giving them the tools to build trust, engagement and communication. There is no leadership ‘template’ instead we want to show our delegates how to be inspirational leaders; within Experian, within the wider business world and within the community.”* ...and duly, ‘Inspire’ was born.

**“...the most powerful leadership programme that I have ever been on.” Delegate**

**The Blue Sky solution**

Embedding this type of cultural transition needs to start from the top. ‘Inspire’ was an experiential programme with a supporting community project attended by every leader starting at board level and cascaded over an 18 month period throughout the organisation.

It was critical for ‘Inspire’ to look and feel different from anything experienced previously to galvanise, excite and motivate the leadership team to ultimately embed the changes seamlessly in to the organisation.

Five modules were delivered every 6 weeks to 12 participants across 18 groups. Each module was interwoven with personal coaching, pre and post workshop activities and action learning sets. All of this was underpinned by project work which was observed to provide live feedback, enabling close examination of default behavioural patterns, ways of thinking and the skills being used. Often an individual’s intentions were very different from the actual impact they were having on others around them. This approach heightened levels of awareness which encouraged individuals to make a personal and very conscious choice about what they needed to do differently.

As an organisation, Experian, places a considerable

importance on corporate responsibility to infuse their people with a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship and therefore it was crucial that the ‘Inspire’ programme was linked to this. Consequently, each group that went through the ‘Inspire’ programme was associated with a community project to deliver a set objective. A by product of this was that attendees experienced a very different, ‘non corporate’ type of leadership that relied more on personal authenticity, passion and connection to influence people and less on hierarchy, politics and position. The result was a meaningful and real project that had a consequence attached to successful application of the learning.

As Kayte Brook-Simpson continues *“linking the two goals together caused a massive shift in behaviour. They were able to practice new ways of behaving and bedded in learning in an environment outside their own. This provided us with the opportunity to observe them under pressure on something that really mattered, providing specific feedback & coaching on their default ways of working, thinking and being.”*

This whole approach led people to examine what actually drives their natural reactions and subsequent behaviour; challenging their own perceptions, their ways of thinking and underpinning beliefs. This, along with the personal coaching offered, enabled people truly change their behaviour.

**The cultural impact**

After the first year 237 delegates in the UK have completed the programme and the impact on the culture as been phenomenal:

- ◆ 54% increase in trust in our leaders for UK&I region, leading to an increased number of potentially ready successors within the top talent pool
- ◆ 53% increase in engagement (Towers Perrin who run the Experian staff survey have proved that there is a correlation between upper quartile engagement scores and adding 2% net profit to the bottom line) leading to a significant improvement in employee satisfaction survey results meaning staff have a greater connection to their work
- ◆ 60% increase in coaching activity which has seen increases in productivity across the business
- ◆ 29% increase in 1:1s with feedback that there is more confidence and gravitas to have honest conversations

- ◆ Work climate, direction and communication all show significant increase

Feedback from leaders that have been through the programme speaks for itself:

*"The Experian 'Inspire' Programme is the most powerful leadership programme that I have ever been on. It has provided me and my team with the ability to lead our people more effectively in these challenging times. We have seen tangible benefits in our business performance and people survey results."*

*"Motivational: to hear the words and see the enthusiasm of others who believe in the course and more poignantly to see leadership in action in a totally different environment."*

*"The 360 Feedback experience was personally quite profound for me. While saying that "it changed my life" might be a bit over the top, I do have to say that it struck a chord in me unlike anything that ever has professionally in the past. I do view myself and others through a different lens now."*

#### **What next for Experian**

The 'Inspire' programme has created a momentum of its own, with clear data showing evidence based radical improvement in leadership style, skills, mindset and the positive culture that all of this brings. Despite challenging times, the 'Inspire' programme has continued to receive

significant investment which is testament to the degree of impact that has been felt and seen across the entire business. So much so that it's now being run in South Africa and North America.

**"The Experian 'Inspire' programme is the most powerful leadership programme that I have ever been on. It has provided me and my team with the ability to lead our people more effectively in these challenging times. I see the benefits of the programme every day in the quality of the conversations we have and decisions we make and in the way that we interact as a team and with others. We have seen tangible benefits in our business performance and people survey results. The Blue Sky team played a critical part in the success of the programme providing support, challenge and guidance, ensuring that each of us had the opportunity to get the most out of the programme." Phil Cotter, MD of Experian Credit Services UK&I.**

**For further information please contact:**

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At Blue Sky we are passionate about delivering performance improvement across sales, customer experience and high performance leadership. Our award winning work delivers outstanding ROI by taking staff on an emotional and experiential journey and ensuring operations are set for optimum results. Visit [www.blue-sky.co.uk](http://www.blue-sky.co.uk) to discover how you can benefit from our approach and learn more about the awards our clients have been winning; 23 in the last 4 years!