



Sopro & h2h – Powering Growth in our People



The impact and return on investment

Evidence-based evaluation demonstrated the following:

 **80%**

of participants' line managers said the learning had significant impact on their team and reported that they had observed:

“Improved team cohesion, increased communication, improved performance.”

“The team is one small hub where everyone is learning and growing...”

“The teams will increase effectiveness and productivity, which will inevitably lead to lower production costs, lower attrition, and increased happiness.”

THE OPPORTUNITY



Sopro and h2h are proud of how together, we met the challenge of equipping an inexperienced community of 35 leaders, across two distinct geographical cultures, with game-changing skills to lead their business through fast-paced growth in the context of a global pandemic.

This community of leaders successfully developed fresh insights and new skills, through a programme of accelerated learning. This was brought to them via h2h resources ltd and builds on Sopro's own spirit, commitment, responsibility and senior leadership support.



“The effects of the Powering Growth in our People programme continue to be felt across every level of the business at Sopro, from employee through to senior leadership, as a result of the newly honed skills developed by our people managers. Whether it be increased confidence in having effective career conversations, improved communication or greater self-awareness leading to heightened emotional intelligence – the impact is far reaching and continues to have a positive impact.”

Michelle Thomas, Chief People Officer



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THE INTENTION



Through a detailed and engaging diagnostic process that included the CEO, the executive team, and current leaders, Sopro and h2h got to the heart of the skills and behaviours they needed most to cultivate in their fast-growing leadership community. These included:



Self-awareness and emotional intelligence in a hybrid workplace



Developing cultural sensitivity and international working



The fundamentals of effective leadership and management



Equipping teams for future growth



THE INTERVENTION



The h2h team have decades of experience in organisation development, learning design, curation and facilitation. Sopro presented an exciting opportunity to leverage the blended learning that, as L&D professionals, we have long been advocating. The surge in remote working meant learners were ready to optimise the opportunity of a hybrid solution. As a fast-moving digital marketing company, Sopro were ready to embrace this approach and we designed and delivered a multi-faceted and inclusive intervention that incorporated:

1

Focus groups for engagement and to inform learning design

2

Play lists of resources for self-directed learning

3

Enriching workshops - offering an interactive and engaging experience

4

1-2-1 coaching to equip the leadership team to truly support their wider leadership community

5

Coaching trios for sustainable peer support

6

Real-time skills application
Evaluation (short and mid-term)

WHAT WE DID



Sopro wanted the workshop elements to be delivered face-to-face in Skopje, North Macedonia, where their Operations team is primarily based and where they would be joined by colleagues from the UK-based team.

The global pandemic meant that was not easily achieved, we had to be patient, and kick started the programme virtually with a diagnostic phase to engage the most senior leaders and inform the design to ensure:

1 - A SAFE AND ENGAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ...



Real learning often happens at the edge of our comfort zone, so if we are to push people, the delegates need to feel that they are in a psychologically safe environment and that the discomfort is worth the effort!

We specifically explored how we could achieve the balance of support and challenge, and what behaviours would evidence this.

2 - SELF-AWARENESS & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ...



Research and real-life experience tell us that emotional intelligence is the strongest driver of leadership excellence, accounting for 58% of performance.

We prioritised this and used a range of well-respected, relevant tools and frameworks to heighten the self-awareness of our participants. The workshop helped them to understand how this plays out in the workplace which created some real 'Ah-ha' moments including: ➡



I think about how my words might be perceived by others and how to adapt to people's personalities to improve communication.

My team appreciates me more and I can see them improving...being happy and more engaged and motivated.

Michelle Thomas, Chief People Officer



100%

Developed an awareness of cultural sensitivities between international teams



As a result, delegates said they: "Use cultural sensitivity when explaining processes to a colleague from different departments"



3. EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY...



This is a massive subject that can be approached from many angles, and we had a suspicion that the different geographies were not actually the heart of the problem. We chose a highly immersive experiential learning activity and observed what happened - the results were fascinating and demonstrated the pace at which sub-cultures can form.

This enabled a rich debate about the impact of personality, geography, function and relationship history.

Ultimately, and thanks to Richard Hanley, Sopro's Learning and Development Manager, we arrived at a great place where we could see how 'fitting together' rather than 'fitting in' was a very healthy solution. Feedback on this aspect of the programme has been overwhelmingly positive with 100% of participants stating that they had developed an awareness of the cultural differences and sensitivities between North Macedonia and the UK.

4. THE FUNDAMENTALS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT...

As a leader you have a serious responsibility - suddenly you are responsible for the safety, performance, learning and career development of a precious commodity. If employees are happy and engagement is high, productivity and collaboration follow suit. Any issues or challenges that arise are more readily overcome, trust is established, conflict is reduced, and a positive culture is embedded throughout the organisation. With over two decades of experience in equipping first line managers for this awe inspiring challenge, h2h has a strong toolkit to share. Yet first, we wanted delegates to truly understand that perceived bad behaviour often comes from bad leadership. We kicked this element off with another experiential activity that landed well with this international audience. (I think they may have just about forgiven us!). With this insight they were keen to not repeat any of those mistakes and embrace the people leadership toolkit that we offer



80%

of line managers said this had significant impact on their team and observed:

“Officevibe scores are fantastic, not least the metrics relating to feedback, recognition and relationship with manager.”

81%

of delegates said leadership skills have developed significantly

84%

said h2h's work has had a significant impact on their confidence as a leader

“I have started to hand over more work to the team, especially those willing to learn more, whilst being able to handle the loss of control better and realising that people can do things differently and that isn't always a bad thing. “I am adopting the techniques and methods learned on the programme, I deal with personalities more easily.”



IN SUMMARY, WHAT REALLY MADE THE DIFFERENCE?

In summary, what really made the difference? The strong partnership and mutual respect between h2h and Sopro ensured that we could deploy what we both know works, including: took accountability for their own learning



A safe, challenging and enjoyable learning environment



The full participation of the executive team



A blended approach, creating a sustainable and long-term impact



The appropriate use of well researched, relevant, and pragmatic tools and techniques to support behavioural shift



A fully inclusive learning design



Learning how to 'fit together' rather than 'fit in'



Delegates who were appropriately pre-positioned and supported by their line managers and who then took accountability for their own learning

Sopro are optimistic about the long-lasting impact of embedding this learning and said ...



I have no doubt the impact of the course will be huge in terms of productivity & engagement. Knowing how to push our teams to be the best in their respective roles as well as understanding their goals/ambitions more closely will aid both of those areas.

Michelle Thomas,
Chief People Officer