

Leading with One Voice

Building a strong leadership approach and a clarity of vision across a multi-site partnership

Background

Julie Breslin is the Head of Programme for a UK wide Big Lottery funded programme, **Drink Wise, Age Well**. She knew that she wanted to be an effective, collaborative leader, so one of her key actions was to organise a UK conference. This would bring managers together from across the UK, to help them generate a sense of common purpose and clarity.

Key issues

Julie wanted the conference to be a success, not only on the day but also as a spring-board for the organisation to deliver results and change lives. She wanted an immediate impact but also a very lasting one with tangible results.

Her key concerns about the conference, and the whole programme, were that:

- There needed to be a focus on leadership values and approaches, rather than delving into operational details
- Lines of communication were understood and clarified
- There was the capacity to explore key work areas that are programme led (related to fixed outcomes) and also those that are organic and locally led
- All leaders, across the UK, were clear about the vision and key messages of the programme.

Determining that this was an event about enabling and equipping leaders, Julie approached Emma to help her plan and facilitate this leadership conference for Drink Wise, Age Well. She also asked Emma to support her own development as a leader with one-to-one coaching.

Julie also wanted time to improve her own leadership skills. Drink Wise, Age Well is a UK-wide programme with multiple layers and partners. As Head of Programme, Julie's role is to:

- oversee the strategic partnership
- ensure that the programme outcomes are being met by all delivery partners
- manage and over-see partner budgets
- ensure operational and best practice systems are in place
- lead the strategic direction and explore ways to influence policy.

"Julie needed to create a shared vision across a multi-site partnership; quite a task!"

Emma Falkner

"At the point of meeting with Emma, my main concerns were time management and prioritisation. At the same time I wanted to keep a wide-spread team and partner agencies on board and on message," Julie explained.

Solution

Emma agreed to help Julie develop the conference effectively and also grow her leadership skills.

The conference:

Emma advised Julie on how to develop the conference so it would have the right impact. A key part of this was that Emma took on the facilitator role. This meant that all managers and leaders involved in the

programme were able to work together, without one having to be the chair. It also allowed Emma to act as an independent and objective facilitator, whose goal was to enable collaborative understanding and working.

Julie observed that, “It was great for me not to have to worry about getting dragged into side issues. Handing over the responsibility of running the days freed me up to participate fully in the activities.”

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Julie Breslin

Julie and Emma also agreed on objectives and outcomes of the facilitated sessions, to ensure the best use of time and resources. In addition, Emma developed exercises to encourage interaction and reflection on key elements of the programme.

Leadership coaching

Emma spent some time with Julie in focused, one-to-one coaching. Julie explained that, “It was really helpful to stand back and reflect on key work areas and how staff support was crucial for both my professional development and the wider programme.

“We spent a lot of time exploring workload and essential tasks using tools, such as Coveys Zones of Concern, to review levels of prioritisation and urgency in workload. Emma encouraged me to do a diary reflection on where she was placing most of her time and the impact that this had on the wider picture. We also did a lot of work around my professional values and how these could impact on my decision making and reaction to situations.”

Results

The conference was a success. Julie marvelled: “Throughout the two days Emma successfully kept a very large group focused on the task in hand – no mean feat!”

The conference was attended by 36 participants and included operational locality managers and team leaders of five UK sites - Devon, Cwm Taf in Wales, Glasgow, Sheffield and the Western Health and Social Care in Belfast- along with key strategic partner members.

Meanwhile, Julie made real progress on understanding her own leadership style and how to best lead:

“Working with Emma allowed me to honestly and transparently reflect on my fears, worries, strengths and weakness as a leader, and then put in place strategies for my development.”

“Throughout the two days Emma successfully kept a very large group focused on the task in hand – no mean feat!”

She explained further: “It’s enabled me to narrow down areas that I have control or influence over, and let go of those issues that may be out of my control (but have been causing great worry!).

Julie

“Being able to stand back and analyse where time and energy was not being used well was incredibly beneficial and some of the strategies and tools Emma has introduced me to I am now using with my own team.”

Conclusion

As Julie said, “Because Emma has so much experience in the social care sector she fully understands and appreciates the demands and strains of working in my sector, while also having a great insight into strong leadership and how to get the best from yourself and teams.”