

Case Study: The Ministry of Justice



The Ministry of Justice was created in May 2007, bringing responsibility for the justice system under the leadership of one department. To do so, it combined a number of government departments that had previously worked separately; the former Department for Constitutional Affairs, the National Offender Management Service, the Office for Criminal Justice Reform and the responsibilities for criminal law and sentencing that previously rested with the Home Office.

The Ministry is responsible for policy on the overall criminal, civil, family and administrative justice system, including sentencing policy, as well as the courts, tribunals, legal aid and constitutional reform. It has a budget of over £9bn and directly employs 79,000 staff, making it the third largest employer in Whitehall.

The Vision

Suma Chakrabarti was appointed Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Justice on 15 November 2007. Soon after, Chakrabarti made a speech to the Prison Service that set out his ambition to make the Ministry of Justice one of the most effective government departments in Whitehall. For Chakrabarti, the key to achieving this ambition would be supporting high quality leadership and implementing behavioural changes focused around performance.

The Corporate Performance section, which has oversight of HR and Performance Management across the Ministry, believes that coaching will play a key role in putting Chakrabarti's vision into practice. Corporate Performance view coaching as one of the best value-for-money learning interventions they can offer to help and support their staff through making difficult decisions. They also believe that coaching can help bridge the gap between their theories of good leadership and the daily reality that managers face.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Justice has made Developing a Coaching Culture a central part of their leadership strategy.

The Challenge

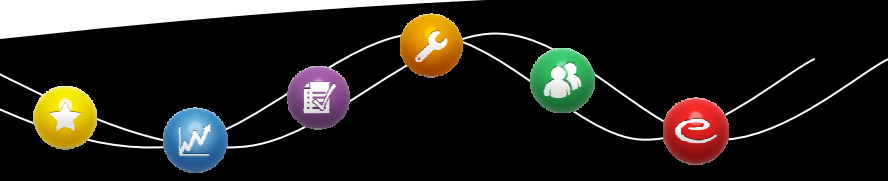
For Marianne Lister, Head of Leadership and Management Development, the first challenge for coaching in the Ministry of Justice was getting consistency across such a large and newly formed government department. Each section had a tradition of independently commissioning their coaching programmes. As such, it was almost impossible to get a complete picture of how much coaching was taking place across the Ministry, let alone to evaluate its effectiveness.

Not being able to track coaching was especially problematic because governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Justice have to be accountable, particularly about how they manage their budget. Under the UK's parliamentary system, an MP can at any time ask how much money is being spent on coaching within the Ministry of Justice as a whole. Without a clear system to track all coaching interventions, the Corporate Performance section would find it impossible to answer that question. This made it an urgent priority to implement a system that would allow Corporate Performance to track all centrally funded coaching.

The Coaching Management System

mye-coach is an online system that facilitates and supports the one-to-one coaching process. Access to the system provides a user-friendly online environment where a coach and coachee can log coaching sessions, access development tools, securely share personal documents, and capture the performance conversation of each coaching session. The system also helps managers to monitor a structured programme of coaching throughout an organisation, ensuring a consistently high quality of coaching administration across the board.

When Marianne Lister was passed information about the **mye-coach** system through the Coaches in Government Network, she realised that it was a potential solution to the challenges of tracking coaching across such a large and newly restructured government department as the Ministry of Justice. After some investigation, she



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commissioned a trial that would put one hundred Ministry of Justice coaching programmes onto the **mye-coach** system. For the purposes of the trial, they would initially limit **mye-coach** users to members of the Senior Civil Service and their coaches.

The System in Practice

The first thing that surprised Marianne was the low cost of the programme; she had expected that it would be far more expensive to set up such a coaching system. In actual fact, it cost less for the Ministry of Justice to put one hundred users onto the **mye-coach** system than to place one person onto most external training courses.

The second surprise was how easy it was to get external providers to use **mye-coach**. For reasons of confidentiality, the Ministry does not use internal coaches for their Senior Civil Servants. Marianne had expected that using external providers would make it harder to set up **mye-coach**, as it would be difficult to train external coaches and to enforce the system's use. In reality, all external coaches started using **mye-coach** immediately and without problems.

Suppliers also gave positive feedback about the developmental tools within the **mye-coach** system. One external coaching supplier in particular has a range of initial assessment tools that they use with all their new clients. They were delighted that this could be uploaded into the **mye-coach** toolkit and become readily available for their new Ministry of Justice coachees.

The Results

Now that the **mye-coach** system is in place and working successfully, Corporate Performance is for the first time able to track its coaching programmes and answer difficult questions about how much centrally funded coaching is taking place. The system has been so useful that they will next begin to use it with their internal coaches and later roll it out to the entire department. As Marianne says '*I see tremendous scope to expand **mye-coach**.*'

The ultimate prize for the Ministry will be the evaluation of coaching across the entire department of 79,000 employees. Now that **mye-coach** has given Corporate Performance the ability to track coaching, it is possible to take the next step and to measure its impact. The Ministry of Justice feels that implementing these systems will both help them meet their leadership aims and move towards becoming recognised as heads of good coaching practice within the government as a whole.

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