

# Q. Learning in Partnership with

Heart of England   
NHS Foundation Trust

*“An Organisational Development  
Programme to meet Commercial and  
Clinical Aspirations”*



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## Customer Profile

*“Heart of England – a Trust that puts its patients first, every time.”*

HEFT are the leading foundation trust in the country, employing 10,000 staff providing general and specialist hospital care for the people of east Birmingham Solihull, Sutton Coldfield and South Staffordshire.

HEFT prides itself on providing services that are local to its communities. The trust's hospitals include Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, Solihull Hospital, Good Hope Hospital and Birmingham Chest Clinic. HEFT also has a number of smaller satellite units so people can be treated as close to home as possible.



## Summary



Two years ago, the Heart of England Foundation Trust came into being, with Mark Goldman as CEO, a leader from a surgical background. It was in an early wave of Foundation Trusts as they were a three star organisation with a healthy financial and quality of service history. This freed them to operate as a business in a competitive market place with other providers such as private hospitals. Their regulator kept a careful eye on them and they still had to go to them for approval. With this freedom came the question ‘What next?’

Q. Learning had worked with the organisation to help them reach foundation status and so facilitated a number of Executive Away Days around this question. They came to understand that they could create the future they wanted – great healthcare for the people of Birmingham. The strategy included building a brand and increasing revenue (and profit) from outside existing territory. A neighbouring hospital (Good Hope Hospital) was identified as the potential catalyst for driving towards this future.

HEFT was invited to take on a management contract of Good Hope Hospital (GHH) which immediately brought in extra revenue. Moreover within six months the HEFT team had got GHH back in financial balance. Q. Learning facilitated the decision by the GHH Board to seek integration into HEFT and coached the Directors on what they should do next. Q. Learning also put in a Programme Director for the integration to set up workstreams for full integration which started to move at a pace. The CEO wanted it to be an opportunity for both GHH and HEFT to really benefit from the integration of people, processes and systems.

It took a full year for the Secretary of State to give her approval to a change in the law so that the merger could go ahead following full public consultation. In the meantime the Board still had 3 hospitals to run!

In the middle of all that, Q. Learning ran an organisational development programme that touched everyone of the 5,000 staff at HEFT and many of the other 3,000 staff at GHH. During this time, there was a wonderful evening when HEFT was given the HSJ award for the Best Acute Hospital – thereby demonstrating that it is possible to keep your eye fully on current performance as well as negotiating your way through a merger!



## Leaders now, Future Leaders and Change Agents

HEFT recognised that if it was going to be successful in leveraging the benefits of merging with GHH then it would need to consider how it could successfully integrate its organisations to provide a common language, shared attitudes and capabilities – in short, how could HEFT make the most of what worked best and improve those things that it wanted to do better – in a consistent and systematic way?

From the outset HEFT were clear that they wanted to increase the capability and capacity of the organisation to create a single, joined up team working together across all of its sites. In doing so HEFT wanted to create a single healthcare system that put its patients first in everything they did. They understood that increasing management and leadership capacity would be key – widening the magic circle - and that increased staff advocacy would lead to increased customer advocacy. To achieve this would need people to feel and be inspired by what HEFT wanted to achieve and for the organisation to create a single post merger culture that would bind people together in the achievement of a shared purpose.

HEFT knew it needed a partner who truly understood their vision and not just in intellectual terms – a partner who could see, feel and know what it would be like to move towards the future of HEFT. Their partner would need to become part of the very fabric of the organisation so that the way in which it approached organisational development would be completely congruent with HEFT's vision and values.

Q. Learning was a natural choice for HEFT to select as its organisational development partner. In supporting HEFT in creating its vision for the future, Q. Learning had immersed itself in what it meant to be HEFT and understood where it wanted to be in the future. The executive team knew that the learning and development would need to be different, engaging and exciting and Q. Learning had demonstrated that it could be all of these things and more!



## The Solution

In partnership with HEFT, Q. Learning designed the organisational development strategy in 3 phases. Phase 1 would deliver a successful merger with GHH, Phase 2 would support the development and embedding of a single culture across the organisation and Phase 3 would develop the organisation's capability to develop solutions working across organisational boundaries.

### Phase One – Building the Plane

During Phase 1 Q. Learning worked with HEFT to design the Organisational Development Programme's governance structure including defining scope, communications strategy and measurement protocols. We then supported HEFT in shaping the Executive team who would lead the successful merger and generated the excitement and interest that ensured the complete participation of leaders, managers and inspirers.



“HEFT wins HSJ Award for Best Acute Hospital 2006”

### Phase Two – Take Off

During ‘take off’ we mobilised literally hundreds of leaders, managers, change agents and staff through a series of learning programmes – Leaders, Intrapreneurs and Inspirers. These innovative programmes of learning and development supported people through understanding HEFT's vision and ‘the HEFT way’ – how the organisations needed to think, behave and work to drive it forwards. These programmes were so successful that there is now an eager waiting list of people wanting to attend!

HEFT understood that engagement of its staff was key to achievement of its vision and set about an ambitious staff survey and feedback programme which Q. Learning designed, administered and analysed the results from. This feedback was pivotal in informing HEFT's leaders and managers about what matters to people and the changes that they felt needed to be made.

One of the most exciting events for both HEFT and Q. Learning were the ‘Moving Forward Together’ workshops which took place in November and December 2006. Over a period of just 6 weeks over 4000 of HEFT's staff attended workshops designed to share key messages and engage them in the action planning process.

Q. Learning has also supported HEFT by 1:1 coaching of the Exec Team and other leaders, facilitating assessment centres, team building events, directorate away days, problem solving workshops and many more activities designed to address specific hotspots throughout the period of the merger.

It really was a proud moment when, in May 2007 around 400 of HEFT's leaders and managers were invited to another 'Moving Forward Together' event. This event was their opportunity to present what they had done differently as a result of the learning they had received. Without exception the feedback was both outstanding and astounding. We could scarcely believe even in our most optimistic moments that so many could achieve so much in such a short space of time.

### Phase Three – Flying High

Working with an organisation such as HEFT serves as a constant reminder that the only thing that is constant is change! HEFT has ambitious plans for the future, both in terms of excelling in patient care and in driving forward with its strategic agenda. Q. Learning is always there to provide wise counsel on its plans for now and the future. We are delighted to have been selected to support HEFT through Phase 3 – Flying High! Any organisation which has undergone change knows (at least) 2 things – 1) change needs to be sustained 2) it is managers who sustain it. With this in mind we have designed a challenging programme of learning and development for managers which ensures they have the skills and capabilities they need to be great managers whilst also equipping them for the change management challenges they will undoubtedly face over the coming months and years.

We are proud to be part of the very fabric of what it is to be HEFT.

### The Results

As ever we believe that our customers should speak for themselves in judging the success of a partnership with Q. Learning. With this in mind here is a small selection of quotes...

*“Q Learning brought a special magic that enabled us to engage thousands of our people in the future challenges ahead and ensure a successful merger”*  
**Mandy Coalter**  
**HR and OD Director**

*“The verdict from the team is that the day was a resounding success and the people who were involved are described as “still buzzing” and “really positive”*  
**Martin Sandler**  
**Senior Clinician**

*“Learning methods were appealing”*  
*“The programme was very value led”*  
*“The shared language between the 3 programmes has been invaluable”*  
**OD Programme Auditors**

And the final word from the Chief Executive, Mark Goldman...

*“There is no doubt that without Q. Learning's help we would not be the success we are today”*