

# Q. Learning in Partnership with



*“Creating a Coaching Culture  
Within the Country’s Largest  
Non Metropolitan Police Force”*



## **Q. Learning Ltd**

The Stable Suite  
21 Hart Street  
Henley-on-Thames  
Oxon  
RG9 2AR

Tel: 01491 414202  
Fax: 01491 414303

[www.qlearning.com](http://www.qlearning.com)





## Customer Profile

*“Thames Valley Police: Working with our communities to reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime”*

Thames Valley Police (TVP) is the largest non-metropolitan police force in the country. Covering the 2,200 square miles of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, TVP patrols 196 miles of motorway - the largest stretch of motorway in Britain - and serve a population of 2.1 million, plus six million visitors who come every year in search of history, royalty and a day at the races.

As one of the biggest Forces in Britain, TVP has set itself a challenging agenda for change. One of the key elements of its change strategy is the desire to set a coaching style of management at the heart of its leadership and management development framework. The aim of embedding a coaching style of management is to move away from the traditional directive style of management and towards a style which empowers people to be the best they can possibly be. This will enable the force to deliver its financial objectives whilst also improving the service it provides to its citizens.

TVP maintains a quality assurance award for learning and development and as such it was essential that their learning and development partner was able to demonstrate that it could meet TVP's high quality standards. Following a stringent selection process, in February 2007 Thames Valley Police commissioned Q. Learning to deliver its Executive Coaching Programme, designed for Chief Inspectors and above, as well as equivalent police staff grades.



## Summary



TVP understood that the prevailing directive style of management would not meet the needs of the organisation, and therefore its citizens, in the future. They recognised that a 'coaching culture' would help people to feel more valued and listened to and would support managers in helping people to be the best they could be. In defining how TVP would adopt this culture shift, a number of learning objectives were defined as pre-requisites for the Executive Coaching Skills programme:

- Define the role of a coach in the context of TVP's guidelines for coaching.
- Apply coaching relationship skills and behaviours.

- Describe how a coaching framework gives structure to an effective coaching process.
- Demonstrate using a coaching framework to improve performance.
- Understand how to translate and monitor coaching outputs into PDR (Performance and Development Review – the internal appraisal system) processes.
- Describe how to use coaching skills in a mentoring capacity.
- Appreciate the responsibility of the coach to pass on skills to their direct reports and to develop a coaching style of management.

Delivery methods were to be varied and interactive, appealing to a range of learning styles, and relevant to the organisational context of policing.



## GROW'ing Capability and Culture

In working with many other organisations to develop coaching cultures Q. Learning understood that creating and embedding a culture of coaching requires a shift that needs to be facilitated through learning based interventions. With this belief Q. Learning proposed that the culture shift be supported by 3 learning interventions – 'Executive Coaching Skills', 'Additional Coaching Skills' and 'Embedding a Coaching Culture'. The approach for these learning interventions would be inclusive, relevant and specific to the needs of the organisation and its people.

Q. Learning designed and delivered these learning interventions to 150 of TVP's senior leaders including the Chief Constable Sarah Thornton, between February and July 2007. The feedback from TVP has been outstanding and, for the first time there is confidence that a significant shift is taking place in leadership and management behaviours. This is in turn having an incredibly positive effect on TVP's staff and citizens.

Perhaps the clearest signal that the coaching culture really is becoming part of 'the ways things are' at TVP is our recent facilitation of the rollout of the new Human Resources 5 year plan. Through their involvement with the Coaching Skills Programme the HR team recognised the value of using a coaching approach to support the rollout of the HR plan. It was incredibly exciting to hear the Head of HR talk about his plans to role model how he intended to use our coaching methods to support the rollout of the plan with TVP leaders and managers!

Anyone who has worked with the Police will understand the need to overcome potential (often justifiably placed) cynicism at Chief Constable level and above. They will also understand the absolute need for teams to collaborate within and outside the organisation. Finally, as with any organisation who wants to embed a coaching culture, managers need to be given time and space to think about, and offer up what support they need to make it happen.



## The Solution

### Design

In designing the programme we always kept 3 things in sight – 1) who our audience would be 2) the learning objectives that needed to be achieved 3) that we were facilitating a culture shift – not just a learning and development programme. This enabled us to stay focused on making the content and materials relevant and appropriate to the participants and to continually remind ourselves and the delegates that this was the start of a new way of thinking, behaving and working within TVP. We incorporated into our design a programme of highly interactive, participative learning that would both challenge participants ‘in the moment’ and support them in taking this learning ‘into the work’ and applying it to make a difference. We used traditional models such as the GROW (Goals, Reality, Options, Way Forward) coaching model, and Tim Gallwey’s ‘The Inner Game’, as well as NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) models for coaching and understanding internal belief systems.

### Delivery

Our trainers (ILM Certified Coaches and NLP Master Practitioners) delivered the 3 learning and development interventions in sequence – first the Executive Coaching Skills learning would provide participants with tools, models and a common language. They were given time and space to explore these models and practice using them in a ‘safe’ environment. Then followed ‘Additional Skills’ during which participants were invited to identify where they had used the coaching skills and how effective it had been for them. Finally the ‘Embedding Culture’ workshops supported participants by providing further (academic) coaching frames, exploring vision and success measures and allowing them to identify the barriers to embedding culture and what support they needed to make the shift.



## And Beyond...

In addition to the learning and development programmes Q. Learning has supported a number of the management teams in TVP's 5 new BCU's (Basic Command Units) with facilitated sessions to develop shared visions, with coaching and team building events. The team building events have been particularly successful in taking teams previously working in operational 'silos' and creating cohesive teams, focused around delivery of purpose. Our approach is always flexible 'in the moment', adapting our approach as needs unfold. We are masters at responding to the unpredictable!

We have also supported TVP in implementing a mentoring scheme to provide additional career development opportunities and to support TVP's succession planning programme for future leaders.



## The Results

As always at Q. Learning we prefer our customers to be the judge of the success of our programmes. With this in mind here is a selection of quotes from participants who attended the learning interventions designed to embed a coaching culture within TVP...

*"Facilitation style warm and inclusive"*

*"Well-balanced, thought provoking training, very at ease and enjoyable"*

*"Great mix between learning and activity. Practice and feedback time was invaluable"*

*"Excellent pace throughout the day"*

*"The team is now very cohesive in its approach and appears to be getting better in terms of communicating and talking to each other – everybody seems to be making the effort!"*

*"Very well structured"*

*"Good exercises to help the group interact"*

*"One of my team who was thinking of leaving is now staying and excited about his future with TVP. I believe this is a reflection of the approach I used when coaching him"*

