

Buying In Consultancy Or Training: - What Do You Need To Know?

'There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it's going to be a butterfly.'

Buckminster Fuller

Some organisations appear to leap into buying consultancy, training or coaching support without having thought through what outcomes they are seeking and the best way of achieving them.

Whether you are an individual thinking about attending an outside training course, a manager buying in a team working event or an MD deciding to tackle some key organisational issues it is important to ask yourself some, if not all, of the following questions:

1. ***What evidence have you already got that there is a problem, issue or challenge that you need to face?*** Gather as much evidence as you have, both quantitative and qualitative. Even if your manager has said you need to go on a course, do you know exactly what it is that you need to change in terms of your behaviour or the skills you need to develop? What outcome are you seeking through the initiative?
2. ***Do you know the underlying causes behind the problems and issues?*** Frequently clients come with an expectation of what the problem is without necessarily understanding the true nature of the underlying cause. Often clients will say they have a time management problem and then, when you start asking questions, you find out the real issue is in terms of staff not being assertive, failing to delegate or develop others' abilities or not negotiating deadlines and priorities. You might want to think about how the following impact on the issue that you, your team or the organisation is facing:
 - ***Systems and processes*** – how are these impacting on people's effectiveness?
 - ***Skills and abilities*** – what are people's strengths, how can these be fully utilised. What are their development needs, what training has happened in the past, what is the best way of developing people's abilities?
 - ***Organisational culture*** – what is the prevailing culture of the organisation? Is it helping or hindering people in working effectively? Will it help or hinder the changes that you want to make?
3. ***Do you have the buy-in and commitment from senior managers?*** Will they support the initiative in terms of money, time and their active involvement? Without this many large scale initiatives, especially if they involve behavioural and attitudinal changes, will fail if senior management do not back it in terms of money time, and modelling the desired behaviour.
4. ***Who needs to be brought on board for the initiative to succeed?*** This might go beyond just senior managers to unions if they are around or key players who can act as positive 'influencers' within the organisation.
5. ***Do you have the budget to see the project through to fruition?*** If you don't have the budget to fulfil the needs and objectives then what is realistic and achievable within your budget? Are there creative ways in which you can buy in support? Can you share training with another organisation that you have connections with? Can you use internal mentoring and coaching to fulfil your needs?

(continued overleaf)

Specialist Advice and Guidance

Melanie can provide both in-house and public workshops, as well as 1:1 coaching around this and other topics.

For more information or to book on one of her public workshops call Melanie Greene on 01865 377334 or email her at mg@inspiretransformation.co.uk

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6. **Who can you pilot this with?** With large scale initiatives or even a new training programme it is a good idea to run a pilot programme first of all to test the water, make adjustments before it goes company-wide.
7. **Do you have the in-house resources to complete the initiative or do you need to draw on outside resources?** You might have people within your organisation that are experts in certain topics, who can run workshops, coach or mentor others in some skills or knowledge. However, be aware that being an expert does not necessarily mean you are good at training others in a topic. Some people are natural trainers or coaches, others will need training and some are not cut out for this kind of role.
8. **If you need outside help, what kinds of skills, experience and qualities do you require?** What criteria are you going to use to assess outside consultants, trainers and coaches against, other than how much they will cost! Qualifications are not necessarily an indicator for success. Experience and the ability to build relationships with people within your organisation will be essential to the success of any initiative.
9. **Do you already know consultants who can deliver this or whom you could ask for recommendations?** Most clients I know either go with consultants they know or with recommendations. However, bear in mind that what works well in one organisation might not suit yours. Asking for references from consultants, trainers or coaches is acceptable and most have clients who are happy to give them.

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