



INSPIRED PARTNERS
helping turn ideas into reality

TeamLink At Thales UK - An Inspired Solution

For any company seeking to deliver business improvements and increase profitability, Team Leaders have a vital role to play. It is their commitment, competency and leadership skills at a working level that can bring about successful and sustained change across the organisation.

This was the rationale for the TeamLink programme currently being implemented by Inspired Partners and Thales UK's aerospace business.



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THALES UK'S AEROSPACE BUSINESS
Thales UK's aerospace business provides high quality prime contractor and systems integrator services, and innovative equipment, systems and sub-systems to the world's civil and military sectors. Current projects include Lynx helicopters, the A380 Airbus and the Watchkeeper Unmanned Air Vehicle. Established in 2004, it employs 1,500 people at five sites across the UK.
The company is part of Thales UK, the country's second largest defence electronics supplier, and the international Thales Group, which employs 68,000 people.



A new way of working

Having set the challenging target of achieving a three-fold increase in turnover within seven years, Thales UK's aerospace business was successfully growing its order book, but was being held back by the UK's chronic shortage of systems engineers. If it was to fulfil these orders, the company needed to dramatically increase the productivity of its current workforce and reduce its development cycle times. At the same time, it had to address the need to raise the quality of leadership at all levels, an issue which had been identified by a staff survey.

CASCADE PLANNING

Team leaders are shown how to distil the company's three-month plans and overall objectives down into weekly individual events. This provides clear, transparent measures to assess progress and enables early identification of any problems. Results are also fed back up to the top-level plan.

An integrated team from Inspired Partners and Thales worked together to design and develop a programme specifically targeted at Team Leaders which could work alongside existing management initiatives. Inspired Partners provided consultants, facilitators, coaches and administrators with the skills and knowledge to supplement those of the in-house improvement team, as well as the additional resources required for large-scale delivery.

The result is TeamLink - not just another training scheme, but the introduction of a totally new way of working based on Collaborative Working, Visual Management and Cascade Planning.

TeamLink aims to provide Team Leaders with the skills and tools that will help them manage their teams at a faster pulse, while encouraging collaborative working within and between teams. It better equips them to deliver both current projects and improvement activities.

"TeamLink is putting in place the basic leadership skills and ways of working which are forming the foundation on which the subsequent improvements are to be built."

Antony Wainwright,
Improvement Programme Manager, UK
Thales Aerospace

Core programme, bespoke implementation

TeamLink is based on a standard process, taking each Team Leader through the following stages:

- Confirming their Team's mission and objectives
- Understanding their relationships with internal and external stakeholders
- Developing useful Team measures - not necessarily the measures they are asked by the business to report, but ones which will be meaningful to them on a day-to-day basis
- Using Cascade Planning to turn the programme deliverables, improvement objectives and targets into individual, daily tasks



- Designing a Team display board as a clear focus for progress tracking and improvement
- Introducing 10 minute Team stand-ups at an appropriate frequency around the board to check the current status, identify priorities and highlight any issues.

To implement the process, Inspired Partners developed a core programme of facilitated workshops, one-to-one coaching and team activities. A bank of presentation materials and 'assets' was created to ensure facilitators deliver consistent messages both now and in the future.

In practice, the programme is always tailored to the individual team, ensuring the content is relevant to their working practices and current business priorities. Any specific personal needs or issues are addressed through one-to-one sessions with executive coaches. While this is an unusual approach for staff at Team Leader level, it is proving highly effective.

STAND-UPS
 Short, sharp, focused team sessions that quickly indicate progress and priorities – ensuring everyone knows where they are and what they have to do.

Post-implementation reviews with every team are integral to the programme to make certain that the process is thoroughly embedded and that progress is sustained over the long term.

Widespread benefits

The results are proving to be inspiring. TeamLink has already:

Improved performance

"We're saving a lot of time - people have prioritised tasks and are not doing jobs which should be done in two or three months time."

Improved leadership

"The understanding of the common goals we're working to and where we are in the project - it's just a leap ahead of where we were before."

Improved team and inter-team communications

"...there's a far more open and honest atmosphere in the teams - rather than having formal communications channels where people are careful about what they say, they're just talking to each other."

Driven continuous improvement

It's a "... driver to support continuous improvement and efficiency and to reduce failure rates because the information is not stuck on someone's PC but is on a display board for all to see"

Quickened the business pulse

"Having the engineers always knowing what to do without them having to come and find me saves them a couple of hours a week each."

Increased customer confidence

"...helped us to give customers more realistic forecasts leading to increased customer satisfaction"

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Now everyone knows what is going on, resulting in more positive and motivated team members and improving staff retention. Teams are focused on achieving priorities and reducing non-value added activities, supporting the drive towards a lean organisation. Good Team Leaders are more competent and more confident, while poor performance can quickly be exposed and addressed.

Over the last two years, the TeamLink programme has been rolled out across nine departments, encompassing more than 100 Team Leaders and 600 team members. By programme completion in 2008, Inspired Partners will have introduced the new way of working to 175 Team Leaders and 1,004 employees across 13 departments and three sites. Thales fully expects that each element of TeamLink will pay for itself in less than 12 months.

"Inspired Partners know how to run improvement programmes and those found in aerospace and civil infrastructure. This is coupled with effective change management and improvement tools and adept facilitators and coaches. They have inspired me to raise my game and increased the effectiveness of the key team leader development process in our business."

*Antony Wainwright,
Improvement Programme Manager, UK
Thales Aerospace*

"Together we used a practical application of Collaborative Working theory to develop an effective solution for Thales and implement the programme in a way which provides long-term sustainability for the business."

*Sally Palethorpe, Managing Partner
Inspired Partners*

Helping turn ideas into reality

Achieving change and business improvement does not have to be dull and Inspired Partners has proved that the results are more effective and more sustainable when it is not.

Established in 2004, Inspired Partners is a team of highly experienced consultants, executive coaches and management specialists who work in partnership with clients to develop individual, practical and effective solutions.

We provide inspiration and leadership that stretches companies and individuals and achieves results that exceed expectations. Our methods are visual, innovative and memorable, challenging boundaries and making change happen.

To find out more about Inspired Partners and our unique approach, please visit our website www.inspired-partners.com

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