

Informing the development of future leaders at British Transport Police

British Transport Police (BTP) is unlike any other police force in the UK; not only is it a national force, rather than being geographically organised, but 95% of its funding comes from the privatised train operating companies rather than the Home Office. Head Light has worked with BTP to refine, define and measure its own competencies as part of its new Leadership Academy and make use of Talent 360®.

It is now able to:

- Spot, objectively, officers with high potential who may otherwise not have been identified thanks to the built-in capabilities of the software to flag 'high potential' predictors
- Demonstrate a greater individual personal ownership of development and career progression
- Hold valuable, meaningful and informed coaching conversations based on the clear outputs from Talent 360®
- Ensure coaches and feedback facilitators are skilled in the reporting and discussion of the feedback results
- Track progress towards achieving the strategic behaviours and values identified as being necessary for the force in the future.

Glynis Hammond, Leadership Academy Manager, British Transport Police comments, *"We have a well-defined view of what we want from our people today but, with policing changing quite rapidly, we needed to understand what skills we must develop as an organisation for the future. Our vision is clear - and our people are committed to this. My role, and that of my team, is to encourage and enable the behaviours, skills and competencies to deliver this vision. To help us, we knew we had to work with a great supplier of an online 360 assessment - and we chose to work with Head Light."*

The best of the best

Glynis outlines the BTP vision *"We have a very clear strategy and approach in how we operate at BTP today and also how we will operate in the future - and this is at the heart of everything we do. We will be the 'best of the best' at all levels in the organisation. This means that not only do we select and promote the best people, but we are committed to developing them to be the best - and part of this commitment was the creation of our Leadership Academy."*



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Leadership Academy
Manager, British
Transport Police



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Predicting the future

The Leadership Academy was initially set up to meet the internal demands for succession planning, high quality leadership and the development needs of those seeking more complex challenges. At the outset, a clear definition of the future essential skills and behaviours was needed. Glynis explains, *“Being committed to quality and to being the best of the best is one thing, but the main challenge we faced as we began to design the Leadership Academy was that we needed a crystal ball in order to predict the future. We know what makes a great leader today, but we now need to understand and develop the skills and attributes which will be essential in our leaders in 5 years’ time. We believe that there will be an increasing emphasis on ethical leadership, emotional intelligence and business acumen and so, at the outset, we sought to define these and other essential behaviours, before moving on to look at how we could develop them.”*

BTP carried out a review of what police forces in the UK and other countries were doing in the area of defining and identifying strategic police leadership. This unearthed very little in terms of research-based answers and so, with the support of Head Light, BTP began to look specifically at its own needs

What is needed of future leaders?

At the heart of the Leadership Academy lie three important ambitions: a desire to create the leaders of the future; a need to better identify and predict those with potential and a commitment to ensure that this potential is achieved by all participants. Glynis expands, *“We knew that we needed to move away the more subjective comments relating to future promotion we sometimes heard, and to look at more objective ways to identify future success as a leader. We started by exploring rigorously the types of behaviours we are expecting and then, once these had been refined and agreed, looked for ways to measure these.”*

“Head Light worked with us - challenging and moderating our suggestions on the behaviours we needed - and helped to ensure we were asking the right questions, in the right way. It was still very much our model, but the input we had from Head Light made it tighter, more refined and overall better.”

The model developed by BTP is built on the Professional Policing Framework (PPF) and includes areas quite specific to BTP and its future vision. Glynis explains, *“Business acumen does not feature as a competency within the PPF and yet it is an essential skill within BTP as we need to liaise with our train-operating stakeholders daily; our people right down to sergeant level need to make intelligent business decisions.”*

Once BTP had confirmed the strategic behaviours it needed, Head Light then worked with BTP to analyse the data already collected through its 360 degree programme at chief inspector level. This helped to define the organisational strengths and highlight the potential areas for development. *“Working with Head Light, we mapped our 5 year strategic plan onto the 360 degree feedback items. This gave us a 360 assessment that now measures the behaviours and organisational values we believe that we need in 5 years’ time. This means that, as well as pinpointing the areas for focus, we can now track our progress towards achieving these.”*

360 at the heart of the Academy assessment

As part of the initial stage of the Academy each participant completes a customised 360 degree feedback assessment via the Talent 360® on-line platform. At the outset, Glynis evaluated a range of 360 tools on the market before selecting the Talent® system.

“We chose the Head Light Talent 360® tool for a number of reasons. The language used within the police version of its questionnaire is excellent and truly resonates with everyone across the organisation. In addition, the online system offers huge flexibility and is capable of being adapted easily by our own team. By using Talent 360, I am able to run various assessments and campaigns across staff and officers, grouped by rank, at the same time with no problems.”



“We believe that the Leadership Academy will change the way our senior officers think and operate.”

After completing the 360, all Academy participants take part in a 1:1 feedback and coaching conversation with one of the BTP internal team of facilitators, trained by Head Light through its Feedback Facilitation Course. Participants are then offered a further 3 coaching sessions to implement their personal development plan and build strength in the areas identified.

Glynis comments on this, “It is important for us to have our 360 facilitators and coaches from within BTP as they have both the credibility and experience to have the depth of conversation needed with our senior leaders. But they need to have the confidence to interpret, understand and delve into the feedback given as part of the 360. As such we were keen for Head Light to train our facilitators on how to use and explore the 360 reports.”

Spotting potential

As part of the initial analysis of the data, the Working Group identified the items within the 360 assessment which indicated or predicted ‘high potential’. With this in place, BTP could begin to pinpoint those officers who may have been overlooked as ‘high potential’.

“There’s a clever part of the Head Light system which allows us to identify specific areas which indicate high potential; I’d not seen that before and it’s proved highly valuable to us. It has helped us to take an objective look at the potential for promotability of our staff by looking closely at who has scored highly on these key indicators or behaviours as rated by their managers, peers and direct reports. This gives us additional information to that already gathered from more traditional ways such as through Performance Reviews and from the managers. We now spot people with potential who have not previously been on our radar for promotion - and we also understand what development needs to take place for them to progress,” Glynis comments.

Next steps

In its first year of operation, more than 300 inspectors, chief inspectors and superintendents have experienced the Academy. Some of those taking part in the pilot were initially sceptical but the professionalism and knowledge of the coaches, the insight gained from the 360 and the development opportunities provided, have made the Leadership Academy a success. Going forward, BTP will link with an academic partner to provide not just a critical friend perspective, but also additional relevant learning modules as part of the participants' development plans.

There have been other positive outcomes from the Academy which hadn't been predicted. Due to the dispersed geography of BTP officers rarely had the opportunity to meet to exchange ideas and establish relationships with other officers. *“We hadn't considered that one of the key benefits of the Leadership Academy would be gained from the frequency of the interaction between participants. The idea for an o-line forum came from those taking part in the pilot and, as a result, we are investing heavily in IT to help bring the participants together in this way so that they may learn from, exchange ideas between and build a network with others.”*

Glynis concludes, *“We believe that the Leadership Academy will change the way our senior officers think and operate. Creating the Academy for BTP was always more than developing the strategic behaviours we need. We want to create confident, future leaders who take responsibility for their own development - and making that step change to individual ownership is one of the biggest challenges for us.”*

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