

# Evaluation Case Study: Certificate in Professional Consulting

## The Beech Centre Certificate in Professional Consulting

The Certificate in Professional Consulting is one of the many professional development programmes available at The Beech Centre on an open and in-company basis. Accredited by the Institute of Consulting as part of the Chartered Management Institute, this course is designed to develop the behaviours and skills necessary to deliver excellence in consultancy practice, both within internal organisational consultancy teams and for external consultants within the field of Organisational Development. This case study will follow the progress of a group of delegates who have recently completed the Certificate.

The Consulting Certificate is designed to deliver some specific key outcomes for programme participants. Delegates are invited to develop an understanding of mind-sets and competencies required to be an authentic consultant, how to build clear and sustainable consulting relationships using the “consulting cycle” and other key models that are important to have within a consultant’s “tool-kit”. Participants will also develop confidence and capability in these skills, along with a 6-12 month personal development plan detailing how to improve them further. Arguably though, the most important outcomes are those that the individual delegate wants to see themselves.

The programme is split into three 2-day modules; Me as Consultant, Consultant in Action and Integration and Evaluation. It focuses on experiential learning at its core, as all Beech programmes do. It is also facilitated, which allows the outcomes of the session to be agreed with the participants at the start and respond accordingly in the moment by potentially altering the agenda of the day, so that the delegates get as much out of the course as they possibly can. However, as the programme is accredited, there are certain aspects of the course

which must be completed. So how was the balance between responding to the needs of the clients and ensuring the academic requirements were met managed? Steve Benfield, Managing Partner of The Beech Centre facilitated this particular programme and provides some insight, "...this programme first and foremost is about being a collaborative consulting and really challenging any existing expert thinking that can get in the way of being truly authentic and collaborative. The accreditation of the programme will mean different things for different people. It's right that people choose what's most important for them – typically, it graduating from the programme and being confident to use the learning and embed that authentically into practice. More and more are we seeing the accreditation as an optional choice for people, although its great to have this programme quality assured by the Institute of Consulting.

## The Impact

During the Evaluation, our group of delegates decided to explore the impact the programme had on them in terms of the personal shift that they have seen. They have decided to compose quotes as a group, as supposed to individually to truly reflect the collaborative nature of the programme.

Firstly, they described how they felt they had increased knowledge and skills, which made them feel more equipped, confident and valuable than they had prior to the programme. This in turn made them feel as if they are now offering "things" which are more impactful back into their organisations; "The course has given me valuable knowledge to help me in my journey as a consultant".

There were lots of key models and frameworks used that had a significant impact on the delegates, such as the consulting cycle, the idea of being authentic and working "in the moment", using inquiry skills, choosing how to react when triggered and managing difficult conversations; "Instilling a new way of being". The participants also noted that "communication is different!" as they are now operating in the client's world of communication by utilising their language. As a result of these frameworks, our participants now reported having a different impact and people noticing and feeling different within their organisations. They talked about feeling as if they deal with things quicker and stick in tough things more often off the back of this programme. They also expressed that they felt they were being more decisive around people decisions, which was having a positive impact on the financial performance of their organisations: "The course has helped me to fulfil my ambition to have more impact and potency in my organisation."

"A dynamic and thought-provoking programme!"

## What next?

Our programme participants explored what they would expect the impact of the programme would look like for them individually 3-6 months down the line.

One delegate described how she was hoping for a promotion in the next 6 months, and is aspiring to lead projects from beginning to end. She is also hoping to figure out whether or not external consultancy is for her as it is not something that she is currently involved in.

Another participant is looking forward to having the opportunity to utilise the skills he's learnt around having difficult conversations in the moment- and well!

Other delegates on this particular programme attended from the same organisation, and they

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are looking within the next three months to use the skills they have learnt to assist them in role modelling the behaviours that they have contracted for within their organisation, such as high challenge, high support and advocacy and inquiry with colleagues whom understand this behaviour and invite it. They are also planning to improve the way they consciously work together robustly, and to model this in well within their team which, if effective, will be observed by others in the system. Within 6 months, they are looking to introduce a common language around leadership within their permanent executive team.

Graduates of our Certificate in Professional Consulting usually build upon the learning they have gained by completing The Beech Centre's Diploma in Professional Consulting. For more information on these or any of our programmes, please contact us at [info@thebeechcentre.co.uk](mailto:info@thebeechcentre.co.uk)