An example of best practice HR strategy

Summary
- The Big Lottery Fund wanted to implement a new organisational structure with the aims of developing management capability and streamlining the business structure to lead BIG to achieve its organisational goals.
- In line with BIG’s three-year HR Strategy, SHL was brought in to review and develop a competency structure for the entire organisation and carry out 360-degree feedback and subsequent development workshops with the Senior Management Team.
- Halfway through the HR three-year plan, a significant amount of positive change is evident while the work continues to further develop and improve the HR agenda.

The Background
The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) distributes half of good cause money raised by the National Lottery to projects bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of those most in need. Currently it awards around £630 million a year to community projects across the UK.

The Challenge
Jasvier Boyal, the deputy director of HR joined BIG in September 2005, at the time of major organisational changes. Following the Lyons Review, which identified and promoted the relocation of civil service jobs from London and the South East, BIG decided to implement the new organisational structure by moving funding operations out of London and centralising them in key centres in Newcastle and Birmingham, whilst retaining a UK country presence in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This development became a catalyst for internal change.

In summer 2006 an early Investors In People (IIP) pilot assessment was undertaken within one directorate, to determine where the Big Lottery Fund was against the IIP Standard.

The assessment showed that while meeting six of the ten standards, BIG needed to focus further on two corporate HR themes related to ‘evaluating training provision’ and ‘defining management competencies’.

“The BIG competency framework, developed in partnership with SHL, has been fully integrated into recruitment, appraisal and employee development. This ensures that HR is aligning its processes to business needs and developing a framework to develop employee capability and management effectiveness.” Jasvier Boyal, Deputy HR Director, The Big Lottery Fund
An assessment partner SHL was brought in to review and develop a competency structure and carry out 360-degree feedback and subsequent development workshops with the Senior Management Team with the aims to develop management capability and streamline business structure to lead BIG to achieve its organisational goals.

An extensive on-line staff survey to benchmark the level of internal satisfaction was commissioned in the autumn of 2006. The survey, which garnered an 85% response rate, revealed that staff were optimistic about the future and considered BIG to be a good employer when it came to promoting equality of opportunity.

However, concern was expressed about team work, the management of poor performance and lack of information about job related training. The HR Team identified the need for a technology platform to service the daily HR requirements of managers and employees via an interactive, self-service approach that would in turn free the HR team up to focus on strategic, value-added interventions such as working with teams to develop skills and address performance issues.

The secondary objective, as identified by the BIG senior Management and HR teams, was to get the BIG’s Executive Team on board and gain their support in developing the right competencies framework.

The Solution

Jasvier and his team developed a three-year HR Strategy. The first stage included the development of internal values, through employee workshops held around the country, to define what type of organisation staff wanted to work in. Four internal values were defined. Based on these values, SHL was commissioned to review and further develop a comprehensive structure of behavioural and technical competencies to cover the entire organisation.

These competencies would identify the behaviours required for each role to drive a high performance culture at BIG. In addition, the project redefined all roles within the business and established a Job Family framework, with levels for each role to be mapped into from each of its directorates. This resulted in reduction of job profiles by a third and ensured that BIG was compliant with person specification requirements introduced by Age Discrimination legislation.

The behavioural competencies refer to behaviours that are essential for a role, such as ‘Analysis and Critical Thinking’, or ‘Influencing Others’, while technical competencies refer to skills, such as ‘Media Techniques’ or ‘People Management’. These competency descriptions communicate to both managers and employees the requirements for their roles and define key factors to support succession planning.

Once defined and agreed, the competency framework was used to map existing courses to competencies, review existing job descriptions, development advice and interview questions. The information was then uploaded onto an employee portal called ‘Your HR’.

Organisations that understand and maximize their people’s potential achieve outstanding results. SHL gives you the insights to make better decisions about your people. We call this People Intelligence, Business Results.
'Your HR' portal provides information, advice and support on staff development for both staff and managers. Most importantly the information on the portal helps line managers take a performance management approach to the development of their staff.

In order to enhance the development options for staff, BIG established a partnership with the Open University, to introduce a new Leadership and Management Development Programme and is currently planning the roll-out of an E-Learning suite.

The partnership offers the chance to take the Certificate/Diploma in Management or a MA programme to ensure that employees continued developing themselves professionally. Over 50 staff members are currently engaged in the programme. The programme was also included into the competency framework for management skills in order to aid application of the ‘learning in the workplace’ principle.

Building on the Open University programme, managers needing training and leadership guidance can now look to an online programme of Leadership and Management development activities. The modular format of the programme, designed by SHL, ensures that while the existing managers can pick and choose the appropriate courses, the new managers have a solid programme of development, designed around:

- Leadership Models
- Performance Management
- Excellence
- Managing Disability
- Interview Skills
- Resource Management
- Coaching
- Change Management
- Continuous improvement

Organisational Development Consultant, Perry Timms is leading these initiatives internally: “Proposals are afoot to supplement the programme with ‘Pathway’ an internal leadership programme, which includes accredited management development for all staff and an academic development programme for women at ILM/NVQ Level 3. This is an integrated programme with succession planning activity for high performance/high potential employees.

Competency based, mapped into BIG’s internal values and reacting to key Employee Survey themes, the programme will commence during November and be delivered throughout the next 12 months. This project is not standing still, but evolving continuously in accordance with the needs of the business.”
The Results

According to Jasvier, “The BIG competency framework, developed in partnership with SHL, has been fully integrated into recruitment, appraisal and employee development. A range of techniques are used to assess the competencies and all training is linked to one or more competency. This ensures that HR is aligning its processes to business needs and developing a framework to develop employee capability and management effectiveness.”

Following the creation of two centres Birmingham and Newcastle, 300 new staff members were recruited using a range of SHL’s tools. The effects of this development will continue to unfold throughout the coming year. A second staff survey has been carried out to monitor whether the actions so far taken by the Senior Management Team have increased employer satisfaction in the development areas originally highlighted.

In mid 2007, the Big Lottery Fund was awarded corporate Investor In People status. The feedback from the assessor included:

- BIG’s competency framework linked to job profiles, appraisal and development process, is generally regarded s very good practice
- BIG uses people management objectives when setting business objectives of managers
- The appraisal process invites upward feedback that reflects good practice
- The induction of new staff was a great success and allowed BIG to maintain its operations during extensive change
- There is a strong public sector ethos with people regarding BIG as an excellent employer with good benefits and facilities
- There is a strong trust in communications received from senior managers who are very proud of this
- BIG is very good at “on the job training”

The 360-degree management development programme together with the practical implementation of a refined competency framework has allowed BIG to address these points and achieve IIP accreditation. Work is now being progressed to achieve exemplar status in a number of IIP profiles. A successful team-driven migration of HR transactional processes online have enabled the development of:

- Self service for both managers and staff on a “Your HR” portal
- Revised HR policies to reflect changed accountabilities for managers, staff and HR
- Process flowcharts with desk instructions and “HR Toolkit” of forms, letters and other documents accessible to all on the intranet, to promote self service
Corporate Helpdesk to log HR calls, which allows service standards to be monitored and issues and themes to be identified and lead HR to plan where action should be prioritised

- Policy and process development, in response to employee queries
- On-line recruitment processes, to reduce transactional processes, allowing HR to refocus on more development work
- Master Vendor agency appointed, which will lead to better quality of workforce planning, management information and cost savings.

Ines Wichert, SHL’s project manager and account director for Big Lottery Fund mentioned:

“It is fantastic to see how Jasvier and his team have implemented a robust HR strategy which is built around the new competencies and which fully integrates the various HR processes of selection, performance management, development and talent management.”

**Conclusion**

BIG’s three year HR Strategy was linked directly to BIG’s corporate performance objectives. Improvements to all areas of the BIG organisation will be driven in part by this strategy.

The Senior Management Team’s development programme was designed to provide the company’s leaders with the capability to inspire their workforce.

Jasvier explains, “The competency framework provided all employees with a value structure that defined their growth and development, and provided the management teams with a template to ensure consistency.”

The Big Lottery Fund strives to become a best practise example for other government bodies in the UK. Halfway through the HR three-year plan, a significant amount of change is evident while the work continues to further develop and improve the HR agenda.