



working with  
**WHITBREAD**

Our journey with Whitbread has combined a focus on change, team and leadership to support the Operations Leadership team and their teams through organisational change. Read on to find out more

CHANGE

## The context for change at Whitbread

As an operator of some of the UK's most successful hospitality brands, including Premier Inn, Beefeater and Brewers Fayre, Whitbread recognises that investing in developing its people will be essential to facilitate the change needed to deliver ambitious growth plans.

This need for sustainable change is typical in large organisations such as Whitbread which have a strong track record of success but need to keep reviewing and refreshing their approach to ensure future success.

Whitbread engaged Leading Edge to design and deliver a tailored change journey to provide all-important clarity on operational roles and support with skill development to lead teams through change.



## Learnings from high performance sport

Is 6 out of 10 for performance good enough? Sometimes yes; in sport, definitely not – it's nowhere near medal position. This learning from high performance sport ignited Whitbread to challenge acceptance of 6 out of 10 being good enough... and to focus on the potential opportunity cost of the other 4 out of 10! Managers and leaders started challenging themselves on "no need to rock the boat" and to focus instead on potential: where are the 3 out of 10 performances that could become 6, 7 or 8 out of 10s?

## Partnering for success

Leading Edge solutions are bespoke to each client and each journey: they are not off-the-shelf programmes. Our tailored solution for Whitbread involved a hybrid of our Points of View on Change, Leadership and Teams in a journey that brought together the most relevant themes and aspects of all three approaches.

At the centre of this was agreeing the outcomes and detail on a rolling basis with input and sign-off from the HR and divisional stakeholders. Taking this approach made sure each event within the overall journey was enhanced by learnings and outcomes from the previous one.

Building a strong partnership with our clients at Whitbread in the early days evoked confidence that this flexible approach was the right one to deliver a programme that remained relevant and was continually focussed on successful and sustainable outcomes.

Read on for more about Whitbread's journey... ↪

## Having an impact

We created a nine-month journey for the Operations team, which includes Operations Directors and Regional Operations Managers. This journey began with a launch conference to introduce our Point of View on Change and provide clarity on how change happens, using Dannemiller's Change Equation as a common language. We followed this up with three events based around activities to support highly effective team working and leading through change.

At the heart of these tailored, outcome-focussed activities was building relationships across a team in a period of change. It was important to help delegates to 'think/feel/do' differently as a way to raise performance and standards – being taken outside of a comfort zone is an impactful way to encourage and support this.

Teaming up with Leamington homeless charity Helping Hands, the Whitbread Operations Directors did a 'Soup Kitchen Takeover' as a shared team experience. This impactful activity aligned with Whitbread's ethos of 'serving up great memories' – in this change journey context, the team were serving up different memories and seeing each other in a different environment, but still as a unified, strong team.



For another activity around driving performance through change with Regional Operations Managers, we introduced the Skill Will Matrix to get a clear picture of capability and commitment across teams. This is powerful and quick to complete compared with an annualised performance review, which generates vast amounts of comparison data to be analysed.

One element of all Leading Edge programmes is to ensure there is a focus on the progress made through each stage of a journey to help teams build self-sustaining action plans that will support their continued development beyond the life of the programme.



## Making a difference

The Operations Team showed clear recognition of what needs to change for successful outcomes – after the final event in the journey, one delegate described feeling "ready to take off" and knowing what baggage needed to be left on the runway for him to achieve this.

Delegate feedback included "success being in the power of listening", with leaders commenting on the importance of the listening work with Leading Edge and understanding that it's not about having all the answers.

"What made me really proud of this programme was that it wasn't just theoretical learning – there were pragmatic next steps and things put into practice immediately. This meant it was 'stickier' than I imagined it would be and the lightbulbs were bigger than I thought they would be."

Catherine Braybrook,  
Head of Learning and Development,  
Premier Inn & Restaurants at Whitbread PLC



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