

Care Management Group

Let's Talk About Neuro-Linguistic Technology:

Care Management Group have used neuro-linguistic programming to identify the strategies of their most successful directors.

Care Management Group (CMG) was established in 1994 by a parent of a person with learning disabilities and since then our ethos has always been that the people we support and their families are at the heart of our organisation.

CMG personalised services include Our personalised services include: Supporting living, Residential care, Outreach and home support, and Day services.

What we wanted to achieve

CMG had previously had success using Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) to identify the strategies used by our most effective registered managers. We used that learning to help shape our outstanding managers programme.

It was felt that a similar exercise involving regional directors of the business could be equally beneficial. I was very interested to see what strategies regional directors used to carry out their roles and the similarities and differences between them. We wanted to identify which are particularly effective.

I also had a hunch that different people used approaches that were particularly effective and there was scope for them to learn from each other.

What we did

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is a tool for participants to really get in touch with how they think, feel and behave rather than it being a more theoretical type of approach.

Participants were asked to close their eyes and think of the last really positive day they could remember at work. This invariably begins to identify people's values, because motivation is linked to the extent to which important values are satisfied.

I used the "Logical Levels" model developed by Robert Dilts, one of the leading figures in NLP. It is a very effective tool for helping to understand the way that peoples' beliefs, values and thought processes interact. It consists of the following hierarchy:

- beyond identity
- identity
- beliefs and values
- capabilities
- behaviours
- environment.

In this exercise, there were three key aspects of the model which were relevant: beliefs and values, capabilities and behaviours.

I then explored the different aspects of the

Regional Director role using questioning techniques designed to be very granular and specific. Questions like “how specifically do you do that ...?” are very helpful here.

What we achieved

The process provided some practical insight into the Regional Managers’ values, beliefs and competences.

Values:

- Every single Regional Director had a value about the importance of service users having a good quality of life and developing as individuals.
- Most Regional Directors had a value about the importance of supporting their staff. Other values were more specific to the individual: for example, “it is really important to me to be responsive to customers and communicate promptly which drives this individual to always respond promptly” to e-mails.
- Two Regional Directors had a similar value “it is important to me to be on top of my workload” and this led them to have strategies to make sure that they keep up to date with the various tasks which they have to do.

Beliefs:

- One person does not always feel as confident as they would like and another has a more empowering belief “I feel confident to cope with the challenges of the job”. This is a very helpful belief as being a Regional Director can be a tough and emotionally demanding role.

Competencies:

I identified eight different competencies that were displayed by the Regional Director group.

Highlighted below are the particular useful strategies used by different Regional Directors that seemed most the effective.

Supporting Managers:

- I adjust my style to suit each manager.
- I pick up on body language and use that to assess the wellbeing of my managers.
- I help managers break tasks down into manageable chunks.
- I give managers the time they need.

- I encourage managers to buddy up and support each other.

Effective supervisions

There is a variety of ways in which Regional Directors approach supervisions with Home Managers. Some take a very flexible approach while others adhere in a very structured way to the company’s supervision policy. Useful strategies being used by Regional Directors in supervisions include the following:

- Most of the time I have a coaching style. I use questions to explore issues and then make suggestions based on my experience.
- I emphasize positives with my managers to help them feel inspired.
- I am able to communicate difficult messages sensitively.
- I discuss every service user in every supervision.
- In supervisions I collect the information I need and help managers to problem solve.

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Auditing Skills:

- I triangulate information in audits e.g. cross referencing support plans with daily diaries.
- I check the service user element of my supervision records for the previous three months prior to auditing.
- I immediately transfer actions from audits into manager’s supervision files.
- I use the audit process to explain to staff what needs to be done.

Organisational skills:

- I review my calendar everyday
- I use my inbox as a checking system because any issues not dealt with are left there.
- I visualise my calendar in my head and can see what I am doing a week ahead.

- I have a “to do” list on the computer which I update every day. It is colour coded (green means done, amber means in process, red either means to be done urgently or tasks have already been delayed before).
- Managers know I will not forget outstanding actions (because of inbox system).

Challenging people appropriately and managing conflict:

- I will challenge negative attitudes by managers
- I challenge staff attitudes by asking them to see things from the service user and family point of view.

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Encouraging best practice:

- I praise staff when I see good practice.
- I ask lots of questions to identify ways of improving the services.
- I have a best practice theme in every managers meeting.
- I spend a lot of time discussing practice issues with staff.
- If I have a concern about interactions I observe, I do role modelling.

Motivating staff:

- I write positive feedback in the communication book.
- I am attuned to people’s behaviour and look for reasons to explain it.
- I explore the reasons behind poor performing behaviour rather than condemning the individual.

Forward planning:

- I plan my calendar three months ahead.
- I do forecasting and scenario planning ahead of difficult meetings.
- I have a mental to do list for longer terms projects which I can see in my mind as a time-line.

Following the initial work, we will now explore further. We are holding a workshop with our regional director team to look at the the learning from the exercise. The plan is for this to include brief presentations from the five Regional Director participants to explain to their colleagues the particular strategies they use which are effective.

We may also want to use the learning to shape both the person specification for the role and the criteria to be used during appraisals. I also think we can explore best practice in carrying out supervisions which we can use to improve the effectiveness of supervisions across the organisation.

What we learnt

Whilst there were commonalities of approach amongst the Regional Directors, there were also significant differences. I was struck by the fact that each Regional Director had one or two areas where I thought they were particularly strong and could teach their colleagues effective strategies.

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I think there is a rich opportunity for Regional Directors to learn from each other and collectively to improve their overall competence as a team.

You do need to be trained in NLP to use these techniques effectively. It’s a very different way of working that gets people in touch with how they think feel and behave. It’s experiential rather than academic and theoretical. It’s also really important to get into granular detail using effective questioning.

For more information please visit

www.cmg.co.uk

Skills for Care Recommends

Skills for Care produces a wide range of resources aimed at owners, leaders, registered managers and nominated individuals including;

Leadership programmes

A range of specialist programmes aimed at developing new and existing top leaders, directors and senior managers.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/leadershipprogrammes

Registered manager networks

There are over 120 networks across England enabling Registered Managers to discuss common issues, share intelligence and work better together.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/networks

People performance management toolkit

This practical resource helps managers to apply a range of different skills and behaviours to maintain a motivated team.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ppmt

