



Severfield: Leadership Development

About Severfield

Severfield is the largest specialist structural steelwork group in the UK. The company has been involved in numerous high-profile projects including Coal Drops Yard, Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, 22 Bishopsgate, and London's tallest skyscraper, The Shard.

With six manufacturing facilities in the UK, one in Europe, and a joint venture in India, Severfield is recognised as being a leader in quality and innovation, with unrivalled expertise within its sector.





The Challenge

The leadership team at Severfield wanted to engage better with their employees and to influence other stakeholders such as customers, suppliers and partners.

The organisation had grown over the years, partly organically, but also through acquisitions and as a result, there was a mix of cultures and practices across their sites. Historically, the business had focused on operations with leaders committed to their functions and delivering defined results. Over more recent years, the executive committee increasingly realised there was also a need to focus on people. In response, Severfield invested in improved safety culture, established a more strategic approach to HR and developed better internal communications.

Building on this platform, the key developmental requirement for the CEO and his leadership team was to improve their ability to impact others. Firstly, the business needed them to appreciate the value of higher employee engagement and its hard business benefits. Leaders needed to see themselves differently, becoming more self-aware of how their presence and behaviour could impact their people.

In addition, Severfield's leadership team needed to engage with the wider business. This audience consisted of front-line steel operatives and managers at various levels, along with technical specialists and their commercial teams. Often, while their functional skills and knowledge were high, many of them had not consciously worked on this leadership aspect of their role, nor had they previously been coached or experienced the support and constructive challenge that this could provide.

Each leader had different challenges when engaging with people. Some lacked self-awareness and some lacked presentation skills - speaking strictly from a dry script, being uncomfortable in large groups or inhibited in their delivery. Others lacked purpose, or a sense of mission, and could not link who they were to what they did.





Our Solution

We coached the different members of the team to develop the impact they could have as leaders. Each set their own goals and priorities as to where they could improve their performance.

The business wanted PEAR to encourage a common appreciation of the importance of employee engagement and a consistent level of performance.

We spent a lot of time reflecting with each individual as to their purpose as leaders and what drove them to want to make a difference at work. We helped them to think deeply about the question 'Who am I?' and to strategically share those aspects of who they were in the context of work, supporting them to link personal purpose and business purpose.

PEAR worked with Severfield's leaders to recognise opportunities, both formal and informal, to connect with their teams and the broader organisation. We looked at story-telling, structure, body and voice, unscripted communications and other communication skills and these skills were practised each time we met.

Individuals were encouraged to have challenging conversations that would help them unlock their team's potential and initiate informal conversations with their reports, using existing team and project meetings to connect better with people.

The coaching was a mixture of face-to-face and online and PEAR worked with individuals for 4-6 sessions over 12 months. The focus was always on the immediate issues relevant to their responsibilities within the business.

Leaders tried new ways of connecting. They ran mental health and well-being 'breakfasts', tried new ways of running their team meetings, different kinds of one-to-one conversations and implemented fresh formats for town hall meetings. They were encouraged to regularly experiment between sessions on new ways of connecting to their teams.

Our support helped build confidence to work without scripts and helped individuals to be clear about their purpose and values and how to express this in what they said.



The Impact

Severfield's leadership team is now more impactful, and their teams are better engaged. Their awareness has increased, and their confidence levels are higher - for many, they learnt how to learn. Leaders are more supportive of and challenging with their teams and both formal and impromptu interactions with staff have been transformed.



The last roadshow presentations were very different and, for me, felt more personal with the audience. I not only talked about things I care about but communicated that I care about them.

Mike, Manufacturing Director



I'm not leaving anything lying around that needs to be addressed, I've upped the tempo and I'm expecting the teams around me to up their tempo and outperform the competition in all areas.. [other] directors have commented that energy levels have lifted.

Jim, Divisional Managing Director



The one underlying theme for me and from me was always about the people and a firm belief in people and what they can achieve. I knew it was there as a value but wasn't quite aware of how strongly held and how much of one it was.... I am also more clear about what I do and the impact I have. It's clearer to me how others value my opinion...made me more aware of it.

Sam, HR Director

