

Case Study #2: A private sector provider of Pathology Services

Our client is a private sector provider of Pathology services serving customers in the NHS and private health sectors. The business is growing but is dependent on a small number of large client contracts which are subject to re-negotiation at various intervals. The business recognises that it has a number of challenges with its medium and longer-term workforce planning that can have strategic implications. The education and training requirements for those employees in the most senior technical and scientific roles is onerous and lengthy. The roles are very difficult to fill and demand employment market outstrips supply. At the same time, it is important to create a compelling employment brand that makes the organisation attractive to join as a trainee, but then to stay longer-term as a career development opportunity. Set against this, there are risks associated with reliance on large scale contracts with public sector clients that are regularly scrutinized and re-tendered.

While there was a recognition that there were serious symptoms that needed to be addressed, there was not an understanding of the linkages between them in different parts of the organisation. There has also been attempts to address what are at first sight the causes of the problems; these have included specific arrangements to mitigate the risks of losing key individuals and review the reward and remuneration policy. The challenge they presented us was to frame an “exam question” for the senior leadership team around strategic workforce planning; what the issues were, how could they be addressed and what would be the broad benefits of doing.

In a first engagement, our consultants worked with a group of people drawn from Operations, HR, OD and Science to build some consensus around the issues and to create some energy for addressing them. In a short intervention, we worked alongside the client to help them to articulate the problems they were seeing, make direct links between them and the underlying causes, to articulate the characteristics of an approach that would address the issues and to build a vision for a future strategic workforce planning framework.

While this was deliberately a small-scale piece of work, the outcome for the client was significant in terms of building a case for change, building a consensus around the presenting issues and building energy and commitment to the cause.