CASE STUDY
BE EXCEPTIONAL. THE HENLEY WAY.

Clare Morton
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How did you choose the Henley Advanced Personal Leadership Programme, and why?

‘We were going through a competence review at work, to ensure that we all have the right skills for the job. Whilst I had 20 years’ experience of running teams, I had no formal external leadership training. As a result, our training adviser suggested this particular programme.’

So what were your expectations, and did the programme meet them?

‘On reflection, I think I expected to learn about leadership from examples of how people had motivated and or implemented change in other organisations. I thought the people there would come from a more commercial background and that the course content would be more structured, so I did find myself getting quite frustrated for the first couple of days. And I really wasn’t prepared for how personal this programme is, but I suppose the clue is in the title!

‘It’s unlike anything I’ve experienced, and I wasn’t alone in that. I just wanted someone to take a grip on it! But as I particularly wanted to work on not forcing my ideas onto everyone – which I tended to do – it was a real challenge for me.

‘By the third day it became evident that we had to do it for ourselves – it almost became the group against the programme, and as a result, we really bonded. By the end of the week these people were my best friends in the world!

‘I had always found it a bit embarrassing to talk about my own thoughts and feelings, but this programme has an insidious way of coaxing you to bare your soul and expose your own weaknesses. We all wrote our goals down and shared them with the group; just writing them down means you have to commit to them. It’s incredibly powerful.’

What was the impact on you, personally and professionally?

‘Profound! My boss said I changed to being a ‘bigger picture person’ and several colleagues noticed that I became more inclined towards listening rather than problem-solving. The session in the programme about active listening definitely has a strong effect on me. And the changes have stuck.

‘In meetings, I didn’t feel obliged to be the first one to talk. And it turned out that some people were more resentful of my assertiveness than I’d realised. I think I’ve become genuinely more inclusive and appreciate the diversity of talent that each person in the team brings to the table.’

So what advice would you give to anyone thinking about enrolling on the Henley APL Programme?

‘I’d ask them what they want to be. For anyone who needs to understand the difference between management and leadership, this is an extraordinary programme.

‘Henley is a lovely site, and delivers fantastic value. But you may well hate the programme – right up until the time you finish. Then you realise how brilliant it has been! I wouldn’t have thought that such a degree of ‘unstructuredness’ was possible, but now I get it, and I understand why it’s done the way it is. I could have killed Kate and John (the programme directors) in the first week, but I now recognise just how skilled they are at getting the best out of people.’

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