



Concrete Results

Tarmac is going through a period of sustained change as it adapts to a demanding and increasingly competitive business climate. Keen to ensure that restructured teams are as effective as possible as quickly as possible, and that employees remain engaged, it has made extensive use of the Margerison-McCann Team Management Profile right across the business.

The challenge

Tarmac is used to change. Indeed, part of the secret of its continuing success – it is 109 years old this year – is its ability to adapt to the times. But during the past decade, the pace of change at Tarmac has accelerated even faster than it has in many other organisations. It has been bought by Anglo American, is preparing to enter a joint venture with Lafarge UK, has a new chief executive and has undergone a complex restructuring designed to make it more responsive to clients' needs in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

"Given the amount of change we experienced during 2010 we needed to ensure that we were working as effectively as possible as quickly as possible," recalls Tracey McQuade, head of HR operations at Tarmac. "That meant that we needed to understand teams' strengths in order to deploy and further develop their skills, while being alert to where we were at risk through skills gaps. We also needed to build and sustain employee motivation and morale at a time of change, and having leaders within the business who could help to do that was critical to building engagement, which is one of our key strategic imperatives.

The company decided to use the Margerison-McCann Team Management Profile in teams right across the

business to help it achieve its objectives. It appointed Rajdeep Gahlla to the new role of team development and performance manager with the specific remit of carrying out the Team Management Profile training.

The solution

"It all kicked off at the end of 2010, beginning of 2011," recalls Raj. "There was a huge appetite for the Team Management Profile. I would do it with one team, and they immediately wanted me to do it with their direct reports too. I ran over 30 programmes, covering more than 350 people, and the programmes have continued into 2012."

She maybe shouldn't have been surprised at the level of demand. The top team had already done the Team Management Profile, and it went down, says head of talent and development Lyndsey Robinson, "an absolute storm." She explains: "What really hit home for me was how useful it was in helping to improve the team dynamics by giving people a similar understanding of their colleagues as it did of themselves. The benefits to both the individual and the business were immediately obvious."

Raj took a regional approach to rolling out the Team Management Profile, and did it in cross-functional teams to reflect the reality of day-to-day working. Demand quickly arose from functional teams too. But while most people have embraced the Team Management Profile enthusiastically they have done so at different rates, depending on their functional background.

Raj explains: "Some people – including some of the engineers and finance guys – were more cynical than others initially. They are very practical and fact orientated, and their initial

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feeling was perhaps that this exercise was a bit subjective. But once they understood more of the detail they bought into it.”

The thing that won everyone over was people’s scores – where they all fell on the Team Management Wheel. “When they could see the differences between their own styles and those of others, that had a really big impact, and the value came from them realising how they needed to adapt to get the best out of other people – particularly those working at the coal face,” says Raj.



Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel

The overall preference of Tarmac managers is fascinating too, she continues.

“I have done a sample profile for Tarmac, and it is all biased towards the Thruster-Organiser (29 per cent), Assessor-Developer (21 per cent) and Concluder-Producer (21 per cent) part of the Wheel. Upholder-Maintainers and Reporter-Advisers account for only two per cent and one per cent respectively of our management cadre. And when you look at our culture and the way we go about things generally, that all makes sense. It is the nature of our industry that there are lots of doers here – we need people who get on and get their hands dirty, and many of our managers started as operations staff.”

Yet Raj was surprised at just how low Tarmac’s representation in some categories is. “That very obvious

deficit really made people sit up and take notice – not least because it explains why, although we are in a state of continuous change, it is always a challenge to embed that change.”

It’s one thing recognising the deficit, but another doing something about it, because, as Raj says, going out to recruit new people to make an even Wheel is unrealistic.

“Some teams do get opportunities to bring in slightly different people. But generally, having the team profile just makes people more aware of the gaps and forces them to address them by adopting behaviours that might not come naturally to them.”

The result

Paul O’Neill, head of logistics in Tarmac’s western region, has done the Team Management Profile five times, and over the years he has become expert at augmenting his natural bias, as he explains.

“I’m quite unusual in Tarmac in that I’m in the Explorer-Promoter, Creator-Innovator part of the Wheel, which is good for the balance, but it means that I’m naturally disorganised and undisciplined. Everyone thinks I’m very organised and disciplined, but I’ve had to force myself to be those things in order to hold up the Upholder-Maintainer, Controller-Inspector part of the Wheel where we are weak.”

He recently did the Team Management Profile with the top ten people in his current team.

“The shortage of Controller-Inspectors and Upholder-Maintainers in the business (which is reflected even in our specialist team) means that while we clearly need to continue coming up with new and innovative ideas, we also have to get better at monitoring their effectiveness, analysing what might have gone wrong and adapting them if needs be. We’ve started to do that now. In the past if something looked like it wasn’t working we would dismiss it as rubbish and scrap it in favour of something else.

And he ensures that this culture change is itself embedded by placing much more emphasis on project management and key performance indicators, and linking those to personal development plans and personal targets.

“Cross-company communication has also improved, as have employee engagement scores.”

“We do monthly checks and updates to see if we are achieving what we set out to do. Annual targets and appraisals are not sufficient in a business that is changing as fast as this one is: we have to accept change as a fact of life and ensure that individuals and the team are changing accordingly.

Tracey McQuade was able to recruit someone to the HR team who plugged an identified skills gap.

“When we were recruiting we were very mindful of the Upholder-Maintainer deficit in the team, and when we interviewed this particular person she appeared to have some of the traits we needed,” she explains. “When we subsequently profiled her, she was indeed very strong in that area. Had we not been through the Team Management Profile we would have recruited in our own image, as we had been used to doing – albeit unconsciously.”

Elsewhere, she adds, where project teams are being formed, team leaders attempt to get a better mix of preferred work styles.

This year Raj is augmenting the Team Management Profile with a programme of Margerison-McCann

Opportunity Orientation Profile (QO₂[®]) training for some teams. The QO₂[®] makes people aware of their attitudes to risk and change, and will help to ensure that the changes at Tarmac become part of ‘business as usual’.

When Lyndsey Robinson first did the Team Management Profile back in 2010 she believed that there would be quick and medium-term wins for the business. Has she been proved right?

“People started talking to each other more, immediately,” she recalls. “On the day they did the exercise they’d come out of the room and ask each other about their Profiles. Longer term, the Profiles are very visible in many offices, teams refer to them repeatedly and the best teams use them when they are planning projects. The results are great for development purposes too: we link them with objective-setting and appraisals. What’s more, cross-company communication has also improved, as have employee engagement scores – which we know have an impact on the bottom line. While it’s difficult to pin such improvements down to the Team Management Profile specifically, it’s definitely played a part.”

