Pioneering higher education organisation FX Plus has used the Team Management Profile to develop its own leaders.

"Falmouth Exeter Plus (FX Plus) is a pioneering organisation. An 'exempt charity' regulated by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, and jointly owned by Falmouth University and the University of Exeter, it provides shared facilities and professional services to both universities on the Falmouth and Penryn campus in Cornwall.

One of just two such organisations in the UK, FX Plus, which was set up about thirteen years ago, is used as a benchmark for others considering adopting a similar approach and is under constant scrutiny. As such, when an interim chief executive (now the managing director) joined in summer 2016, he decided that investment in leadership was a priority.

Kathryn Miller, People Development Partner, explains: "We wanted to move from a transactional to a transformational leadership approach, and needed a programme that would help leaders to develop the appropriate behaviours. And we were very keen that the new Geared for Growth programme should be open to all managers, right across the organisation. As such, when an interim chief executive (now the managing director) joined in summer 2016, he decided that investment in leadership was a priority."

The programme comprised six modules over six months (December 2016 to June 2017), and around 75 leaders, from executives to supervisors, completed it. Participants were highly receptive - particularly to the Team Management Profile sessions, which they found invaluable in understanding their own and others' work preferences, and how those preferences might affect their own teams. Many of them requested Team Management Profile workshops for their own teams too, and between September and November 2017, in a spin-off to the Geared for Growth programme, Kathryn ran workshops for ten different teams, often tailored to those teams' particular orientations - such as customer service.

The insight into their own and others' preferences which the Profile has given people has been put to good use in their dealings with external 'customers' - including students, students' parents and academics in the two universities. "I think we now have a more constructive dialogue as a result," says Kathryn.

In total, almost 200 staff have received their Profile over the past year, and the resulting 'heat maps' are illuminating, says Kathryn. Thruster-Organisers and Concluder-Producers are well represented in the organisation (26% and 20% respectively), compared to other areas of the Team Management Wheel.

"This gives us an interesting picture of what our organisation is about," says Kathryn. "We spend a lot of our time delivering what our partners at the universities ask us for, when perhaps we need to be asking ourselves how we could become more proactive in developing our own ideas to the benefit of FX Plus as well as both universities."

An additional benefit of the Profile is that it gives people a common language that allows them to talk about behaviours and preferences "in a professional and objective way, not a personal way." Kathryn explains: "The emotion is taken out of conversations. For example, people now feel able to talk about how they like being communicated with, what works and what doesn't work, without worrying that they will upset or annoy someone."

One of the participants had a split Wheel: their major role was Creator-Innovator, and one of their related roles was Concluder-Producer. "The job they were doing was very much focused on the south side of the Team Management Wheel, but in the workshop they admitted that they would like more opportunity to use their Creator-Innovator preference - and they felt for the first time that they had a safe environment in which to voice this," says Kathryn. "So we see the Profile as being very much about helping people to achieve their full potential at work by revealing preferences that might have been 'hidden' because of the particular role they've been doing."