

# SECTOR FOCUS: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

commitment level is the same: typically eight 1.5 hour sessions, once a week. Participants then do three to four 30-minute Fluid Intelligence practice sessions in between, such as brain puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, etc, but they need to be done in a very specific way. Campbell likens this approach to using a personal gym instructor once a week, but if you don't go to the gym in between the sessions, the impact will be minimal. "People have to commit to doing that or there's no point," he says.

The enigmaFIT approach aims to address what Campbell views as a flaw in many leadership development programs. "Think of it as looking to add a second storey on your leadership house," he says. "Firstly, we're testing the foundations of your house. Then we want to strengthen those foundations. Only then do we add the second level. Too often companies will build the second storey without first firming up the foundations. Basically, the first two thirds of the program is spent addressing those foundational areas. The last third is spent applying it to the job of each participant."

At the end of the program, participants are retested. "We do the retest because we've found that people in finance, accounting, engineering and sales roles really want to see quantitative evidence of change. The retest also identifies any fine-tuning that needs to occur, but you're only doing that in the areas where it's needed," Campbell says.

## Time for a change?

Astute HR directors are already on board with this innovative approach to developing existing and future leaders. enigmaFIT's impressive client list includes Scentre Group (owner and operator of Westfield in Australia and New Zealand) and Boston Consulting Group in New York (see case studies). "Every HR department we're talking to is saying, 'We need to make our leaders more adaptable, agile and flexible,' but they don't know how to do it. That's what we do uniquely. Others can't do that, because they're trying to do it with Crystallized Intelligence, which makes people more aware but doesn't get an outcome. It's time for a different approach."

## ■ CASE STUDY: BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP

HRD chats with **Vickie Zalkin**, Consulting, Staffing and People Team Director at Boston Consulting Group's New York office, about how enigmaFIT's approach to leadership development is helping BCG's high potentials adapt to the strategic demands of future leadership roles



### HRD: What sparked your initial interest in how enigmaFIT develops leaders?

**Vickie Zalkin:** We attended a breakfast a little over a year ago, where we first heard about the program and the concept of Fluid and Crystallized Intelligence, and Adaptive Leadership. We thought this could be an interesting program for our high-potential Principals. Within BCG we have a Senior Partner level and then a Pre-Partner level – our Principals – and we were keen to offer something new to both these cohorts in addition to our existing development programs. We thought this would be a good opportunity to pilot something different that we hadn't really encountered before and position it almost like a reward for our high potentials in particular.

Ross Love, our Managing Partner, also commented: "Designing our new office at 10 Hudson Yards required innovative, strategic and edgy thinking as we wanted a degree of unpredictability. We didn't want our people to just slip into a regular pattern of thinking at the new office. So we also engaged enigmaFIT to develop our people's Fluid Intelligence and Adaptive Thinking so they could think differently about projects and develop answers that delivered a differentiated and advantaged outcome for our clients."

### HRD: Had you tried traditional coaching sessions before?

**VZ:** We'd used traditional executive coaches before and they are great – they are helpful in getting people to work through performance issues or developing specific skills, such as presentation skills. However, what appealed to me was the fact that this is rooted in neuroscience. This was very different both in terms of how the enigmaFIT profile assesses where you are to start with, and then how it explores the various dimensions that are helpful for executive performance. Then the approach the program takes is fresh and different – from the brain practice exercises in between sessions and the different types of exercises, to the coaching itself.

### HRD: What were you hoping to achieve by putting these high potentials through the Group Adaptive Expertise Program?

**VZ:** These participants are at Pre-Partner

level so they are yet to have much experience and exposure to the executive level. We were looking to help them pull back and see the bigger picture, including how they could delegate more effectively to their teams. Many of them were really close to the Project Manager phase of work at BCG, so they were still tactical and focused on the day-to-day activities of project management and execution. We wanted them to get a sense of how they might handle some of the strategic challenges inherent in these roles.

**HRD: You participated in this course yourself. Walk us through how the program was implemented at BCG.**

**VZ:** Our high-potential Principals had their profiles done, then we undertook group sessions, and then we practised the brain exercises between each session. We undertook the coaching sessions together in an interactive group format, with additional one-on-ones with each person over the course of the two-and-a-half-month program. As each participant completed the course they undertook a post-program test to see how and where they'd developed.

**HRD: What results have you seen so far?**

**VZ:** One of my roles has been overseeing the career development for this cohort of staff, and six months since they completed this program I can see where those who made the biggest gains in the program, from pre-program to post-program, have actually also made the biggest gains in their overall performance. They have been able to stand back, look at the bigger picture, and see how they can adapt or flex to the different challenges coming their way.

I think they're continuing to see benefits and are really accelerating into their roles. Those who didn't do all the exercises in between the coaching sessions didn't see as much of an impact from their pre-program profile to their post-program profile evaluation, and haven't had the same level of acceleration. From my own perspective, I have become much more strategic, more proactive, gained considerably more leverage, and more effective use of my time. In fact, as a result of undertaking the

program, I actually made the decision to hire two more direct reports, which has enhanced my effectiveness and leverage even more.

**HRD: Can you provide an example of the brain exercises?**

**VZ:** An example would be the series of mazes, which became increasingly difficult; however, there was also a specific way to complete each maze. It wasn't just starting at the beginning and working your way through. Initially it seems quite basic, but as the mazes become more complex you can see how this approach makes a big difference. It's actually a very visual representation of something that you're doing all the time in management roles. It's

with being uncomfortable and knowing that was when I was making the most progress.

**HRD: You've since rolled out the 1:1 Adaptive Expertise Program with Senior Partners. How has that experience been?**

**VZ:** We're still only partway through. It's eight sessions theoretically done once a week, but with some scheduling issues it will take a little longer for the Partners to complete. Using the 1:1 sessions is more impactful as each person is working in a different industry or practice area, and they each have different ways of working with clients. The 1:1 sessions make more sense as they can dig into live situations

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*Vickie Zalkin, Boston Consulting Group*

the same way that a large, complicated project might initially look insurmountable. However, in much the same way that you can train your brain to navigate a maze in a different way, you can also ensure your brain is wired and equipped to deal with a larger or more strategic problem in a more effective way.

**HRD: Did the course challenge any preconceived notions of your own abilities?**

**VZ:** You do get a sense of which exercises are addressing which dimensions of Adaptive Expertise and Fluid Intelligence. What surprised me was the experience of doing the profile test and having the profile results fed back to me, outlining what my profile results on each segment of the assessment indicated. I kept saying: “That's exactly how I think about things”. I was surprised at how accurate it was, but I was told this reaction was normal. It was the fact that these results reinforced what I naturally gravitate towards and what I feel most comfortable doing, and also where I feel most uncomfortable and need to stretch myself. Working through that was probably the most arresting piece – getting comfortable

and determine how to apply some of the techniques and approaches to the challenges they are facing. Ethan Dabbs, who is a Partner and Managing Director and recently started the 1:1 version of the program, commented at a breakfast event: “It's early days yet, but I have already substantially improved my own and my team's productivity. I have also got an additional hour back in my day.”

**HRD: Any advice for other leaders considering such a course?**

**VZ:** It is unlike most programs where you can take a more reactive approach of just attending and focusing on understanding the content. With the Adaptive Expertise Program you need to appreciate the science underpinning it which requires you to be proactively engaged and undertake the brain practice exercises on a regular basis in order to become more strategic, flexible, agile, leveraged, etc. Put simply, if you do the brain practice exercises then you get the payoff, but if don't then you won't get the payoff. This is critical to making it work, so it is important to select motivated and engaged executives to undertake the program.