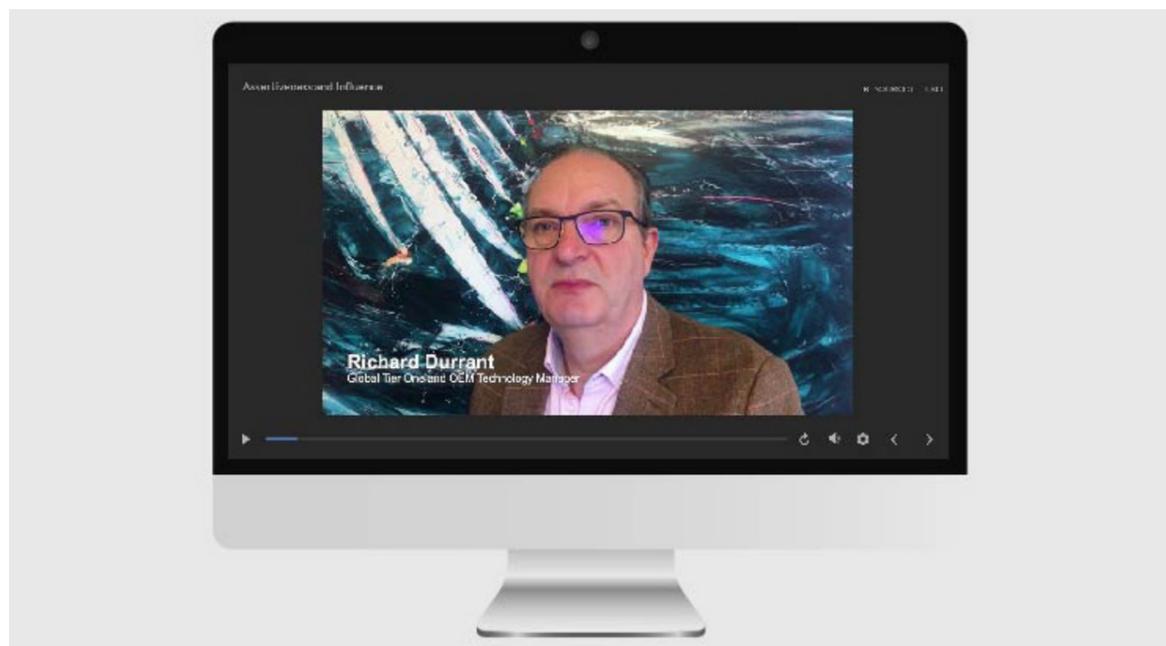


The Red Thread Partnership



World-class programme now available to all

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Soft skills can be hard, both to learn and to teach, but activities such as building relationships, working in teams, coaching and influencing are vital for the success of any business. So, a recently launched programme of online soft skills training from The Red Thread Partnership could be a great investment.

The Personal Effectiveness programme was developed in collaboration with Infineum, a global speciality chemicals company. Now the suite of 13 tried and tested modules is available to the wider corporate world. A further module – on managing change – is currently being tested, with more expected to be added soon.

Originally designed to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation's new graduate and postgraduate starters, the whole programme needed to speak to a diverse and geographically scattered audience located in the UK, US and Asia. It has, therefore, been designed for effective online delivery – just right for our current situation – and takes a blended learning approach, using videos, questionnaires, self-paced workbooks and online workshops to ensure the self-study elements are understood and applied.

A key focus in creating the modules has been to build them on recognised behavioural theory. Rather than recommending solutions,

they are designed to help learners develop a range of skills that can be applied to many business situations.

The individual modules are grouped under three core areas: Efficient Projects, Individual Impact and Delivering Value. But the modules themselves can be taken in any order, so learners can select the ones that will be of most use to them in their own roles – and, crucially, they can immediately start practising their skills in real life. When originally launched at Infineum, colleagues worked with their line managers to identify areas for improvement and the modules that would be most helpful to them, enabling them to significantly build their skills.

Red Thread Partnership director Adrian Spurrell explained: "The workbooks are central to every module. They contain reflective and active exercises that draw on the learners' current experiences. So, they aren't just theoretical learning exercises; they enable learners to practise as they go."

Richard Durrant, global technology manager, is the senior leader at Infineum who partnered with The Red Thread in developing the programme. The Infineum-branded materials now sit on the company's learning management system (LMS) as an essential part of their people development strategy.

Richard explains how the programme came about: "Infineum is a science-based technology company, and we recruit high-quality colleagues

from the top universities here in the UK but also across the globe. They have a minimum of a science degree, with most having PhDs.

"This is typically their first job after completing their academic studies, and we give them high-value and complex project activities. But they generally haven't had any formal training in soft skills – they have had to pick them up as they go along.

"I and my colleagues in the leadership team recognised that there was a gap in our training provision. We had excellent technical training and we had leadership training, but we didn't have anything to help colleagues with these key soft skills – we just left it to chance. And the programme we created with The Red Thread addresses that gap."

Input from the target audience was crucial to the design of the programme. A user group was established early on to help ensure the content and structure was right for its intended audience. This was especially important, as it had to work for a diverse group of learners. It also had to resonate with, and appeal to, an audience of scientists.

As Adrian is keen to stress, the resulting programme does just that. It emphasises effectiveness, efficiency and 'ways to get things done', and both design and content are firmly rooted in behavioural science.

"Though we call them soft skills, they need to be learned, just as much as scientific know-how, technical processes or commercial safety practices," said Adrian. "And with this programme, we have a framework for learning that works for bright, scientific minds."

Though the programme was designed for people at the start of their careers, senior leaders



at Infineum have also tried out some modules and found them useful. As Richard puts it, they felt they were a good way of taking a step back and 'seeing the wood for the trees'.

Richard added: "I am delighted with the difference the programme is making in helping to maximise the potential of our primary audience. We are investing in our colleagues, ensuring that all of them can benefit, irrespective of their location or cultural background. And teaching our new graduates these skills is like adding an extra person (or more than one) to every project team."

Richard firmly believes that the programme can now also benefit people in other organisations, and he is happy to see it extended. Adrian added: "The modules in Infineum's programme are aligned closely with who they are and what they do. But the content could be adapted for use by any organisation, of any size, and for participants at any stage of their career."

To find out more about how Personal Effectiveness training could benefit your organisation, contact adrian@the-redthread.co.uk

