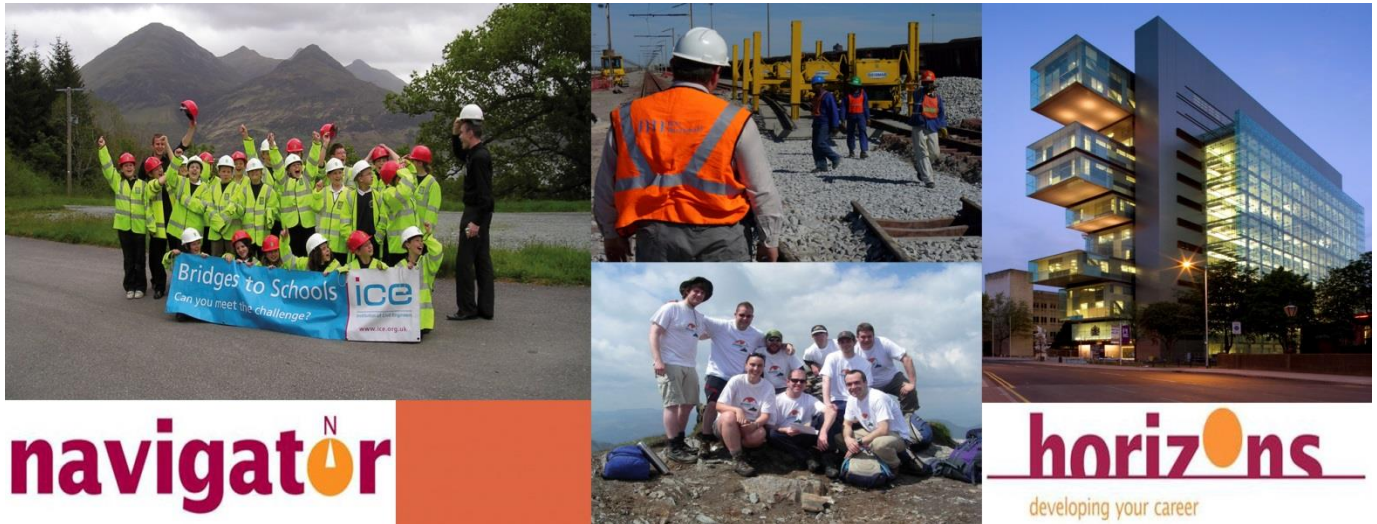




Investing in people to develop and retain key talent



The Organisation

Mott MacDonald is a wholly independent, employee owned, world-class consultancy delivering solutions that add value to many areas of everyday life - from transport, energy, communications, building and industry through to water and the environment, health and education.

Their employee group consists of engineers, scientists, environmentalists, planners, economists, cost consultants, project managers, safety and human factor experts, IT and telematics specialists, educationalists, healthcare advisors, and management consultants, many of whom are recognised as innovators or world authorities in their fields.

The business issues

In 2007 Mott MacDonald's ambitious growth plans were challenged by the organisation's ability to recruit and retain professionally qualified staff in an increasingly competitive market.

"For the first time in most of our experience, the dominant constraint on our business is the availability of skilled staff. Many of our competitors are in the same position and, as a consequence, competition for staff has become intense."

Keith Howells, Group Managing Director

For many years Mott MacDonald has run an extremely successful Graduate Development Programme which leads its employees' development through to professional chartership. However, once chartered, many employees

were being targeted by the competition and encouraged to maximise the return on their qualifications outside the group.

The challenge

Mott MacDonald's response to the challenge of retaining their talent was to extend their investment in people by introducing two new employee development programmes.

In February 2007 Cranfield were successful in their bid to co-design and deliver these strategically important development initiatives with Mott MacDonald:

- 'Horizons' is aimed at recently professionally qualified staff, to help them plan their careers and development within the group;

and

- 'Navigator' is aimed at managers with a significant

responsibility for people management, to improve their self-awareness and people management skills.

The approach

Due to the large number of delegates needing to become involved in the two programmes, and the diversity of skill development needs, it was immediately apparent that a traditional business school approach of modular taught development was neither appropriate nor deliverable for either of the programmes. A far more flexible, individually tailored experience for each delegate was therefore required.

The programmes

Delegates are engaged in the Horizons Programme for 3 years and in Navigator for 18 months. During their time on the programmes they spend less than one week in structured tuition at Cranfield. The remainder of their time is spent following individually tailored development plans, which consist of competence measurement and feedback, group reflection and knowledge sharing, work place learning, and coaching.

Horizons delegates spend their first 18 months improving their self-insight through the completion of a 360° feedback process and various personality inventories. Each delegate receives their feedback from a trained Cranfield Practitioner who visits them at Mott MacDonald's premises. They are then encouraged to explore the requirements of a variety of different career paths within the Group whilst working in an Action Learning Set made up of delegates from different divisions throughout the business.

To ensure that they make progress during their time on the programme, the delegates are supported by a personal coach who is selected from the group of Navigator delegates.

During their second 18 month period on the programme, the delegates focus progresses from career exploration through to implementation, and they receive the skills development they need to build personal networks and engage the support of their major stakeholders.

The Navigator delegates' development starts with their attendance at a Development Centre which is run by Cranfield.

The Centre consists of a range of exercises and role plays which use professional actors to improve the authenticity. Each exercise is designed to measure a range of people management competencies taken from Mott MacDonald's PDR Process. Each delegate's individual performance at the Centre is observed by an occupational psychologist, who will also have access to a range of personality inventories and the delegate's 360° feedback report.

Within a month of attending the Centre the delegate will receive a detailed development report from their assigned occupational psychologist, who will then go on to coach the delegate.

In turn, and as a part of their own ongoing development, each Navigator is encouraged to develop their own coaching skills by volunteering to support a small group of

Horizonians over an 18 month period.

This integration of the two programmes has proven extremely important in maintaining the momentum of the self-directed learning aspects of both programmes, and has helped to develop a learning community within the Group.

Making a difference

Although the United Kingdom has entered a recession since the original launch of Horizons and Navigator, Mott MacDonald still believes that finding the right staff is critical to their continued success.

In the UK to date there are 430 delegates involved in the Horizons Programme and 230 in Navigator, with further cohorts planned.

The employee retention rate for those delegates involved in Horizons is significantly higher than experienced elsewhere in the Group, and as a result of the positive feedback from those involved in both programmes, there are now plans to develop the concept on an international basis.

Why Cranfield?

"The Centre for Customised Executive Development (CCED) at Cranfield School of Management won a competitive pitch by demonstrating the clearest understanding of the needs and constraints at Mott MacDonald, and responding to those needs in the most flexible, imaginative and sustainable way."

"CCED's willingness to work closely, and on an ongoing partnership basis, with the Mott MacDonald Learning & Development team and to develop measurement tools, provide professional coaches and work-place tuition for large numbers of delegates was also vital."

Philip Jeffery, Group HR Director