



Sustaining competitive advantage through transformational talent management



The organisation

NATS is the UK's leading provider of Air Traffic Management (ATM) services, handling 2.4 million flights each year, covering the UK and eastern North Atlantic. NATS provides air traffic control from centres at Swanwick, Hampshire and Prestwick, Ayrshire. NATS also provides air traffic control services at 13 UK airports including Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow; and its services span Europe, the Middle East, Asia and North America.

Building on its reputation for operational excellence and innovation, NATS also offers aerodrome, data, engineering and consultancy solutions to customers worldwide, including airports, air traffic service providers and Governments.

The business issues

NATS' business landscape is undergoing significant transformational change, driven by tighter regulatory conditions, stronger competition in its domestic market and continued international expansion.

In the period since NATS became a Public Private Partnership in 2001, it has successfully transitioned from the public sector to an organisation that is commercially focused, responsive to customer needs and innovative in delivering data, technology and consultancy solutions. However, the journey for NATS is not yet complete and sustaining its competitive advantage is contingent on how

NATS attracts, retains, recognises and deploys people across its business in service of its strategy and vision.

The development Challenge

Following an initial assessment of the top 250 leaders across the business, NATS identified three core development priorities for its leaders and managers:

- Delivering commercial success;
- Focusing on clear priorities; and
- Taking a broad perspective.

NATS created a development framework called PATH, underpinned by its core competencies, designed to equip all employees to meet their business challenges and deliver on the commitment to Defend, Enable and Grow the business.

The programme

Cranfield was selected to support NATS to deliver a programme for a critical mass of leaders and managers who would enable the organisation to focus on its key business challenges.

The programme was designed to;

- Ensure up-to-date business thinking with a practical application;
- Provide a blended approach combining face-to-face, online development and action groups, delivering flexible and adaptable development tailored to the individual needs of participants whilst minimising time away from the office.
- Have at its core, an industry relevant business simulation running for much of the programme to cement and extend learning in a fast-paced competitive environment; and,
- Maximise the transfer of learning quickly back in to the workforce through role modelling and coach-mentoring from experienced PATH alumni.

The programme focuses on five areas; Customer and Key Account Management, Strategy, Finance, Change, and Innovation as detailed below. Leadership and interpersonal skills development overlay all aspects.

Making a difference

The approach has transformed talent management in NATS helping to build a pipeline of leadership and management capability with the skills and aptitude to lead the business in fulfilling its strategic objectives and commitments to customers and shareholders.

Why Cranfield?

The programme has helped to create new insights, shape the execution of strategy and crystallise key actions with a heightened understanding of the key role that managers and leaders need to play.

Participants have welcomed the approach and experience of Cranfield faculty.

Nevhis Gardner, Organisational Development Director remarks 'Cranfield's faculty complements our internal delivery capability, and provides us with key thought leadership around the areas PATH [2] & [3] has been designed to focus on....'

