

CASE STUDY - BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY – TEAM PROGRAMMES

Service. Obsidian has worked with a wide range of clients in both the private and public sectors on assignments to improve the effectiveness of teams. Although the programmes are tailored to the specific needs of the client most include two basic elements

- working on practical issues facing the team (e.g. strategy, opportunities, problems)
- developing the ways people work together

Client. We have worked with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) for several years on a variety of assignments. BAS is a world-leading, public funded, organisation, with 500 scientists and support staff, which has conducted research for the UK in the Antarctic for over 50 years. It has been responsible for many major scientific developments (the discovery of the ozone hole being just one) and is recognised worldwide as a source of key scientific knowledge in the field of climate change. Its support operations include operating five permanent research stations in the Antarctic, and running two ocean going research ships (one being the James Clark Ross pictured above) and five aircraft.



Benefit. The work Obsidian has carried out has enabled a range of different groups and teams within BAS to identify and deal with important practical working issues, as well as improving the working relationships of people who either work in the same location, or in several cases, are located hundreds or thousands of miles apart.

John Pye, a member of the BAS Board, with the responsibility for all the support services and management of the annual budget of c£40 million said

“Obsidian has credibility with many specialist groups within BAS. They have particularly helped us to improve teamworking and to get people talking to each other across specialist and organisational boundaries – both within our own Cambridge facility and remotely between the UK and Antarctica. Obsidian’s preparatory and follow-on reports have been just as valuable to the business as the events they have run for us.”

Dr John Shears, also a member of the BAS Board, with responsibility for the Environmental and Information Division said

“Obsidian are excellent change and management facilitators. They understand fully our complex business of people, science and logistics and that we work in one of the most challenging places in the world. Our partnership has resulted in significant improvements in the performance and joint working of my senior management team”

Requirement. The assignments Obsidian has facilitated include

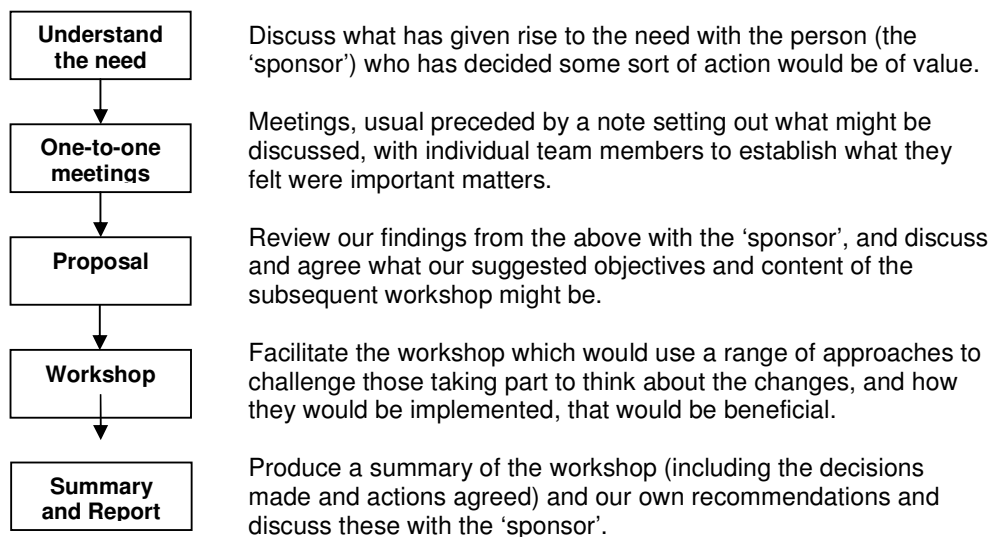
- a series of 'Marine Management' workshops when the management of the support functions based at Cambridge have been brought together annually to discuss and agree

'high level' changes and to develop a better understanding of their colleagues and the issues they face.

- a workshop attended by the BAS management responsible for the building of a new base in the Antarctic ('Halley VI, costing c £50million) and the management team of the main contractor who were to build the station in order to pre-empt and mitigate potential difficulties.
- working with the management team of the Environmental and Information Division to give them the opportunity to review how they would work under a newly appointed Division Head.
- a workshop for the HR department to help those in the team who were responsible for 'one-off' projects to manage those projects effectively and make good use of their colleagues knowledge, skills and experience
- working with the Operations Team, established for some years, that wanted to review the way they worked together; this included looking at the way the workload was distributed.



How the assignments were carried out. Obsidian are strong believers in the old adage 'failure to prepare is preparing to fail'. Our approach to the above assignments, although varied in detail, were along the following lines:



Other comments

The following are other comments made by people involved in the programmes

"Obsidian consultants have developed a clear understanding of BAS's business and have used this effectively to provide focused workshops which have helped us to consider how we can work together better."

"Senior managers at BAS work in a fast-paced environment, meeting many different customer demands, managing deadlines and delivering challenging strategic objectives. Obsidian's workshops have created breathing space for management teams and provided opportunities for them to focus on business priorities and on improving working relationships."