

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT DRAFT COPY

Once upon a time, people would go on two-day hothouse events of management development. 'Come and do two days, and you'll know how to manage!' But actually, becoming an effective manager takes years.

In the years that I've been involved in management development, I've developed myself. In the past, I'd receive a brief from a line manager or HR department to work with a group of managers and develop their knowledge and skills about managing people. I'd then give a lot of knowledge-based input: 'this is how you communicate... this is how you delegate and motivate your people... this is how you conduct an appraisal...'

This was all very well, but I discovered that learning that way is not long-lasting. The managers go away enthusiastic and motivated, but when they're back in their departments and try to apply what they've learnt, it's really difficult, because nothing in the system has changed. The system conspires against them doing anything different or new.

Sometimes a manager might try to introduce something new to his department, and his people say, 'You've been on a management course, haven't you?' They tease him and he reverts to what he was doing before. The change is not lasting change.

The way I've adapted is by taking an action learning approach. I meet with a management group in the classroom to identify the learning needs. Everyone indicates what they're going back into the workplace to learn – because it's in the workplace that the most effective learning takes place.

They go back into their departments and say, 'I want to learn how to motivate my people', or 'I want to learn how to delegate', or whatever piece of development they are aiming for. They explore that task in their day to day operation, and then come back to the management group to reflect on what worked and what didn't. They use their day to day environment as the learning platform, rather than the classroom.

The classroom then becomes the place to reflect, consider, challenge, endorse, or reinforce what it is they're acquiring through their practice. The result is a more gradual process. The changes may be tiny and incremental, but they're integrated and deeply rooted.