



# CASE STUDY

## BaxterStorey Management Skills Development

“All the lights came on for me while attending Day 2 of ML&C’s management training programme. It set me on a completely different path: switching from ‘doing’ with my team to managing my team’s performance has changed my life immeasurably.”

David, Multinational Contract Caterers  
(now General Manager for an Electric Vehicle manufacturer)

### The Client

BaxterStorey is one of Britain’s leading independent food service providers to the business and industry sector, operating on a national basis and employing several thousand people throughout the UK and Ireland.

It provides daily catering facilities to Barclays, Standard Chartered Bank and BBC Media City in Salford Quays, among others. It is part of WSH, Westfield Street Holdings and is linked with sister companies Caterlink, Holroyd Howe and Benugo.

Productivity of BaxterStorey’s operational teams was far lower than expected for a business of its size and reputation, despite having prestigious Chef and Barista Academies that support all employees to grow their technical skills and achieve industry standard accreditation.

The Senior Management team suspected this was a result of underinvestment in developing management skills and invited Management Learning & Coaching to investigate.

### The Impact

- Many delegates earned management promotions during or immediately after the programme.
- Managers started identifying themselves as ‘managers’ as opposed to ‘doers’ and shifted their focus to improving *team productivity*.
- Successful work-based projects have been implemented as a direct result of work carried out during the training programme.

### Our Approach

Our first action was to observe what was really happening both on the Shop Floor and in the management of the operational teams.



The purpose was to identify which behaviours were stopping managers from making the most of their team’s performance and what skills were missing to allow managers to effectively lead their teams.

We observed that many operational managers were thinking of their responsibilities in terms of specific actions required on the shop floor, which lowered productivity of their operational teams. For example, managers were not delegating effectively and were overwhelmed. The knock-on effect was reduced time available for the line management and strategic thinking required to drive operational performance.



## What We Found

In short, managers weren't thinking of themselves as managers. Operational managers overseeing 2-3 units across a region were now too far away from the shop floor for their individual problem solving abilities to be sufficient. Yet they still measured their own performance based on what they achieved individually, rather than what they enabled their teams to achieve on the shop floor.

The reasons for this soon became clear. BaxterStorey, originally a family business, grew rapidly and placed a high value retaining local talent. As a result, many operational managers started on the shop floor and were promoted based on their technical proficiency. They lacked the project management, interpersonal and coaching skills needed to delegate, influence and monitor their unit-based teams to deliver results at each site.

## What We Delivered

Client Director, Tim Woodman, worked with BaxterStorey's L&D Director, Graham Eveleigh, to produce a year-long Leadership Development programme based on our integrated learning approach. The programme consists of around 12 one- and two-day modules on the most critical aspects of the middle manager's role. Topics include:

- Project management
- Financial management
- Interpersonal skills
- Coaching skills

Each one- or two-day training module includes pre-work before the session and delegates create a SMART action plan after the session outlining how they plan to apply their learning back in the workplace. In addition, delegates are required to complete a work-based project during the year which they present back to the project sponsor at the end of the programme.

To ensure the investment this training programme represents is fully realised, middle managers apply to attend the programme with the sponsorship of their direct line manager. They then attend a one-day Assessment Centre where their current skills and motivation are assessed.

Once accepted onto the programme, every delegate has a coach for the duration so they can address any specific challenges or concerns and to support them with remaining accountable for their own learning outcomes.

## The Challenges

To begin with, it proved difficult for delegates to juggle their learning journey with the day job. 100% attendance was a condition of acceptance onto the programme and some found this time commitment seemed impossible.

During their first sessions, delegates learned a new time-management mindset as they re-identified themselves as managers. By prioritising management activities (including training) they discovered skills and techniques to lead their teams to perform better on day to day activities.

