

To remain world class in a changing world, you need to identify and train the best managers • Zoë Grainge explains how Anglian Water goes about it.

## Potential gains



Talent pool: intensive training 'events' are held followed up by constant on-the-job monitoring

Anglian Water has undergone a number of strategic shifts in recent years, and in its 2005 report it emphasised its new focus on the "customer experience". Add to this the firm's withdrawal from international markets and stated aim of advancing into public sector contracts, and it is apparent that Anglian's managers and future managers must develop in line with the company's needs.

Last year saw the creation of Anglian's skills and behaviour competency framework to help it do just that.

Phil Brown is Anglian's people performance manager. "We revamped the performance

management system," he says. "Development programmes were put in place and middle managers with high potential were identified."

Brown says the framework was received "extremely well" by staff. Managers found it a useful performance measurement tool.

Against this background, Anglian wanted to develop a bespoke management training programme for those earmarked as future high achievers. Backed by chief executive Johnson Cox, the High Potential programme was introduced. "We wanted to tailor this programme to the organisation, rather than send our trainees to a business school," explains Brown.

Anglian identified a number of people

as potential high achievers and put them on a multi-faceted programme that began in October last year. Different parts of the training were outsourced to different specialists. Business schools looked at designing the strategy training. Business psychologists Kaisen was charged with devising the training and development section of the programme.

"Kaisen ran development assessments on each trainee," says Brown. "Each individual then got a development plan. The assessment took the form of psychometric testing, reasoning, a biographical interview to find out what makes them tick and other tests." The information forms a "development centre", which is the crux of the programme. Following on from this are the personal development plans and modules of training. This makes the programme bespoke – Kaisen was guided in its modelling of the course by the responses of individuals in the development centre.

Brown does not hide that fact that many individuals are wary of this kind of assessment. "It is high risk," he says. "They could think 'will the organisation find out my weaknesses?' So we say, 'it's because we think you're good that we're doing this'."

Fifteen trainees started on the programme last year, going on a day-long training "events" every few weeks. In total there are 20 days training over 12 months. Events take the form of practical courses covering issues such as personal influence and management and development. There is the use of role play, and the ratio of students to tutors is about 3:1.

Robert Myatt, business psychologist at Kaisen, says: "The trainees on the programme have a very high level of drive. The purpose of the development centre is to make them think: where am I now in my career? What am I good at? Where can I add value? The responses enable us to be really precise in what we provide."

Kaisen ran training on four specific areas: change management, teaching and inspiring teams, teaching and inspiring individuals, and personal impact and influence. This is followed up by on-the-job assessment. "We want people to learn, practice, learn, practice," says Brown. Brown and his team keep in touch with the line managers of the trainees, and he meets regularly with the trainees to see how they are using their learning in their jobs. "Their improvement is assessed constantly," says Brown.

The personal development plans run throughout the course together with "360 degree" assessments (where all of a candidate's colleagues are invited contribute).

"It's pleasing to see Anglian put this investment into its staff," says Myatt.

The current High Potential programme ends in September and Anglian is already planning to run another one beginning next January.

Constantly helping and guiding high achievers through an organisation enables an organic replenishment of talent that has mutual benefits for both company and trainees. ■

### Obituary: Martin Fitch – 1941-2006

Martin Fitch has died of a heart attack aged 65. He chaired the water subgroup of the Public Utilities Access Forum, but was best known in the industry for his tireless campaigning for the underprivileged. In addition to his duties at the PUA, Fitch worked as a Research Associate at the Centre for Utility Consumer Law at the University of Leicester since its foundation in 1998. He contributed to the centre's work in lobbying to influence what became the Utilities Act 2000 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. He was also instrumental in lobbying Ofgem to devise a Social Action Plan to help alleviate fuel poverty. He was among a small

group of welfare rights workers who put anti-poverty campaigning on the political agenda in the 1970s and 1980s. He began his working life in the probation service in Yorkshire before going on to lecturing on welfare rights and working as a social worker. In 1976 he co-set up the welfare rights unit for Sheffield Council and also founded the debt support unit there. Fitch enjoyed furniture-making, cooking and repairing clocks. He also loved growing vegetables, especially garlic, of which he was tremendously proud. He is survived by his wife Usha, his children Louise and Harry, and grandchildren Cameron and Sophie.