

a sideways LOOK

News from Elevation Learning

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Joke Corner

Consultants are the butt of many jokes and we're now collecting them for a new webpage. If you would like to contribute a joke, please email jokes@elevationlearning.co.uk

Re-branding reviewed

Welcome to the first edition of 'A Sideways Look' - Elevation Learning's new client newsletter. Old friends will know that we changed our name to Elevation Learning (from Consultancy Skills Training) in the middle of last year, and you may be interested in why we did so, and what the results have been.

Like many organisations, clients and consultants influence us, and it was a client who suggested that we might update the look of our materials. The original designs were more than 10 years old, but had been tweaked over the years. The results were that there was a growing variety in our documents and that we needed to get a more modern 'look and feel', which we could apply consistently. We appointed graphic designers to help, who also suggested that as we were revamping our image, it might also be timely to update our name, for one that inspired more than our usual 'CST'. Well, it is easy to decide what you don't like, but more difficult to reach a consensus on what you do! Having come up - eventually - with a new name, using our own resources, I now understand the hard work that branding consultants have to do! On the way we considered a vast variety of names, all associated with raising performance, and rejected Levity, Ascend, Faculty and many others, before deciding on Elevation Learning - which put across our desire to make an essential difference to the quality of consulting our clients provide.

It took a little while for us to get used to answering the phones with our new name, but we and our clients have adapted quickly. It's been a lengthy and intensive process but we've learned a lot and are pleased with the result. We hope you like it too.

This edition of A Sideways Look will tell you how 2008 is shaping up for our team, some of the new client work we are involved with, and the work we are doing to advance consulting standards and skills all over the world. Happy reading!

Calvert Markham
Managing Director, Elevation Learning

Consultancy certificate enters third year

Do you know about the Certificate in Management Consulting Essentials, run by the Institute of Business Consultancy (IBC)? The Certificate is a valuable first qualification in management consultancy, helping candidates to consolidate their consulting skills with the added confidence that public recognition provides.

This is particularly worthwhile not only for those in consulting practices, but also for those in other organisations who want public endorsement of their skills - for example, internal consultants. Launched in 2005, it has proved a great success, with almost 400 registrations for the qualification in the last twelve months, and over 300 candidates successfully qualifying for the Certificate. We ourselves have registered over 70 candidates and almost 40 have already attained their Certificate.

For those of you interested in adding another string to your bow, candidates need to undertake a recognised course of training covering the syllabus required and then submit a dissertation of 3,000 words covering aspects of consultancy, which is assessed by the IBC. Our Core Consultancy Skills course - see www.elevationlearning.co.uk/courses/ccs.html - covers the syllabus required; in addition, we provide post-course coaching for Certificate candidates.

See the IBC web site at www.ibconsulting.org.uk for more information.

New work in Kazakhstan



Picture of students and tutors in Almaty

Mention to anyone that you are visiting Kazakhstan and they will immediately think of Borat! However, few people know much about the real country. We are now among them, as our new client, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), asked us to travel there to help local businesses gear up for future prosperity and growth.

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Kazakhstan is a central Asian republic, formerly part of the USSR. The size of Western Europe - and the ninth largest country in the world - it has a population of only 15 million people. It is bordered in the East by China and in the West by the Caspian Sea, a source of oil, gas and prosperity for the country.

Through its Japan-funded Business Advisory Services (BAS) programme, the EBRD employs local consultants to work with SME organisations to develop their performance and Kazakhstan is one of the countries where this is taking place.

The EBRD is committed to developing local capability and has asked us to run 'Train the Trainer' programmes for its consultants, to help improve their leadership, development and problem solving skills in the local language. The pilot course was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan in early February 2008 and was a big success. We hope that several other courses will now be rolled out across other consultant groups supporting the BAS in Central Asia and elsewhere.

The training was organised in cooperation with the Kazakhstan Association of Certified Management Consultants, recently admitted as a provisional member of the International Council on Management Consulting Institutes.

Elevation Learning's International Director, Robert Fonteijn, who is managing this project, comments: "We were profoundly impressed by the quality of the consultants we met in Almaty, they compare favourably with those we see on other international courses we run, where English is not participants' first language."

Towards a Community of Practice in consultant education and development

Some of you will have attended the one-day conference last year run by Cass Business School's Centre of Leadership, Learning and Change on the education and development of management consultants that looked at the role and value of academic research into consulting and cultural issues that influence consultant development in the twenty-first century.

The consensus at the end of a very successful conference was that there were real advantages in continuing the debate, and the Centre has formed a 'Community of Practice' for those interested. They meet at Cass twice a year, and the first of these follow up meetings took place in January.

The next meeting of the Community of Practice will be in June, again at Cass Business School in the City. For exchanges in the meantime, we will be setting up an online community - location yet to be determined! Contact us at info@elevationlearning.co.uk if you are interested in getting involved.

Consulting skills in 2012

"The future is not what it used to be" is as true of consulting skills as anything else, so it was no surprise that a recent survey of consultants showed that they expected consultants' skills would need to change over the next five years.

We're now conducting our own survey to assess how these skills are likely to change. We'll be publicising the results in the second half of 2008 in a future edition of this newsletter.

Summer School 2008: Expanding your consulting horizons

We launched our two-day 'Summer School' event a couple of years ago and it has proved hugely popular. The programme consists of three streams of seven sessions each, covering a wide range of topics so that consultants can mix and match to suit their own interests. Past years have included topics such as 'Aristotle on persuasion: practical techniques for increasing your influencing skills as a consultant', 'Creating a vision for change: communicating the dream', and 'Dealing with the politics when things don't seem to work out'.

Each year offers a new programme and 2008's theme is "Expanding your consulting horizons". The three streams will be: Growing your sales; Consulting skills refresh; and Consulting labs, all of which focus on the tools, techniques and skills that help you bring additional value to your practice and your clients.

The Summer School will be held on 17-18 July at Latimer Conference Centre in Buckinghamshire and the programme is in the process of being finalised. If you are interested in receiving more information, drop diane.davies@elevationlearning.co.uk a line and we'll send you a programme when it is complete.

Advanced training for senior consultants

Advancing your career in a consulting practice requires more than delivering successful client work. As well as having to handle projects of increasing size, risk and complexity, senior consultants take on a variety of commercial and managerial responsibilities, such as selling, account management, practice development and team leading skills.

Our Advanced Consulting Skills course is to be launched in the autumn, so if you have started a role with new responsibilities and need support then ask Diane about this new course.

E-mail diane.davies@elevationlearning.co.uk

Putting faces to names



We have some new faces in the team.

Sarah Jones (left) has joined us to support our work in business development, while **Pat Hodgson** (right) has joined the office team.