

THE IRISH NEWS

Name and Role

Advertising Manager, Valerie Gourley for the Irish News Ltd in Belfast

Organisation

The Irish News Ltd is a very successful family owned private limited company, employing 140 people. The ongoing investment in technology, the development of skills along with growth in circulation and advertising revenue has helped make the Irish News the successful newspaper it is today.

Valerie Gourley has benefited from that investment in building her management and leadership skills along with the opportunity to apply these directly in to the workplace. Her experience in reflected in this case study.

Management Development

By 2005, as Deputy Advertising Manager I wanted to equip myself for a senior management role in the future. Although I had already completed CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) qualifications, I wanted to learn more about corporate governance to improve my financial literacy and achieve a level of competence in strategic planning.

Before M&L Development – Triggers

To achieve continued growth in advertising sales, the Irish News needed to have strong strategic and business planning skills available in-house, to support its future success.

Management & Leadership Development Activity

Between September 2005 and September 2007 I undertook an Executive Masters in Business Administration part-time at Queens University. Looking back it is clear that you must have the support and sponsorship of your organisation in order to take part in this course – not only for the practicalities of funding and time, but more importantly to be able to apply the learning back in to the business.

The modules on this programme were Management Information Systems, Humane Resources, Leadership, International Business, E-commerce, Economics, Marketing, Strategy, Accounting, Corporate Finance, Organisational Development, Organisational Change, Research Methodology and Operational Management.

Actions, Outcomes and Benefits

I now have a better all round understanding of the business after completing my MBA, which benefits the Irish News in different ways

- By achieving a significant level of financial literacy, which enhances the rigour and accuracy of budgeting, controlling costs and conducting investment appraisal.
- My range of information resources and contacts across the key management disciplines has grown

- Going forward the business strategy for the Irish News website will be able to benefit from my dissertation (Digital Media Strategy)

Another consequence of my positive experience is that others in the advertising department have now undertaken higher education courses in order to develop their own capabilities.

Leadership Style

In most instances I solicit and consider the views of my staff in formulating strategy for the department. I operate a very strong reward culture, demanding very high standards of performance. The staff are given a lot of training and development at every level in the advertising department, and are encouraged to identify their own development needs as their roles evolve. I try to give each person time, listen to their concerns and ambitions; I encourage each person to set himself or herself challenging goals and to achieve their potential. I have engendered a “can-do” culture in the department, a sense of pride and a will and determination to achieve the highest possible standards across our operation.

“My approach to leadership is based on my firm belief that people respond positively to clear goals, praise, responsibility and consultation”

Barriers to Improving Management Skills

Initially the main barrier was to recognise the need to make this investment in my own development and the commitment that was necessary.

The main barrier I found through the process of completing my studies was the pressure on my time. The demands of the course were enormous with the weight of assignment work coupled with regular examinations though I found these both rewarding and beneficial. I quickly adjusted to juggling multiple tasks and tried to ensure that my studies complemented rather than detracted from my performance in the office.

I tried to use current problems in work as the focus of assignments and therefore had the added benefit of addressing real work issues or problems and come up with solutions.

