



Mallusk Enterprise Park Ltd

Name and Role

Melanie Humphrey is the CEO and Company Secretary for Mallusk Enterprise Park Ltd.

Organisation

Mallusk Enterprise Park (MEP) is a Business Support & Development Services organisation that has 2 full time and 6 part time employees. Opened in 1994, MEP supports over 50 small businesses, sustaining 250 local jobs. Since 2006 they have been promoting the start up business programme by offering evening, day-time and Saturday training courses for potential business owners.

Melanie Humphrey states "We have been extremely successful due to our commitment to our own growth strategy and investment in management development. We strive for excellence in delivery which has been recognised in gaining liP accreditation, ISO accreditation, our National Training Award and our Special Award for Collaboration"

Management Development

The nature of the NI economy has changed significantly with over 95% of companies employing less than 10 people. MEP was established to meet the need to help develop and grow local businesses. Their approach was that they wanted to grow the company to its fullest potential in order to provide a range of quality services for the small businesses of the immediate locality and indeed other parts of Northern Ireland. MEP decided that to be in the development of small businesses they had to be role models and demonstrate excellence in all areas of their own business growth – and their own development.

We developed our first 3-year Strategic Action Plan (2004-2007) that involved 3 key areas

- ***Management & People Development***
- ***Quality (through ISO and liP standards)***
- ***Development of support services for new and existing businesses***

Before M&L Development – Triggers

There were a few triggers that made MEP decide that engaging in Management & Leadership Development would be beneficial to the organisation

- Firstly wanting everybody in the company to have an understanding of our work and objectives
- Everyone in the company needs to understand what and why we do things on a day to day basis
- Why their work is important to the overall service we provide
- What difference it makes to those who want to set up their own business or expand their business
- And also to enable our staff to enjoy the work they do in a pleasant, friendly and fun working environment.

Management & Development - Key Objectives and Actions

- Our board of directors meet regularly with the staff and we have annual Strategic Review days that involve all staff and directors. We also take time out to think creatively about new business support services.
- Retention of ISO standards
- Recognition as Investors in People in 2004
- Melanie Humphrey participated in the “Leaders for Tomorrow” programme in Boston; she attended the JF Kennedy School of Government and worked alongside the City of Boston Business Development Department.
- Deborah Johnston has completed her post graduate certificate in Personnel Management at the UJJ and the MSc in Innovation and Entrepreneurship programme at UJJ.
- All staff participated in team development events
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Actions, Outcomes and Benefits

The Strategic Plan was translated into a practical Action Plan that was based on a traffic light system. Green for activities completed, yellow for ongoing and red for those that were not a priority. Every person in the office contributed views and opinions for consideration. Networking is something that was an important part of the company and was actively increased.

There was a need to be able to provide professional qualifications linked to the business programmes. This was achieved by being affiliated with the University of Strathclyde – Department for Life Long Learning. The two certificates M E P have been approved to offer are – Certificate of Competence and Certificate of Professional Development.

ME P want to be able to play a major role in future initiatives both in terms of new structures (Council areas) and new programmes (Next Steps) The idea is that the current businesses within the site need to expand and this often requires more workspace for new equipment or personnel. The vision is therefore to persuade government to invest in the next stage of business development – that of business re-location and growth incentive scheme.

The main outcome for M E P has been success in terms of increased work and winning prestigious Northern Ireland wide tenders. In terms of a qualitative approach, they see the benefits of working together as a team towards common goals and targets, they do not over complicate matters and provide support to all colleagues.

Leadership Style

The overall approach or style is based more on “transformational” leadership – focusing on understanding, communicating, motivating and developing the strengths of the people in the organisation. Melanie says *“One of the most important elements to leadership to me is being passionate, without passion I do not see how you can motivate your staff to achieve their goals. Treating staff as valued people, encouraging them, and providing them with training, all this helps towards tasks being carried out efficiently and with confidence”*.

Attention to detail is another approach to leadership that ensures a quality service. Other approaches are specifically taking time out to “think”, come up with new ideas for the current service portfolio, or identify new services.

“A good leader needs to be innovative, creative, but still have one foot on the ground.”

Barriers to Improving Management Skills

Melanie gives a very personal view of the barriers

“One of the barriers is being able to manage yourself and particular to maintain confidence in your ability! Leadership is not just about managing and maintaining your own confidence levels and self-esteem, it is about developing the confidence of others. Being able to plan is other barrier, planning is essential to any business and managers must be able to balance the day to day operations and keep working towards their goals and strategy focus. Another of the key barriers to improving as a manager is in the area of problem solving and decision making. Managers must have the ability to solve problems and come up with the solution. Internal communications is invaluable to have in an office environment. Too many managers assume that all employees know what is going on, when in fact this is not the case. Regular staff meetings with everyone involved, plus group emails are excellent ways to make sure everyone is up to par with what is happening.”

“A leader shapes and shares a vision which gives point to the work of others” This has been my aim during my years at Mallusk