



PRESS RELEASE business final

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UK executives appointed to boost leadership skills.

The UK's first cohort of business leaders has been appointed to undertake a cutting-edge programme to boost leadership performance in companies during the current downturn. Sixteen experienced executives will work with existing or high growth potential companies over a six-year period, while undertaking a new Post Graduate Certificate (PGC) which aims to upskill an organisation's own capacity to develop leaders – particularly at a time when training budgets are under pressure.

The team will work for business and investment network, Oxford Innovation (OIⁱ). The first companies earmarked for support will be largely fast growth businesses in Cornwall. The executive mentors will follow a Post Graduate Certificate (PGC) in Coach-Mentoring and Facilitation in Organisations, which teaches trainers and senior executives how to develop the highest quality in-house leadership programmes.

Organisations in the UK are believed to spend £38.5 billion on trainingⁱⁱ but poor mentoring programmes can hamper the performance of UK companies and organisations and are:

- Variable in quality
- Lacking in time for mentees and
- Failing to provide real leadership challenge.

OI Project Director, Dr. Treve Willis, says: “Key UK organisations often commit to major programmes mentoring their senior personnel, but the role can be poorly supported. Despite major investment the results can be disappointing or even destructive – wasting potential which we, as a country, cannot afford to do. High potential individuals and teams achieve more through well-supported, well-thought through programmes – such as the PGC aims to ensure more consistently.”

The business and academic partnership's new training qualification fills a gap in the market identified by a recent Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) surveyⁱⁱⁱ and aims to cut training costs.

Heading the PGC delivery team, Danielle Grant of leadership development experts and business coach-mentors, LeaderShape, explains: “Research^{iv} shows companies which do not train are 2.5 times more likely to go bankrupt and also to lose vital talent. As spending comes under pressure in tough times this new PGC will ensure monies are efficiently allocated and policies fit with business objectives.” **Mf**

LeaderShape and the University of Chester developed the course as probably the first accredited programme for those who want to develop their ability to act as Coach /Mentors and Learning Set Facilitators to others. It aims to build knowledge, understanding and expertise to identify, deliver and evaluate learning, development and training needs.

Professor David Major from the University of Chester is overseeing the accreditation. He says: “Learning and development (L&D) is vital to economic recovery and ensuring that organisations are well placed for the upturn. Strong professional backing to deliver learning has to be among the most useful of the tools available as people adapt and change to a rapidly changing world. Business and organisational success depends on the generation of leaders we are training now.”

LeaderShape’s appointment by OI is based on their Partnership experience, in designing and delivering the highly successful South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA) and European Social Fund’s Merlin programme for innovation and growth.

LeaderShape’s Danielle Grant adds: “Organisations need to develop the right mindset to lead successful new leaders. The best mentors learn to act as a catalyst for change. They are flexible, understand the importance of personal chemistry, take time to build up the relationship and manage expectations.”

Only half of all directors and senior personnel from major blue chip and public sector firms believe their managers are equipped to tackle current the challenges of talent retention and development– according to the CIPD; The qualification in Coach-Mentoring and Facilitation in Organisations meets the demands the professional body identifies in their report, which also shows that 55% of organisations aim to increase in-house training, to improve leadership behaviour and performance cultures.

Ends

For further details please contact Danielle Grant at LeaderShape on 0161 796 3333 or 07766 473473 or email dgrant@leadershape.biz

Notes to Editors

The **University of Chester**, at the forefront of work-based and lifelong learning, and business experts **LeaderShape**, are collaborating on the tri-partite post-graduate qualification to tackle coaching, mentoring and facilitation development issues that can lead to business underperformance.

The **PGC** is a recognised qualification, requiring 60 post-graduate credits. It enables superior delivery of important staff development needs and cascaded learning, whilst providing a recognised academic award.

Merlin Mentoring programme – LeaderShape designed the three-year project to build a community of 70 high-calibre mentors across the SEEDA region, working with high growth potential companies.

Please see websites for further information www.leadershape.biz, www.chester.ac.uk

ⁱ **Oxford Innovation** is the UK’s leading operator of Innovation Centres and runs Investment Networks that link investors with businesses seeking funding. The company also manages business support projects and specialises in partnerships with regional development agencies, government, universities and businesses.

ⁱⁱ CIPD

ⁱⁱⁱ CIPD 2008 War on Talent

^{iv} ibid