

Practising what they preach – Case Study of ISS

One of the world's largest facility service groups – ISS – offers catering, property services, cleaning and office support to customers who see the advantage of “delegating” these business support tasks to outside experts. ISS employs more than 270,000 people and holds leading market positions in most European countries, Asia, Australia and South America.

As an organisation that has employed an aggressive growth strategy, acquiring nearly 400 companies in the last seven years, ISS has been under pressure to quickly merge these acquired companies into the core business, assimilate the new cultures and help newly formed teams work together more effectively.

Senior managers within ISS identified the opportunity to “practise what they preach” when it came to IT services and outsource this essential business support function to experts who could deliver a cost-effective and high-quality service.

The decision to outsource the organisation's IT was made in 2003 when ISS signed a service agreement with CSC, a leading global IT services company, to run IT services in most European countries.

“We needed to strengthen our IT team's skill-set and management capability and we also needed to support a growing and changing market,” explains Jes Jørgensen, Senior Vice President, Group IT at ISS.

As part of the outsourcing transaction, 70% of the ISS IT workforce was transferred to CSC. Significant change was demanded of the remaining IT staff. Their roles were re-defined and transformed from that of technical delivery experts to project managers who could operate at a strategic level within the business.

“We approached Henley to develop a programme that would help our IT managers become more strategic, more focused on management of an outsourcing vendor and project managers who could help develop IT strategy, rather than simply delivering IT on a day-to-day basis.”

ISS nominated 20 senior IT professionals on the IT Management Development Programme and the first module was delivered in September 2004. Participants worked in cross-cultural teams, supporting the business objective of promoting collaboration across countries and encouraging the organisation to work together as a group.

“The programme is based around workshops at Henley Management College, at ISS` in-house university in Copenhagen and post-workshop group work, which is facilitated by a member of the tutor team,” explains Linda Moyler, Client Director at Henley. “In addition, each manager receives a comprehensive set of project management distance-learning materials, which are studied during the time between the workshops. “Participants also

work on a “live” project with a strategic IT focus, which is assigned by senior managers at ISS and is designed to deliver real business benefits,” says Linda.

“Before the IT Management Development Programme we had been working with independent IT teams in each country,” comments Jes.

“The introduction of the Development Programme and the impact of the IT outsourcing agreement with CSC have meant huge change for IT professionals within the organisation. But more than one year into the outsourcing agreement and at least half way into the Development Programme, I believe that the country teams are co-operating better and are continually identifying ways to work in a more collaborative capacity,” he says.

“The business is already seeing a positive impact from the investment. The programme has helped to establish an environment where IT managers can work together towards the same objectives, rather than continually “reinventing the wheel”. The changed and refocused mindset of the IT team, from a technical orientation to a strategic perspective is clear in the way the team has grown together and is sharing knowledge to develop IT for the future.”