



Company: Protostar
Leadership Development Ltd.
Contact: Michael Coates
Contact Email:
michael@protostar-uk.com
Address: Portland House,
Belmont Business Park,
Durham, DH1 1TW, UK
Phone: +44(0)191 3855455
Website:
www.protostar-uk.com
www.protostarsurveys.co.uk

Driving Innovation in Leadership Development

Protostar Leadership Development supports managers from many leading organisations, utilising management consultants with at least 20 years senior management experience at global corporations. We caught up with Managing Director, Michael Coates to find out more about the firm and its drive to be innovative.

Steve Jobs famously said, “Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower”, and it is the connection between innovation and leadership that has helped drive UK management consultants, Protostar Leadership Development. Formed in 2007, it has weathered the global economic crisis and the amalgamation of many main players in the leadership development industry. Managing Director, Michael outlines how the firm has flourished since inception thanks to its innovative solutions.

“Here at Protostar, we specialise in developing and supporting leaders to be more effective and to have a more engaged workforce. We do this by diagnosing development or improvement areas through the use of tools such as employee surveys, focus groups, 360-degree feedback and personality profiles. Then, we develop bespoke, cost effective solutions that we deliver or source via other specialists. Typically, this will be tailored management development workshops, executive coaching and direct support for change projects.”

So far, this doesn't sound that different from other such management consultancies, however Michael goes on to explain how they took an established approach and created something new.

“One of the main reasons we have thrived in such a competitive and uncertain market is that from day one we have aimed to be innovative in our approach. For instance, back in 2009 we won our first innovation award for our 360-degree feedback tool that specifically assesses whether a manager has demonstrated the behaviours required to go through a period of organisational change or turmoil. Inevitably this was a popular service during the economic downturn, and continues to be used by clients implementing major change projects. It was, and probably still is, the only tool of its kind in the world.”

As the winners of Most Innovative Leadership Consultants 2017 – UK in our prestigious 2017 Global Excellence Awards, Protostar is committed to offering the most creative solutions and driving change in the

industry as a whole, as Michael is eager to emphasise when describing one of their other innovations.

“With organisations having more diverse employees and working globally, traditional employee surveys are becoming increasingly difficult to run, as for instance, how do you compare the results from your Beijing office to the New York office? Similarly, if your UK workforce consists of people from multiple cultures, many with English as a second language, how can you ensure that they interpret the typical employee engagement questions in the same way?”

To counter this, Michael has been involved in extensive research and his academic paper published in December 2016 “Examining The Cultural, Age and Gender Differences In Attitudes Toward Employee Engagement Surveys” (commons.emich.edu/gabc/vol5/iss1/4/) won Best Paper Award at a Global communications conference.

His research highlights the key differences and potential pitfalls of assessing employee engagement in a multinational or diverse organisation, and this has allowed Protostar to differentiate their survey and focus group services from the competition. This has been ideal for organisations such as Momentum Services that provide the onboard service and lounge staff for Eurostar. The challenge Protostar faced was that the employees being surveyed were of multiple nationalities, rarely in an office (generally on a speeding train) and while most spoke reasonable English, they were more comfortable with their mother tongue. “Only by tackling the problem in an innovative manner and combining it with my research, was it able to be achieved with so much success.”

One of the major issues Michael and his team are facing as they look to the future is Brexit, and the uncertainty this will bring. However, this challenge also has its benefits, as Michael explains.

“The main challenge facing the management consultancy and in particular the leadership development industry within the UK, is of course Brexit. Despite all the rhetoric that it might be good for

Michael Coates Managing Director at Protostar

UK business, all we are seeing is that it has introduced great uncertainty in to every sector. As a result, organisations are not sure if they can invest in long term projects or where they will base their key staff, and are even unsure what skill sets will be required post Brexit. While we have a long track record of being agile and helping clients to adapt to change, this situation is proving to be quite a challenge. As a result, we are increasing the level of work we do outside the UK, and having an office in Mexico that is also only 90 minutes from Dallas, has proved to be highly beneficial."

Despite the challenges Brexit will bring, looking ahead, Protostar will continue to adapt and innovate in order to remain at the cutting edge of this fast paced industry, as Michael concludes.

"Overall, the future is looking bright for Protostar, as we have a solid client base of international or large UK clients, plus a nice variety of SMEs that regularly return for more support. Our innovative approach to ensuring that clients only receive the most effective elements of a service and our push to promote Return on Investment as a means of measuring the support we provide, appears to be seen as a refreshing change from the traditional 'charge high and for everything' style that the consultancy industry is often labelled with."

"To continue to meet our clients' ever evolving needs, moving forward we are going to be focussing more on our diagnostic survey work and have formed a sister company Protostar Surveys" (www.protostarsurveys.co.uk) to promote that aspect of our services, and we are confident that this will result in significant international growth."



Michael (sat centre right) with business leaders in Mexico