

**Barclays has 27 million customers and clients in more than fifty countries, with 127,000 employees. Barclays Finance is the internal finance function, it has a role as a strategic finance partner to internal clients, and policing' the organisation's costs, expenditure and return on investment.**

### **The Business Challenge**

As part of the Barclays Finance Change programme the internal finance function needed to redefine its position within the organisation. The key element of this overhaul was the definition and development of a new role within the business, the Finance Business Partner (FBP), designed to form a bridge between the Finance function and the rest of the business. "The new FBP role is about becoming more of a strategic business partner to internal customers and less of a 'bean counter' that is perceived as solely the guardian and presenter of numbers. For Barclays it's all about changing the role of finance and the way that we work with the business and our internal customers" explains Jill Robinson, Organisational Fitness Manager at Barclays.

"The bridging role is a difficult one to play" says Jill "FBPs need to balance being part of the team that's accountable for decisions, as well as part of the 'policing' team that challenges costs, expenditure and return on investment is difficult. Along with the job title and role changes it is a complete change in individuals' perceptions of themselves. To be successful, FBPs must move away from being a 'traditional' accountant to a relationship manager who is involved in the corporate decision making process"

Barclays worked with Hunter Roberts to drive a development programme for FBPs. The incoming role holders who were to take on this new responsibility had been recruited from previous positions within the function. This created a strong mix of skills levels, backgrounds and experience, but these needed to be developed to take on the strategic FBP challenge.

### **The Solution**

"There was a real need to clearly define the role of the FBP, enabling them to understand the scope of their role and the competencies required," explains Susy Roberts, Director of Hunter Roberts. "It was also necessary to define the gap between the individual FBP and Barclays' 'best practice, world class' vision for the role, so that we could work with the FBPs to achieve their potential". Hunter Roberts created a development centre to accelerate the integration of FBPs within the business.

Held over three days, the centre used a number of assessment tools, such as 360 degree feedback and business-focused case studies, as well as a number of specific learning sessions that covered topics including how to provide feedback, stakeholder management and commercial awareness. “The commercial approach we took to the planning of the development centre ensured the needs of the business and the individual were at the heart of the programme. By using exercises and simulations that involved real Barclays data and ‘real’ characters from the business, we were able to make the programme as realistic as possible so that the FBPs got maximum value from the centre,” says Susy.

### **Measuring Success**

“Delegates have consistently reported that the centre was the best development they’ve ever had and there’s now a waiting list for future events,” Jill explains. “As an internal finance function within the business, we understand even more where to focus future learning. By developing the coaching skills of senior managers we have been able to sustain the internal buy-in from the firm’s leadership and continue the success.”

FBP staff came out of the development centre with personal development plans to take back to the business and action with the line managers. Follow-up coaching was also offered to the FBPs at regular intervals following the development centre. This helped to support individuals’ transition to their new roles and reinforce the learning from the formal part of the programme. “Barclays have successfully achieved total clarity for the role of the FBP and development plans for each individual are now in place and agreed with their line managers. There has been strong recognition and ownership from each of the FBPs of the changes in skills, behaviour and the approach required to deliver a strong and ‘first class’ performance in the role,” comments Susy Roberts.