

The Royal Bank of Scotland Group

Business training for HR professionals

“HR is a business, just like any other part of the RBS group. We provide products and services to the Group and our people, and we have to deliver them professionally and efficiently. Broadening the HR professional’s understanding of business drivers and external markets is key to adding shareholder value, and to the success of today’s HR function.”

Tony Williams

Head of HR shared services, The Royal Bank of Scotland Group





The Royal Bank of Scotland Group: Business training for HR professionals

The issue

The human resources function of The Royal Bank of Scotland Group (RBS) plays a valuable role in contributing to the Group's ongoing business success, including the highly successful acquisition and integration of NatWest. However, the RBS group recognised that their HR team needed to maintain, enhance and grow their credibility and influence and therefore they needed to equip their HR professionals to be 'Business people first, HR people second.'

The RBS group is not alone – a PricewaterhouseCoopers survey of major UK companies that had recently gone through a major acquisition or merger showed that almost half of the finance directors and an even greater proportion of HR directors thought their in-house HR professionals lacked sufficient commercial acumen to effectively help their business meet its goals.

The RBS group objective was to help their HR professionals increase their understanding of:

- the business drivers and issues facing the organisation
- how the HR function could proactively add value to the business in addressing some of these challenges.

Our approach

PricewaterhouseCoopers has a strong relationship with the RBS group and a good understanding of their business. We suggested running 'masterclasses' for their senior HR professionals as a way of increasing their understanding of the RBS group's businesses, in particular the financial aspects of business, and helping them to agree priority goals and activities for the HR function.

Our business analysts collated publicly available information on the RBS group and benchmarked this information against a selection of their competitors, and presented the findings to the Group's top 75 HR professionals during three one-day interactive masterclasses.

The participants identified what they considered to be the RBS group's top ten challenges, and ranked them in order of importance to RBS. In breakout sessions facilitated by PwC, participants discussed

how HR could help to address the top three of these business issues and then looked at the barriers, challenges and key performance indicators for measuring success.

The outcome

Generally, the RBS group's HR professionals are business-focused and commercially aware, with a high degree of 'consulting' competencies such as oral presentation skills. The masterclasses helped participants to increase their understanding of financial issues and understand how the HR function can proactively add value to the business through a greater appreciation of share price performance.

The masterclasses were seen as extremely successful by the HR function as:

- they provided actions for the HR function to help the businesses and were key in informing the HR strategy, which the HR professionals now 'own'

- HR professionals had a much greater understanding of the business drivers and impact on share price
- 100% of participants said they personally benefited from the workshop and the PwC presentation and facilitation.

Almost half of the participants said that their most significant learning point was the market perception of the RBS group and how this perception impacts on share price. For many participants personal action points included continuing to develop commercial awareness and encouraging similar discussions in their wider HR communities.

Participants now believe even more strongly that the HR function has a real opportunity to play a strategically important role and are highly motivated and enthusiastic about being part of an HR function aligned to achieving business objectives.