

## Case Study

### THE CHALLENGE

- Increase the quality and volume of mainstream funded Management Development provision in Berkshire
- Engage more of Berkshire's SMEs in Management Development

### THE SOLUTION

- Undertake assessments of selected organisations against agreed criteria
- Benchmark organisations and produce report of findings
- Engage selected providers in developing programmes 'fit for purpose'
- Ensure that programmes are attractive to the SME market and meet its unique requirements.

### THE BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Public organisations receive support, feedback and action plans
- Development of a live database of SMEs
- Creation of a sustainable project that can be taken forward

### INTERVENTIONS USED

- Electronic survey
- 'Mystery Shopper'
- Telephone research
- On site observations
- On site audits
- Workshops

## Learning & Skills Council - Berkshire

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in Berkshire engaged **FTS** to help launch an initiative, aimed at encouraging SMEs to undertake management development. In the initial stages, **FTS** investigated providers, both partially and fully funded by the LSC, to identify how well they were able to attract and meet the needs of SMEs. Networking groups were then created, bringing together those businesses wishing to have input into their management development.

When investigating the providers, **FTS** consultants employed a range of interventions, providing support and feedback and developing action plans for further development. The initiative was a great success, encouraging more than 200 SMEs to attend the Network Broker Sessions that were subsequently provided by the public organisations. When the project drew to a close **FTS** were on hand to conduct a comprehensive evaluation, which has greatly contributed to the sustainability of the project.



Joanna Birrell and Roger Harris

*'The LSC is extremely pleased all round,'* says Roger Harris, Quality Manager for Workforce Development at the LSC. *'The project was highly successful and extremely worthwhile. It is going to be a very important benchmark for future developments.'*

*'Working with the six providers was a challenging brief,'* adds Joanna Birrell, Project Manager at the LSC. *Assessment of the public organisations provided the LSC with vital information regarding client perceptions, service standards and quality of products, strengths and weaknesses. It also highlighted areas for improvement and indicated where further training and development was needed. 'FTS were incredibly loyal to their part of the project,'* says Roger. *'Right from the start it was clear that the Consultants had done their homework. As the project progressed and sometimes changed direction, FTS remained very flexible.'*

During the delivery of the Network Broker Sessions, **FTS** worked closely with the providers, acting as administrator, delivering feedback and providing the necessary information and documentation. *'FTS brought a new and useful perspective to our situation here at the LSC,'* Roger continues, *'and the Consultants were a pleasure to work with.'*

Once the sessions had been completed, **FTS** conducted a telephone survey of the delegates who had been in attendance. The results from this survey were then presented to the LSC in a comprehensive report, which analysed the findings, evaluated the project as a whole and made recommendations for the future. *'This is a very specific piece of work,'* says Joanna of the report. *'We didn't want something that would simply sit on a shelf. It needed to be a working document that could be handed over and taken further and this is precisely what we got.'*