

## 'Self-leadership' approach

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### SWEDEN

In 2014, the leadership of Arbetsförmedlingen (Swedish PES) launched a new strategy and vision for the organisation. PES senior management introduced measures to encourage changes in the organisational culture, by promoting a more horizontal structure and giving more autonomy to managers.

Part of this cultural change involved introducing a new management philosophy based on a 'self-leadership' approach. The aim of the practice is to empower staff and give them greater freedom in decision-making. As a result, PES staff should grow confidence in their own work and skills, and consequently improve on their performance.

One of the key activities of this practice was to develop specific training on self-leadership for PES managers. PES managers are then responsible for spreading the knowledge acquired among their staff.

Name of the PES	Arbetsförmedlingen (Swedish PES)
Scope of measure (a pilot project or a national reform)	This measure was part of a national reform affecting all PES managers and staff in Sweden.
When was the practice implemented? (including start and end date for pilot projects)	The practice is ongoing, with all PES staff expected to implement the new skills and knowledge in their daily work. One of the main activities developed was 'self-leadership' training to PES managers, which started in January 2015 and ended in August 2016.
What was the driver for introducing the practice? Was it internal or external?	The 'self-leadership' approach was introduced by a new PES management team. The new team judged that the organisation was excessively hierarchical and micromanagement was limiting the initiative of PES staff. As a result, new objectives were set up and new ways of working were encouraged. This was set out in the White Paper 'Arbetsförmedlingen 2021'.
Which organisation was involved in its implementation?	In addition to PES, an external consultancy (Gaia Leadership) was hired to provide training on self-leadership and management skills.
Which groups were targeted by the practice?	All managers in the PES were directly targeted by the training. The PES has around 800 managers and approximately 14 000 employees in total. The practice also targeted all PES staff indirectly through their managers, as these are responsible for spreading and instilling the 'self-leadership' approach across their teams.
What were the practice's main objectives?	The aim is to promote cultural change by empowering staff and managers through self-leadership. Empowering PES staff and giving them a greater degree of freedom (within a unified framework) should increase confidence in their skills and capacities, and therefore increase performance. As a result, PES services are expected to improve and PES customers are expected to receive better assistance. The PES has developed 'five dimensions of self-leadership', which staff need to be familiar with: collaborating with partners; taking responsibility; developing personal leadership; challenging and encouraging others; and capturing and influencing events in the community.
What activities were carried out?	The 'self-leadership' approach is implemented through training for PES managers. Prior to the development of the training, an article was published in the PES newsletter informing all PES staff of the new approach and the activities to be developed. The training focused on self-leadership and management skills. Managers were required to attend six training sessions across two days. The training consisted of exercises and discussions under the 'five dimensions of self-leadership', and how these translate into their day-to-day work. After taking part in the training, PES managers were encouraged to transmit the knowledge obtained to their staff. The information should cascade from managers to all PES staff. Following the training, the PES intranet was updated with online tools, resources and exercises to help staff apply self-leadership in their job. The PES is exploring other follow-up activities, such as webinars, in order to make the training more accessible.

What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?	<p>The new approach was implemented through the PES' ordinary management system instead of operating as a 'side-project'. This was a strategic choice made by the Director General with support from the PES management team.</p> <p>As well as having the external consultancy lead the training sessions, there was an internal group of managers at the national level that was responsible for i) setting strategic plans for the implementation of the 'self-leadership' approach and ii) communicating this to staff. The process involved providing staff with the necessary online tools and resources to exercise self-leadership. The group was also responsible for tracking outcomes in order to establish whether the training sessions were effective.</p>
What were the source(s) of funding?	PES national budget
What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?	<p>All PES managers who joined the PES before August 2016 (approximately 800) participated in the 'self-leadership' training sessions. PES managers are then expected to transfer the information on to their staff and encourage them to incorporate the new approach in their daily work.</p> <p>Along with the training sessions, a range of online tools, exercises and resources have been created for employees to develop their leadership skills. These are available on the PES intranet for all staff to access, especially new employees who were not working at the PES when the training was carried out initially.</p>
What outcomes have been identified?	<p>Since the implementation of the training sessions, positive effects have been observed. Interviews conducted by the management team with participants showed very good responses and results. According to a local PES manager, PES managers are now using a common management language and are trained in supporting each other.</p> <p>PES managers are now better equipped to use the resources available to them and are more effective in their management. They recognise the importance of working together, and the training has given them greater security and self-confidence.</p> <p>The PES now also has a greater sense of unity and a clearer direction. There is less use of 'us versus them' and management observe a more collective approach to work.</p>
What are the lessons learnt and success factors?	<p>Key lessons learnt for implementing the 'self-leadership' approach include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ This type of change needs to begin with, and be driven by the senior management team. This ensures widespread implementation across the PES.</li> <li>▶ Self-leadership needs to start with managers, but it also has to involve the whole organisation from the beginning. This ensures a rapid uptake, highlighting that the concept is not only targeted at managers but also to all staff in the PES.</li> <li>▶ Commitment, ownership and patience are required from all parties involved. Managers must participate and take responsibility for promoting this approach amongst their staff. Self-leadership should not just be seen as a two-day training exercise, but as something which is being learned and practised continually in the day-to-day job.</li> <li>▶ Middle managers can be used as 'change-agents', as they are best placed to identify improvement opportunities on the ground and communicate these upwards to senior management.</li> <li>▶ Strong organisation and planning is required beforehand. For example, the 'five dimensions of self-leadership' model was created before the process began in order to guide it.</li> <li>▶ Creating a culture of change requires a long-term perspective and implementation period. The government may want to see results for their investment but this will take time and will be difficult to measure.</li> </ul>



#### Contact details for further information

Name: ÖSTLING WALLER, Therese

Email: [therese.ostling-waller@arbetsformedlingen.se](mailto:therese.ostling-waller@arbetsformedlingen.se)

Telephone: (+46) 0104868284