

## Case study

### Northampton College

Further education college using Thomas assessments to improve team and management performance in order to stay competitive.

Tools used: PPA, GIA/TST, TEIQue, Team Audit

Northampton College is a large Further Education College with approximately 13,000 learners, a turnover of almost £28 million and over 1200 full-time and part-time members of staff. The College's mission is to provide the local community with the opportunity to develop through learning and is on a strategic journey to become a 'Grade 1' college in the next few years.

The Leadership Development Unit at Northampton College is an accredited centre for the Chartered Management Institute and offers a range of programmes and executive coaching to help business leaders meet the ever-changing needs of the marketplace. From bespoke training programmes to nationally recognised qualifications at Degree and Masters Degree level they have a breadth of experience to help organisations of all sizes from both the public and private sectors.



#### The challenge

Nigel Girling, Manager of the Leadership Development Unit explains, "The LDU is responsible for the provision of programmes both for commercial clients and the management team of the college. I wanted to improve the dynamics and capabilities of the management team and build better interdepartmental relationships in order to raise standards throughout the College on our journey to a Grade 1. As a unit we also needed to improve and extend our offering to business clients in order to compete successfully with other providers."

#### The solution

"We use Thomas PPA, TST and Team Audit extensively as part of our internal development programme and are beginning to introduce Thomas EIQ. Commercially we use Thomas tools to help business leaders achieve their development objectives. The real power is in the combination of all four tools. Together they deliver a comprehensive picture of behavioural style, mental ability and team dynamics."

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"I tell people their PPA profile is the most important piece of information they have ever received. It is like holding up a mirror – it really helps people to understand their behaviour and how others perceive them. By improving self-awareness PPA gives individuals the opportunity to make choices about their behaviour."

PPA gives an accurate overview of an individual's work behavioural preferences and describes it in terms of four opposing factors: D = Dominance, I = Influence, S = Steadiness, and C = Compliance.

"We offer all management staff 1-1 support to help them understand their PPA profile and its applications within their team. Often managers can have different profiles from their team members. For example, many have D led profiles, and tend to be driving, assertive and forceful, but are leading teams containing high S and C profiles, who tend to be deliberate, careful, systematic and amiable. This can cause a lot of conflict and loss of motivation. PPA facilitates their understanding of different behavioural styles resulting in better communication between team members."

"Our commercial client base primarily consists of D led profiles. The awareness of behavioural preferences engendered by PPA has helped us work more effectively with client organisations and made it easier to implement solutions suitable for their specific needs."

"TST gives us information on the pace at which people prefer to work. This helps to create tolerance for the various working speeds within each team." TST measures fluid intelligence – the rate at which someone can learn and process new information. "Individuals with higher scores learn to slow things down.



Individuals with lower scores become more focused and less afraid to ask for clarification when dealing with higher scores. This has an enormously positive effect on team dynamics."

"We use Team Audit to help managers consider their team as a whole: what impact does each team member have on the team? Are the right people in the right roles? Could this team be more effective? Are there specific team issues that need to be addressed? Managers using Team Audit learn to recognise the value of each team member and question their objectivity when making team decisions."

"With commercial clients we use Thomas assessments to frame discussions about behaviour: what drives behaviour? Are some behaviours better than others in their context? Do particular behaviours help or hinder progress? At an organisational level we use PPA and Team Audit to give broad information on the best way for a company to achieve its aims. At an individual level TST and TEIQue provide more detailed information to drive our coaching process."

"Thomas assessments are ideal for encouraging people to reflect on their actions and getting them to see the benefits of modifying behaviour. They speed up coaching by enabling us to have in-depth, personal discussions very early on. The reports increase our credibility and give us leverage to create lasting behavioural changes."

"Combining Thomas' work based assessments with the College's academic expertise puts us in a strong commercial position. Internally the assessments have made us a better team. Now we don't just support each other – we really work together. We have a common toolkit and language to use with clients and this enables team members to cover for one another with minimum disruption. Having the ability to field a large training team (20+ people) who work together seamlessly gives us a real edge over private providers."