

Rachel Parfitt DSBL Portfolio

My CIPD Journey September 2020 – May 2022

Student Number: 2005681
Module: BMHR7002
Word Count: 4,229
Date: May 2022



Table of Contents

Description	Page
Introduction	4
Scenario 1 - Mental health training for line managers on a shoestring budget	6
References for Introduction and Scenario 1	9
Scenario 2 - The introduction of hybrid working	11
References for scenario 2	14
Scenario 3 - The cost of sickness absence	16
References for Scenario 3	19
Scenario 4 - The need for primary research in Postgraduate study	21
References for Scenario 4	25
Personal and Professional Development Plan (PDP)	26
Appendix 1 - Permission from VCL to access and use Financial Information	29

Table of Figures

Description	Page
Figure 1 - Eisenhower Matrix	12
Figure 2 - Ladder of Inference	16
Figure 3 - The Cynefin Framework	18
Figure 4 - The Research Onion	23

Introduction

- Viscose Closures Limited (VCL) is an SME manufacturer based in Llansamlet, Swansea. VCL manufactures and supplies plastic and aluminium closures, crowns, capsules, shrink sleeves and secondary seal tamper evidence to a wide range of customers mainly in the food, beverages, pharmaceutical, vitamins / supplements and vaping markets.
- This portfolio contains 4 real-life scenarios which have happened since starting the CIPD Level 7 course in September 2020. The table below outlines the learning outcomes covered in each scenario. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988) has been used for all 4 scenarios.

	Scenario Title	Learning Outcomes Covered
1	Mental health training for line managers on a shoestring budget	5 and 7
2	The introduction of hybrid working	1 and 4
3	The cost of sickness absence	2, 3 and (5)
4	The need for primary research in Postgraduate study	6 and 8

- The final section of this portfolio consists of a Personal and Professional Development Plan (PDP). This is linked to the learning needs identified in the scenarios above and the CIPD Profession Map (CIPD, no date).



My Journal



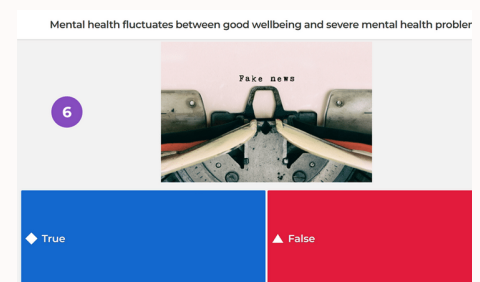
Mental Health Training for Line Managers on a Shoestring Budget

DESCRIPTION

As part of the CIPD Level 7 assignment for the module on Designing, Delivering and Evaluating Learning and Development I identified a learning need at Viscose Closures Limited (VCL) which was mental health training for people managers. Poor mental health costs employers between £33bn and £42bn per year (Deloitte, no date). I originally wanted to investigate an external training provider to deliver the training to myself and the team. However, after a meeting with the Finance Director to review the HR budget and profit and loss accounts it was evident there was no budget available, so I decided to create and deliver the training myself. Even though this review meeting did not have the desired outcome for me, had I proceeded with arranging the training without a budget in place there could have been consequences for the business (Farnham, 2015). I would rate my skill level for the interpretation of financial information and managing financial resources as being associate level (CIPD, no date).

With the help of the CIPD website and knowledge hub (CIPD, 2018) I created a PowerPoint presentation to deliver the training. To determine the effectiveness of the training I added a short Kahoot (Kahoot.com, no date) at the end which also demonstrates enhanced IT proficiency. I also called upon my IT skills to deliver the training via Microsoft Teams to the senior management team due to them working from home due to Covid.

During the session I was so nervous I was in a cold sweat and I was rushing my words. I couldn't wait for the training to be over. I didn't think this was noticeable, and most of the feedback I received on the session was positive, particularly relating to the Kahoot which the group enjoyed. However, I received feedback from the CEO that they could tell how nervous I was, and that the session felt rushed.



Example Kahoot question

FEELINGS

After the session, I initially felt relieved that it was over, but I was also disappointed and embarrassed about the feedback from the CEO and I felt like I had let myself, and him down. I questioned whether I should have even bothered putting all the work in to create the presentation as I appeared unable to deliver it successfully. I felt that my skills had not been adequately demonstrated due to my nerves taking over. After reflecting for a few days, I realised that feeling nervous is a natural reaction when public speaking especially as this was the first time I had ever done something like this (Verderber, et al., 2011 and Raja, 2017).

EVALUATION

After speaking to some of my classmates on the course about their experiences of delivering training I felt much more positive. It appears that most people are nervous when delivering training, especially when it is the first time (Mason, 2015). I would evaluate my skill level in this area of the profession map as foundation level (CIPD, no date).

I was also aware that my personality type is ISTJ after conducting a Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment some time ago. The letter "I" stands for introvert, and this helps to explain why delivering training was challenging (Myersbriggs.org, no date).

ANALYSIS

I realised soon afterwards that the CEO's feedback was the most valuable. I believe the feedback was given objectively and with the purest of motives (Eurich, 2018) and I trust them entirely. I felt upset by it mainly because I was embarrassed that I was so nervous, but I shouldn't have been. Self-affirmation helped me to put the situation into perspective and allowed me to turn the feedback into a positive (Mindtools, no date).

I was happy with the success of Kahoot quiz went at the end of the session as I had chosen this method based on what I know about the learning styles of the participants (Shackleton-Jones, 2019). I knew that the participants would enjoy the competitive nature of the Kahoot and this would create some fun at the end of what was a serious training session. Putting learning into practice and introducing real-life experiences can also make it more memorable (Kolb, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Looking back there are a few things I could have done differently. I should have done a practice run-through of the training with one of my colleagues. Practising would have potentially made me less nervous (Gershman, 2019). I should also have addressed the fact that it was my first time delivering any training and that I was nervous at the start of the session. The attendees were all my colleagues, and I shouldn't have felt embarrassed. I think this would have helped as I would not have been trying to hide my nerves.

I learned that it is acceptable to feel nervous when doing something for the first time and with practice I will become less nervous. I also realise that I expect a lot from myself, and it is impossible to excel at everything. Finally, I learned that negative feedback from a trusted source is given with good intention and can be the best feedback to receive (Grant, 2013).

ACTION PLAN

When faced with delivering training in future I will do at least one practice run with a colleague before the event. I will also practice breathing techniques and continue with self-affirmation. This experience highlighted that I need to be more confident when presenting/delivering training and this is something I will work on with my coach. I have also requested that I am involved in the setting of the HR budget as up until this point I have not been. This will help me interpret relevant financial information and allow me to effectively manage the HR financial resources.

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The Introduction of Hybrid Working

DESCRIPTION

In response to the Covid restrictions easing in Wales in August 2021, allowing workers to return to the workplace, I was tasked with bringing our employees back to working onsite at Viscose Closures Limited (VCL). This involved leading and facilitating a major change at VCL through implementing a new way of working – i.e. hybrid working (CIPD, 2021). I created a Hybrid Working Policy (VCL, 2021), which following review by our solicitors, was rolled out to all staff via email for those working remotely and via noticeboards for those on-site without email access. Most employees eligible for hybrid working embraced the option to work on a hybrid basis due to the benefits they have experienced to wellbeing and work-life balance (CIPD, 2021a), and began working in the new way immediately. There were however some problems with understanding the policy and it has not worked well for new employees. The new employees have found it difficult to learn the informal structure, i.e. the unwritten rules, when working from home (Puranum, 2018).

FEELINGS

When I was first tasked with facilitating this change, I felt nervous as it was a big project and I had not done anything like this before. My skills in self-awareness, time management, organising and understanding dimensions of personality and individual differences (Myersbriggs.org, no date) provided a solid basis for me to start the work. I was aware that working from home had not suited everyone and some would be keener to come back to the office than others (Cheng, 2021). I was disappointed that the policy had been incorrectly interpreted by some and that the new way of working had not been a success for new employees.

EVALUATION

What worked well was the creation and introduction of the hybrid working policy which is fully compliant with relevant employment law. What didn't work quite so well was the rollout of the policy to those working from home via email as the policy was not fully understood, and the inclusion of new employees in the hybrid working arrangement was unsuccessful.

ANALYSIS

I think the creation of the policy went well due to my skills in employee relations and key aspects of employment law. It was delivered on time due to my usage of the Eisenhower Decision Matrix (Covey, 2020). The matrix helps me with task prioritisation and delegation which was critical to get this project over the line.

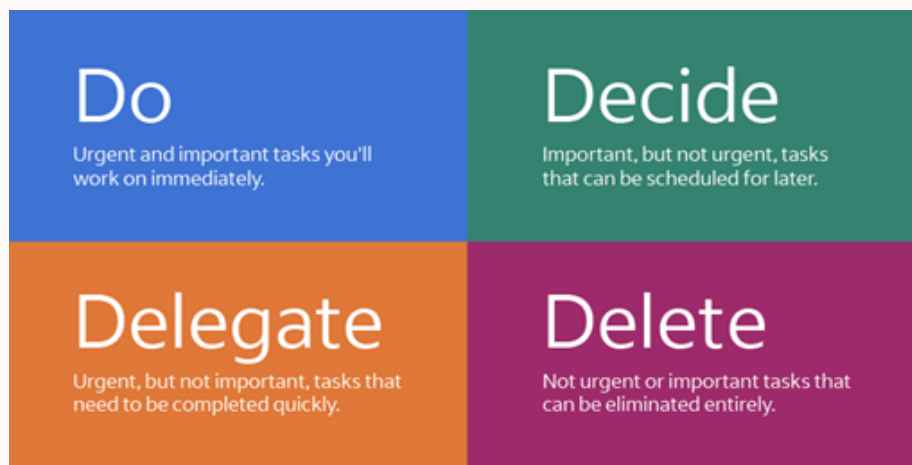


FIGURE 1 - EISENHOWER MATRIX (INDEED.COM, NO DATE)

Creating documents is also one of my strengths as this is the way I like to learn. I realise now though that not everyone likes to learn this way, and some may have preferred a more visual presentation or an explanation of the policy for example (Shackleton-Jones, 2019).

If I were to consider why some employees were not keen to adopt hybrid working, it could be in part explained by differences in personality and why some personalities may be better suited to home working for example than others (Lufkin, 2021). Using Myers Briggs Type Indicator (Myersbriggs.org, no date) analysis for myself, it is evident that as an introvert I feel comfortable being alone and I like things I can do on my own meaning working from home has not been an issue for me and therefore hybrid

working is a welcome solution for me. For someone who may be more extrovert, or who feels more comfortable working in a team this will have been much more difficult to do while working from home and they would be keener to return to more office-based work.

CONCLUSION

I learned that when I am faced with a large project it is important to prioritise tasks to ensure deadlines are met. I also learned to consider how others like to learn and to consider different personalities and individual differences.

I also learned that despite offering hybrid working to new employees with the intention of fairness in mind it can be detrimental to their ability to learn the information structure of the business.

Before carrying out this project my skill level in this core knowledge aspect of the profession map (CIPD, no date) was associate level. Upon completion, I would class my skill level as Chartered Member (CIPD, no date). The project delivered the desired outcome, which was to bring people back to the workplace and manage the risks of doing so by ensuring all covid safeguarding measures were in place and adhered to (VCL, 2021a).

ACTION PLAN

I will be more considerate of different learning styles when I am next required to roll out a new policy or procedure. I will also consider personalities to better manage my expectations of how something will be received. I will continue to use the Eisenhower Matrix to ensure sound time management. To successfully facilitate change in future I will suggest a trial period to determine any potential issues before rolling out to the entire workforce. I will suggest that hybrid working is offered to employees upon successful completion of a 3-month probationary period rather than from day one of employment.

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The Cost of Sickness Absence

DESCRIPTION

During a Management Review Meeting in October 2021, the Finance Director shared a report which indicated that sickness absence had cost Viscose Closures Limited (VCL) more than £50,000 in 2021 (VCL, 2021). This is a large amount for any business but especially for an SME. I was tasked with coming up with a plan to reduce this amount for 2022.

Due to Covid VCL has seen a huge increase in absence throughout the pandemic. Up until the point of that meeting employees had been fully paid for any absence relating to Covid regardless of how many times they had been off for testing positive themselves, isolating due to family members, awaiting results etc. This was over and above any sickness allowance granted to each employee as per the Sickness Absence Policy in the Employee Handbook (VCL, 2020).

After consulting with our employment law solicitors and the management team I created a new Sickness Absence Policy (VCL, 2021). The key change was that Covid absence would now be treated as any other illness and no further exceptions to the rules would be made to ensure costs are minimised. This was agreed between me, the management and the GMB Union representative and the new policy was rolled out to all staff in January 2022.

FEELINGS

I felt confident that the policy was fair and ethical to all employees and that it complied with employment law. The decision to change the policy was evidence-based (CIPD, 2021) and could be justified because the cost of doing nothing would likely be greater.

However, I was still nervous when presenting this to the Union representative. The discussion required both assertiveness and calmness due to the emotional nature of the discussion as it was assumed by the Union representative that the Company was taking something away from the employees. Clearly presenting the evidence for the decision and demonstrating to the union representative the cost of absence and the consequence this could have (i.e. pay freeze, redundancy), allowed me to justify the decision and agreement was reached.

EVALUATION

The creation of the policy went well and the justification for the change was easy to understand. There was potential for conflict to arise with the Union representative but the good working relationship between myself and them allowed me to explain, justify and evidence the decision. Always acting in a politically astute and ethical manner assists with ensuring HR objectives are met (Vickers, 2005).

ANALYSIS

The creation of a new policy was based on evidence and can be demonstrated using the Ladder of Inference which was created by Chris Argyris in 1970. This tool enables understanding of the thinking process we go through, sometimes without realising it, before coming to a decision (Mindtools, no date). The tool is assistive as once you have assessed where you are on the ladder in the decision-making process, it may be necessary to move back in the process to the earlier rungs which will ensure decisions are based on fact, data and evidence rather than emotions. When used correctly it will prevent jumping to conclusions (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014).



FIGURE 2- LADDER OF INFERENCE
(COMPASSIONATE SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP.NET, NO DATE)

In addition to this, the Cynefin Framework, created by Dave Snowden in 1999, could be used to further demonstrate the process of sense-making to reach the decision (thecynefin.co, no date). The framework requires categorisation of a problem which leads to suggestions on how to deal with it. The problem for this project was clear meaning the suggested solutions are those based on best practices. Best practice relating to sickness absence management is to treat all employees fairly, legally and ethically (ACAS, no date and CIPD, 2021a).



FIGURE 3 - THE CYNEFIN FRAMEWORK
(THECYNEFIN.CO, NO DATE)

CONCLUSION

I learned that making evidence-based decisions are easy to justify and that I can be confident when presenting such decisions in future. Completion of this project has moved my skill level from foundation level to associate level. I have learned that data and analytics can be used and communicated to resolve people issues (CIPD, no date).

ACTION PLAN

When faced with a situation in future that requires problem-solving and/or decision making I will continue to use a model to justify and explain the outcomes to relevant stakeholders more easily. I will also build my confidence to deal with potential unethical decisions, providing an explanation of the risks to the business.

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The Need for Primary Research in Postgraduate Study

DESCRIPTION

As part of the CIPD Level 7 qualification, the IBI module required a 7,000-word report which consisted of primary and secondary research. I had never carried out any primary research before and after more than 20 years since completing my undergraduate studies, this was a daunting exercise. Each student was assigned a supervisor whom we met with periodically and we were left to get on with our work.

I based my research project on Employee Voice mechanisms at Viscose Closures Limited (VCL). I used my organising and prioritising skills along with the Project Initiation Document (PID) to set out a clear timeline which I stuck to. I used my IT skills to create a survey on Microsoft Forms to conduct a company-wide employee survey for my primary research. My IT skills were also further developed by the extensive quantitative analysis I carried out on Excel to analyse the survey results. I would rate my IT skills as associate level (CIPD, no date). I used my analytical skills and business acumen skills to evaluate the primary research and create a professional report with realistic recommendations for VCL (Parfitt, 2021). I was encouraged by the participation levels and the results of the survey. I was proud of the work I had done.

Overall, I was pleased with my grade which was a distinction, but I was annoyed by the feedback from the second marker which was that I exceeded the word count when I knew I had not.

FEELINGS

When the assignment was first explained I felt quite overwhelmed by the task ahead. However, after I had submitted the PID and discussed it with my supervisor I felt much better. This is the way I like to work in my daily life anyway – i.e. to have a list of tasks and a timeline. I felt like I had to challenge the comment from the second marker.

EVALUATION

I asked for confirmation regarding the word count, which was quickly resolved, and my feedback was adjusted accordingly. Had I not done this, I would have been dwelling on this rather than celebrating the success of the project (Hart and Cooper, 2001). Other things that worked well for the project included the creation of and adherence to the PID, the creation of the employee survey on Microsoft Forms and the recommendations from the report which are currently being implemented.

What didn't work quite so well was the completion of the survey by a small number of respondents. Due to not all employees having access to email the survey was carried out both electronically and in paper format. For those completing in paper format, I placed a post box on the shop floor to maintain anonymity (Saunders, et al., 2019). Some questions were answered incorrectly or not answered on the paper versions. This could have been avoided had all been completed electronically as the software prevented incomplete surveys from being submitted.

ANALYSIS

Adhering to the PID worked well as I had clear direction and timelines. My skills in primary research before this assignment were foundation level so I knew this was where I was going to need to focus most of my time and where the most structure would be needed. The methodology for the report was laid out by the research framework I used which is known as the Research Onion (Saunders, et al., 2019). This model, as illustrated below in Figure 1, allowed me to follow a process for the research and helped with my case study analysis. Underpinning my research with a framework brought credibility to my report (Crotty, 1998).

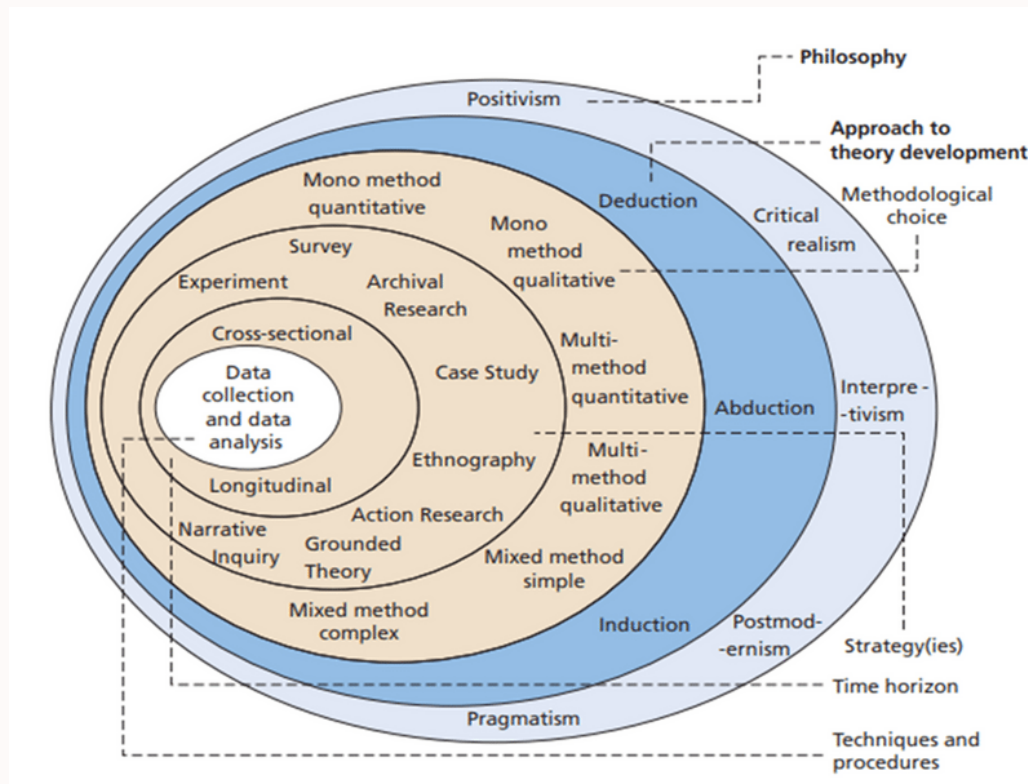


FIGURE 4 - THE "RESEARCH ONION" (SAUNDERS, ET AL., 2019)

Another skill that has been developed through the completion of this report is my ability to think more critically. I evaluated the survey results and made recommendations based on the evidence which also demonstrates evidence-based decision making.

Moreover, my skills in the core knowledge area of culture and behaviour (CIPD, no date) have improved from foundation to at least associate level. My report provided clear evidence of the relationship between culture and voice and how the mechanisms of voice at VCL impact the overall culture (Parfitt, 2021).

The report helped me elevate my position as Head of HR at VCL and I would rate my skill level in the professional courage and influence section of the professional map (CIPD, no date) as chartered member level. I demonstrated this for example by selecting appropriate channels to communicate with different groups of employees and tailoring the communication for each audience.

CONCLUSION

I learned that when faced with a difficult project it is helpful to break it down into manageable tasks which lead to milestone successes and eventually project completion. Also, I learned that taking quick action to resolve a situation I am unhappy with is important.

ACTION PLAN

In future, I will ensure I use a timeline document and endeavour to stick to it. I will also consider using a model such as the one created by Toulmin (Toulmin, 1958) to evaluate my arguments and make them more robust.

If I had to carry out primary research again using Microsoft forms, for example, I would insist on electronic completion to negate the possibility of incomplete submissions.

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Personal Development Plan – Rachel Parfitt

Covering Period from April 2022 to December 2022

<i>What do I want/need to learn?</i>	<i>What will I do to achieve this?</i>	<i>What resources or support will I need?</i>	<i>What will my success criteria be?</i>	<i>Target dates for review and completion</i>
Develop confidence when presenting / speaking in front of groups.	I will work with my coach to build on the foundation already in place.	Permission from CEO to continue with monthly 1-1 coaching programme for the next 6 months. This will include financial support to pay for coaching sessions and permission to be away from my daily activities to attend the sessions.	Feedback from the CEO in next training session I deliver that he can see an improvement.	Review following each training session until satisfactory. Next training session planned for 27 May 2022. This will not have an end date as I will be always improving.
Build on skill for making evidence-based decisions.	Complete CIPD Learning Hub course on Situation Decision-Making.	Continued CIPD membership to access the Learning Hub.	Ability to justify decisions based on evidence.	30 May 2022.
Develop my skills in identifying different learning needs of my team and line managers at VCL.	Continue learning using CIPD Learning Hub in particular the section on Evaluating Learning and Impact. Ask my team and line managers how they like to receive new information and amend materials accordingly.	Continued CIPD membership to access the Learning Hub. Cooperation / support from my team and line managers to help me provide something that best suits their needs. Jane Hart's top tools for learning.	The next time I roll out a new policy or procedure I will evaluate recipients understanding by asking them if they understood the material.	I am in the process of writing a new Ethics Policy which I expect to roll out by 30 June 2022. This will be the review date. Any learning from this will be carried forward to next project. No completion date.

Personal Development Plan – Rachel Parfitt

Covering Period from April 2022 to December 2022

<i>What do I want/need to learn?</i>	<i>What will I do to achieve this?</i>	<i>What resources or support will I need?</i>	<i>What will my success criteria be?</i>	<i>Target dates for review and completion</i>
Further develop skills in dealing with difficult situations to improve professional courage and influence.	Complete CIPD Learning Hub course on Professional Courage and Influence.	Continued CIPD membership to access the Learning Hub.	Able to act quickly and appropriately when faced with a difficult situation.	30 June 2022.
Gain confidence in facing ethical dilemmas and challenging unethical decisions.	Complete CIPD Learning Hub course on Ethical Practice.	Continued CIPD membership to access the Learning Hub.	Ability to explain organisational risks when faced with unethical decisions.	31 July 2022.
Improve knowledge around technology and appropriate packages for specific tasks.	Research online and further investigate current software to ensure they are being use to their maximum level of effectiveness.	Online resources and access to current VCL software packages.	Following a full review of software I will make recommendations to the CEO for any new packages which may be appropriate.	31 July 2022.

Personal Development Plan – Rachel Parfitt

Covering Period from April 2022 to December 2022

<i>What do I want/need to learn?</i>	<i>What will I do to achieve this?</i>	<i>What resources or support will I need?</i>	<i>What will my success criteria be?</i>	<i>Target dates for review and completion</i>
Improve change management skills.	Attend a course specific to this subject matter.	Financial support (£895) from CEO to attend 1 day course provided by Six Sigma in Swansea. https://www.sixsigma.co.uk/courses/continuous-business-improvement/managing-change-and-leading-teams/swansea	Successful completion of the course.	30 September 2022.
Further develop financial awareness to be able to become budget holder for HR department and effectively manage financial resources.	I have time scheduled in with the Finance Director for him to run through the budget setting process and he will assist me to prepare the budget for HR in 2023.	Support from the Finance Director and the rest of the senior team to prepare an effective HR budget.	Approval of the HR budget for 2023 by the Chairman.	15 December 2022.

Rachel Parfitt

From: Nicholas Edwards
Sent: 03 May 2022 10:41
To: Rachel Parfitt
Subject: Information Data Release Authorisation - Viscose Closures Limited

To whom it may concern

Please accept this email as confirmation that Rachel Parfitt, student number [2005681](#)) has permission to access and use internal financial information relating to sickness absence at Viscose Closures for the purpose of her DSBL assignment at UWTSD.

Kind regards

Nicholas Edwards
Finance Director

T: +44 (0) 1792 796393
www.viscoseclosures.com

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