

# Diploma blends with Boots UK's approach to talent development

*Business school nurtures retailer's leaders of the future*

**N**ottingham Business School has teamed up with Boots UK to help to develop management and leadership skills.

The UK pharmacy-led health and beauty retailer and the business school, part of Nottingham Trent University, have developed the externally recognized diploma qualification as part of their overall leadership-development program. The talent-development team at Boots wanted to integrate a qualification covering wider business elements with its coaching and experiential-learning partners to provide a holistic development program for its leadership talent.

The postgraduate diploma has been designed to blend with Boots UK's approach to talent development. The modules contribute to the delegate's understanding of retail and customer loyalty and give a wide understanding of business in general while contributing to the development of world-class people and, more specifically, leaders of the future. Each module has a business owner from Boots UK who works with a university tutor to ensure that the content is tailored to the company's and delegates' needs.

Barbara Sargent, a member of Nottingham Business School's executive-education and corporate-relations team, said: "Boots UK was impressed with our existing experience of delivering postgraduate in-company programs with the likes of Kentz and Ecco as well as the business school's Customer Engagement (Retail Services) Research Center.

"We are working closely with Boots UK's talent-programs team to develop the course, and members of the Customer Engagement Research Center will deliver a specially designed module for the program which focuses on retail."

## Applying the knowledge to the work environment

Delegates study four modules over 15 months. The final module, for those attending the postgraduate diploma, is a live consultancy project in the workplace, giving the chance to investigate a real business issue and present findings to senior managers.

Delegates undergo a two-day induction at Nottingham Business School and then complete four modules. Three are delivered in two parts with the final module taking place over five days. The modules have been designed not only to focus on academic knowledge but also to recognize the importance of being able to apply the knowledge to the work environment.

The induction introduces delegates to Nottingham Business School and the systems and support mechanisms available to them. It includes a library induction and initial debate on what management and leadership mean. Delegates also get the opportunity to submit a practice assignment and receive feedback before the first module begins.



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The first module, on management fundamentals, is designed to give delegates a good grounding in business and extend their knowledge of how businesses work. Business functions do not operate in isolation. Hence it aims to examine the main functional areas of business and the role of management and leadership. The module, delivered in two parts over six days, includes sessions on human resources, finance and marketing. The module includes a multiple-choice finance test and a written report where delegates undertake an investigation into their own business environment.

The second module, delivered in two parts over four days, discusses customer satisfaction, service quality and loyalty in the first part. The second part of the module is more focused on the supply chain and e-commerce. The assessment includes a short essay and a more detailed business report which focuses on a current issue in the retail environment.

Module three is about how organizations develop strategies using the tools of strategic analysis. It also covers the strategic-planning process and the importance of leading and managing change. Delivered in two parts over four days, it is assessed by a short *vignette* in which students *précis* an organizational change with which they are familiar and develop this into a more detailed report that links theory to practice.

### **Delegates investigate a live business issue**

The fourth module provides the opportunity to apply what has been learned on the previous three modules to a real Boots UK consultancy project. Delegates work during five days as consultants in small groups and undertake an investigation into an issue decided on by Boots UK senior managers in conjunction with the business-school module leader.

“This is a fantastic opportunity for them to work in an unfamiliar area and provide feasible recommendations with strategic implications,” said Barbara Sargent. “It is assessed by a presentation to the Boots UK client and other relevant stakeholders and a group report.”

Although the program has been running only a short time delegates are already seeing the advantages of investigating real business issues and being able to share their findings with their teams.

“My current assignment on stakeholder analysis will allow me to use the output back in my day job so that all my team can benefit from it,” said Helen Clayton, security and forensic manager.

Daryn Kinsella-Wood, HR project manager, commented: “As somebody who has worked for 26 years and not been involved with academic education for some time it has been a great experience to get back into the classroom and learn about recent developments and thinking in management and leadership. Being able to apply this thinking to the work I do has great value and I am looking forward to implementing some of the recommendations from my assessments.”

Sarah Hill, senior program manager, said: “The program creates the time to introduce new thoughts and ideas about behaviors and processes I take for granted day-to-day, giving me the opportunity to choose to think and act differently and achieve better results.”

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