Rachael’s Story
Rachael Yolland is HR Manager at WPM Education, a payment process specialist within the higher and further education sectors.

I came across the strengths approach to performance a few years ago and it really made sense to me. On joining WPM Education last September, it felt right for it to be part of our people strategy – the company culture was already open and curious, and it felt like the perfect build.

I attended a Bailey & French seminar and really warmed to the team. I felt confident in their knowledge and experience, and enjoyed how consultative their facilitation was – the content spoke for itself and allowed everyone to draw their own conclusions. I knew that partnering with an external consultancy to build a new approach to performance motivation would lend importance to the project, and I valued the opportunity to grow my own knowledge and skills whilst tapping into their expertise.

We’ve been working together for just over three months now, holding workshops with senior leaders and people managers, and I have built more internally-run sessions onto this for all people. Our people really ‘get’ the strengths approach, and have taken ownership of it. It’s not ‘an HR thing’ – it’s something we all own together. And it’s provided tangible benefits in just a few months, particularly in three areas:

- We have some highly specialised roles in our business, and had found the calibre and quantity of candidates attracted by traditional recruitment approaches to be limited. By refocusing the language and content in our marketing towards strengths – what people enjoy doing in their work – we drew in a whole new field of quality candidates, who were already energised by and engaged with the way we work.

- We recently restructured some roles and teams. Far from this being a stressful process, the changes – which we built around allowing people to do more of what they excelled at and less of what drained them – were welcomed. The consultation period was easy, and people have settled quickly and into their new roles, and are already more productive.

- We’ve been able to throw out a lot of meaningless paperwork around appraisals. Our focus now is on authentic conversations and relationships, not processes. People understand what they and their colleagues are energised by, and are planning work and making decisions based on that knowledge.

I love what I do, and feel that this is largely because of the approach we’ve taken. I truly believe in the work I’m doing, and it feels right for me and for us as an organisation. We’ve implemented a lot of new ideas very quickly, and are now stabilising and embedding what we’ve done, as well as continuing to build. Next up: more collaboration and a focus on career development.

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