

## CASE STUDY

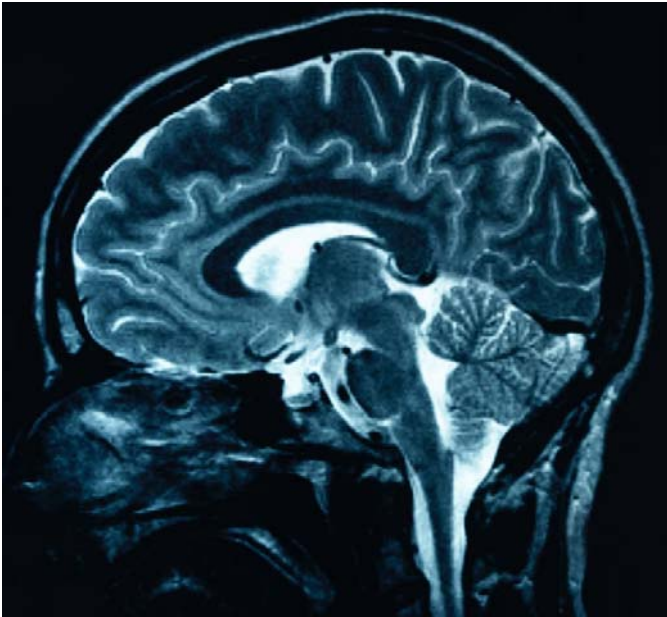
Westminster Associates Ltd

case study

# Developing an innovative diagnostic tool to examine leadership and management skills

*“Having access to this academic expertise will enhance our competitiveness and unique selling features within the existing market” - Simon Buxton, Managing Partner, Westminster Associates*

Secondment into  
**KNOWLEDGE**



### SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

#### Funding Scheme

LDA Secondment into Knowledge

#### Company Partner

Westminster Associates Ltd

#### University Contact

Dr Stephen Benton, Business Psychology Centre

#### Project Aim

To examine the potential for developing a new diagnostic tool to be used to assess an individual's preferred managerial and leadership style.

#### Benefits

- Access to knowledge of University experts
- Prototype of the diagnostic tool under development
- Launch of new product foreseen within 2-3 years
- Turnover increase of up to £150,000 expected within 3 years
- New jobs to be created after launch of new product

Westminster Associates, formerly known as Springboard Development, is a 'people performance' business whose work focuses on organisational strategic planning, executive & leadership development, performance coaching, impact evaluation and more. Its clients include Reuters, KPMG, Dell, Canon Europe, BP, Glaxo SmithKline, and the UK Ministry of Defence.

#### The Challenge

Westminster Associates had been working on and off with the University of Westminster's Business Psychology Centre (BPC) for about a year. Westminster Associates' Managing Partner, Simon Buxton, is a former student of the BPC, and had maintained his links with the BPC after graduation, using its services to help him develop his business, and in turn supporting the BPC through giving guest lectures.

Through their work together, both the BPC and Westminster Associates recognised that there was a gap in the market for an innovative diagnostic tool which examined competence from both leadership and managerial perspectives. This tool could be developed into a new product for Westminster Associates and could also be used as an important academic resource by the BPC.

However, busy schedules and other projects taking priority meant that little progress was ever made in developing the idea.

#### The Solution

The London Development Agency's 'Secondment into Knowledge' grant provided the perfect mechanism for Simon Buxton to work with Dr Stephen Benton of the BPC to research the viability of the diagnostic tool, both as a potential product for Westminster Associates and as an academic resource.

“I had been working on and off for about 18 months with the University, but we never had the means or incentive to formalise our collaboration until the Secondment into Knowledge project came along.” says Simon Buxton. “This grant meant we could both take some time out to sit down, go through our ideas properly and do some research to see if the new diagnostic tool idea was really viable.”

The £14,000 LDA grant provides funding for somebody from a London-based Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) to be seconded to the University for a period of 12 days to work closely with an academic expert on a specific project.



### The Result

Work during the project focused on the development of a diagnostic questionnaire which would evaluate management and leadership skills, style and overall competence.

Initially, a paper version of the questionnaire was developed and given a 'real-world' trial by one of Westminster Associates' client businesses.

Following expert assessment and feedback received during and after the trial, the questionnaire was amended and improved, allowing progress to begin on developing the online version of the questionnaire.

Development of this innovative prototype questionnaire has been a major step forward, and now both partners plan on applying for further funding to develop the online questionnaire into a viable marketable product.

### The Benefits - Westminster Associates

Taking part in the Secondment into Knowledge project had many benefits according to Westminster Associates' Managing Partner, Simon Buxton:

- Benefited from University's knowledge of formal research methodology
- Strengthened relationship with Dr Benton and the BPC
- Original product design developed
- Understanding of how the diagnostic tool could be used as a resource for students
- Creation of 2-3 jobs planned over the next 3years
- Further collaboration with Business Psychology Centre planned

### The Benefits - University

This successful Secondment into Knowledge project enabled staff with particular research interests and areas of expertise to gain first-hand experience of a 'live project'.

Dr Stephen Benton has seen many benefits from his involvement in the project, including:

- Strengthened links with Westminster Associates
- Case studies and seminar presentations developed for students
- Possibility for MSc Business Psychology students to undertake work placements at Westminster Associates
- Raised the profile and reputation of the BPC in business circles
- Further collaboration opportunities with Westminster Associates under discussion

*"We're now going to go on and apply for further funding with the Business Psychology Centre to enable us to develop this unique product." - Simon Buxton, Westminster Associates*



*"Building relationships with business is fundamental to our research and teaching success. This project has enabled us to do this, and will hopefully lead to more collaboration with Westminster Associates on other projects."*

*- Dr Stephen Benton, Business Psychology Centre, University of Westminster*

