

CASE STUDY: EC Harris  
Accelerated Performance for Graduate Future Leaders



EC Harris is part of the ARCADIS group and is an international built asset consultancy.

ARCADIS differentiates through its talented and passionate people and its combination of capabilities covering the whole asset life cycle, its deep market sector insights, and its ability to integrate health and safety and sustainability into the design and delivery of solutions across the globe.

They employ 28,000 people who generate €3 billion in revenues.

EC Harris in the UK wanted to introduce a Graduate Development Programme that would build the pipeline of future leaders within the organisation.

## Background

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The programme was to be aimed at new graduates, employees who have worked for EC Harris for a period of years, and newer employees with other outside experience.

They would be from a variety of disciplines and from all offices within the UK; therefore, any provision must be sensitive to the mix of experience, disciplines, and location of the delegates.

While delegates would be focusing on working towards charter status there were some key issues that were fundamental to their integration and acceleration through the business as high potential future leaders.

These were to be introduced during the week-long Graduate Induction Programme.

During the Graduate Induction programme, the graduates would need to:

- Be inspired by key people in EC Harris – made to feel part of a world class organisation
- Gain information and knowledge about how the company operates
- Consider how they are now going to learn differently – more experientially
- Raise awareness that they need to take responsibility for their development
- Have a greater understanding of how they operate in a team
- Gain knowledge and motivation for self-development
- Create a graduate community
- Accelerate their integration into EC Harris

## Requirement

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EC Harris wished to provide an interactive day during the Graduate Induction Programme that would:

- Raise awareness of behaviour and the need to give feedback
- Raise observation skills
- Introduce the concept of coaching improved performance
- Re-enforce the culture, values, and expectations within EC Harris, thus providing clear actions for individuals which would accelerate their promotion through the business
- Build the graduate community, by encouraging interaction, collaboration, and competition

This intervention would support the rest of the Graduate Induction Programme, and therefore would need to be consistent with, and support the themes and language in, the other elements.

## Solution

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Acorn Coaching worked with EC Harris over three consecutive years, providing a short intervention to support the wider Graduate Induction Programme (GRIP). Acorn designed a series of outdoor management exercises that built on complexity, with facilitated feedback, delivering awareness and learning of personal and team behaviours.

Graduates were paired into their GRIP teams and asked to consider how to give developmental feedback on the observed behaviour of their partner and its effect on others. The exercises gave a chance to observe behaviour and interaction over a series of complex team challenges, providing valuable material both for the graduates to reflect and feedback.

The language and themes of feedback and coaching introduced would build over the week of the Graduate Induction Programme.

## Outcomes

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Delegates reported that it was beneficial to have the opportunity to work in an interactive way, and receive observation and feedback, receiving 'real time' data about their style and behaviour and where it did and didn't support the group's achievement.

From this they were able to take away some clear actions that would support their personal development as the business's high potential future leaders.

They also appreciated beginning to understand more clearly the underpinning values, culture, and expectations within EC Harris, thus increasing the likelihood of them getting it right 'from the start' and increasing their chances of leadership success within the business.

*"I learned that I had one unhelpful behaviour in particular that would probably have got in the way of me integrating smoothly into the business and could have even limited my opportunities as an aspiring future leader. Having the opportunity to receive this feedback so early on in my career and avoid making the mistake was brilliant."*

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COACHING & DEVELOPMENT

If you would like to find out more about Acorn, our people and how we can help develop and improve the performance of individuals and teams in your organisation, then we'd love to hear from you.

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