



Investing in coaching-based training through the Apprenticeship Levy

Société Générale has been working with Corndel since 2018, to deliver apprenticeship programmes across Leadership and Management, Project Management and Data Analytics.

Société Générale is one of the largest financial services groups in Europe and has been serving the needs of its clients in the UK for more than 100 years. Its clients lie at the heart of Société Générale's business model – to provide them with exemplary service and value. The Group's expertise ranges from corporate and investment banking to private banking, asset management, and securities services, as well as specialised financial services including vehicle and equipment finance.

Nearly 200 Société Générale employees have now benefited from a Corndel training programme. In August 2018 the first cohort of data learners embarked on the Level 4 Data Analytics Diploma, followed shortly by sixty learners who joined the Corndel Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management. Since then new cohorts of learners have joined these programmes on a regular basis.

The Level 4 Project Management Diploma launched in September 2019. In addition, Corndel has run a number of commercial training programmes for Société Générale, delivering tailored workshops and short courses, including a two-day programme for Managing Directors, tailored compliance workshops and a global Management Fundamentals programme for Managers across the business.

"Corndel came highly recommended from other businesses. At the time Corndel was a relatively new training provider and right from the start they demonstrated a high level of professionalism, flexibility and understanding of our organisation and our Leadership and Development strategic aims", explains Dimitriya Valkova, Learning Advisor, Société Générale.

A strategic approach

Société Générale has a strategic leadership framework in place, with very clear objectives and identified competencies that all colleagues need to hone, develop, and demonstrate. The framework and all related training ladders back up to their overall ambition to be the relationship-focused bank, chosen for the quality and commitment of its teams.

The Learning and Development team wanted to use their Apprenticeship Levy to support this ambition. "It was critical that we worked in partnership with Corndel to tailor workshops and material, so that the programmes developed our colleagues in line with our values and competency framework, in addition to fulfilling the criteria required by external apprenticeship assessors."



Corndel is now so embedded into our team that they are an extension of it, rather than a provider.

Dimitriya Valkova, Learning Advisor, Société Générale



Coaching at the heart of the model

There was work to do to embed a learning culture within Société Générale, and the L&D team wanted to create a group of colleagues who, by participating in a Corndel Diploma, understood a different way of learning and managing.

Dimitriya believes these programmes have laid the foundations for cultural change over the coming years.

“Colleagues on the Corndel programmes get a considerable amount of value from the one-to-one coaching, fortnightly, that is not usually afforded to people at this level. Coaching like this allows people to work out what to do, rather than being given a solution and we definitely see the difference in the attitude and skillset of colleagues as a result of this experience. This has had a measurable positive impact on our business. We also find that being on a Corndel programme is the start of their learner experience. Once they complete a programme they are keen to continue to develop their skills.”

The Professional Development Experts and Delivery Director delivering one-to-one coaching have Financial Services backgrounds in addition to senior leadership experience and this team has remained consistent since the start of the relationship.

Elizabeth Underwood, Delivery Director at Corndel, responsible for Société Générale explains,

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We very much work in partnership as part of their L&D team. Monthly meetings are held between Corndel and Société Générale to analyse performance data and discuss feedback from individual learners. In addition, there is continuous communication throughout the month. Critical success factors include learner completion rates, learner feedback and the results of the employee survey given by people who are managed by learners on our programmes.

Adapting during Covid-19

Corndel’s programmes were immediately adapted to accommodate remote delivery from March 2020.

“The transition to remote working in a heavily regulated market such as ours was very challenging. Our cohort benefited from the additional support our Professional Development Expert provided. Additional resources were made available to us on subjects such as managing teams remotely, maintaining wellbeing and balancing work and home life. We joined freely available webinars from experts within Corndel who are very used to working remotely and have overcome some of the challenges themselves. My PDE was flexible and available at any time to support me.”

Learner, Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management

All launches and workshops were moved from face-to-face to remote and the content was adapted so that the meetings were shorter but more frequent. Elizabeth explains:

“It was very important that the learners on each cohort were still able to meet regularly, albeit remotely. Société Générale is a large organisation and very often cohorts of learners do not know each other at the start of the programme. The sharing of knowledge, networking, and better understanding of other areas of the organisation is a crucial learning outcome.”



Learner stories



Etienne Bosse is Head of Service Unit based in London, managing the IT function of the Fixed Income business in the UK at Société Générale. He gained a Distinction for the Level 5 Corndel Diploma in Leadership and Management.

Etienne was promoted at the start of the programme and found that the course supported him in his new role: “I wanted to improve my coaching skills to better manage performance within my team as my new position required management of senior managers. Skills I learnt on the programme such as identifying personality types to advance my team definitely helped to improve our overall performance.”

Etienne believes that the Apprenticeship Levy has given employees more access to specialist training that results in a certification and therefore has a market value: “All managers have a training plan at Société Générale and this forms part of our performance management objectives. The level of training I received from Corndel, especially the coaching element, was excellent. Discussing issues that I had encountered in my role with an impartial, experienced advisor was invaluable.”

Société Générale is a large and diverse organisation, so the opportunity to bring a cohort of managers together who wouldn't ordinarily interact was very useful, both from a networking perspective and to better understand other areas in the business: “The workshops were a great opportunity to talk to my peers, most of whom I didn't know before the course started. They were well organised and the Corndel presenters were excellent.”

Etienne completed his programme just as the pandemic hit, and he continues to use his new-found skills: “This year has obviously been a challenge, so I have relied on the skills that I learnt from the ‘Difficult conversations’ module. I also frequently respond to the CMI surveys and read the articles that I now have access to as a result of being on this programme.”



Leigh Ellis is UK Head of Trade Surveillance, within Compliance at Société Générale. Leigh's team monitors for Market Abuse by clients and traders, determining whether cases should be escalated to regulators.

Leigh was promoted just before he embarked on the programme. Both he and his line manager felt the skills that Leigh would develop on the Level 5 Corndel Diploma in Leadership and Management would enable him to succeed in his new role.

“I was quite sceptical at the beginning of the course, if I'm honest,” confessed Leigh, “but the theories I learnt, that I continue to apply daily, have made me a better leader. For example, Covey's Matrix has made me a more efficient time-manager. I run a busy team and we need to prioritise tasks. Having the permission in my own head, and with the support of my coach, to deprioritise certain tasks, helped me to get rid of irrelevant things that were tying us down. The Finance unit has made it a lot easier to interpret and contextualise budgetary reports. I became very engaged in the course content when I could see how the theory applied in practice.”

Leigh manages people with a wide variety of experience – from early-career graduates to highly experienced team members. In addition, he has a wide stakeholder engagement requirement across global regions. “The module on communication styles was extremely useful. Being part of a diverse cohort of learners made me appreciate the wider organisational considerations.”

Other than industry exams, the Corndel Diploma was the first formal training Leigh had completed in 25 years. “For me, the coaching element was fundamental to my successful completion. My coach Louise was very supportive, and she helped me to find the balance I needed to complete and get value from the course.” Leigh gained a Distinction. He is inspired to carry on learning and would highly recommend the Corndel Diploma to others.

Contact us

To find out more about optimising your Apprenticeship Levy to develop your leaders and drive digital transformation, contact:

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