



CASE STUDY

GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACADEMY

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

The Kaplan Diagnostic is an online self-assessment survey that measures and reports on a variety of key areas that your organization deems important. Our tool presents business scenarios and poses two simple, but key, questions: Do you know the answer? How confident are you that your answer correct? With a few complex algorithms and a wealth of expertise, we analyze the answers to give a clear picture of who is likely to be spending business money wisely, and who is a risk to your organization's financial health. This then empowers us to efficiently target who needs training and development, and in which areas they need it most.

Kaplan Leadership and Professional Development developed an innovative diagnostic tool to assess both technical competence and behavioral confidence for the Government Finance Academy.

We designed a series of challenging scenarios (targeted at 'expert level') addressing 10 key topics including Governance/the Role of the Accounting Officer; the HMT Budgetary Control Framework; Tax; Government Financial Reporting issues; and Risk Management & Fraud among others. Each scenario was reviewed by a team of subject

matter experts from across government, and the whole diagnostic tool was reviewed and quality assured by a leading global accounting body – the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

Stakeholder Feedback

The diagnostic tool was launched, on time, as part of a 'Finance Forefront' program. Participants receive personalized feedback on their technical strengths by topic and also critically, their confidence.

As part of the program, individuals have now undertaken a self-diagnosis of their technical finance and capability skills. The online test allows results and feedback to be available quickly. With the ability to measure real-time insights on risk areas, hidden talent and learning trends, the tool is responsive and provides extensive online reporting capabilities. Reporting can be at a strategic level, providing an organizational heat map of strengths and weaknesses. Reporting can also be provided at an individual level whereby individuals can receive a detailed report on the results of their survey.

Each future cohort will undertake the diagnostic as part of their development program. This tool



has now become an integral part of each senior member's progression and development.

Stakeholder Feedback

Feedback from participants has shown a positive and successful impact of the implementation of this innovative tool. Feedback has shown that anyone working in government finance would find it a useful tool to advise them of the topics that they should have knowledge of; and indicate whether their knowledge was adequate, thus indicating their personal future development needs.

GOVERNMENT INTERNAL AUDIT PROFESSION

The Government Internal Audit profession needed a bespoke induction program to support new members. These members were typically a mix of internal auditors – who were new to the public sector, and those who were completely new to internal audit.

Since 2013 there have been significant changes to the profession – including cross government collaboration, methodologies and the creation (of a more commercial) Government Internal Audit Agency. This has required internal audit function to display both strong technical skills but also highly effective interpersonal skills to quickly build high performing teams.

Working with key stakeholders we have developed and successfully delivered a number of programs.

Internal Audit Induction Program

(3 day – ongoing)

A core offering has been a highly tailored induction event that has become a critical part of the induction process for new joiners. It was developed with key stakeholders from across the profession, and was designed to reflect and respond to the range of experience of participants. The program has evolved over time as the methodology has changed and we have also run a series of bespoke in-house versions for particular bodies with specific requirements (such as the Valuation Office Agency and Ofwat).

By the end of the program, participants are able to:

- Explain the role of internal audit and provide assurance to stakeholders
- Identify the qualities that make an effective audit team
- Compare and contrast the different types of audit
- Define fraud and identify fraud risk factors in audits
- Identify key features of the financial control framework
- Compare alternative service delivery methods and assess the implications for the audit process
- Identify and assess controls for design effectiveness
- Use audit testing techniques to test controls for operating effectiveness
- Explain the key reporting requirements for audits

We have been advised by the Government Internal Audit stakeholders that the program has been recognized as being consistently one of the highest rated programs on the Civil Service Learning curriculum.

GOVERNMENT INTERNAL AUDIT AGENCY: COMMERCIAL ACUMEN SIMULATION

Recently, we were asked to support the newly formed GIAA by delivering a program to a population of senior audit managers. These managers were in the front-line in delivering audit assurance, while undergoing huge organizational change, in an environment where they needed to operate more commercially.

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The program has been built around our unique business simulation – the “Kaplan Business Challenge”. The Business Challenge is a realistic business simulation that mirrors the commercial pressures of the GIAA.

The simulation creates a perfect learning environment for participants to create innovative solutions and achieve commercial success through a series of strategic and commercial

decisions. It requires self-awareness and self-assurance, combined with an intimate understanding of key skill-sets and how to apply them with confidence.

At the same time, participants are able to consider their behavior and how their style and actions impact other members of the team.

By the end of the program, participants are able to:

- Plan and adjust resourcing requirements to meet customer demand and audit schedules
- Be able to cope with changing demands and adjust resourcing accordingly
- Understand financial statements and key performance indicators
- Explore team dynamics in a competitive business situation
- Understand cash management and the impact of customer budget pressures on delivering a value for money service
- Improve commercial confidence and financial dexterity
- Demonstrate and anticipate the commercial impact of successful business decision-making
- Think strategically and deal with commercial ambiguity
- Deal with business risk and change
- Heighten commercial awareness and strategic thinking
- Provide an insight into financial information and presenting numbers with impact
- Practice communicating a coherent plan to stakeholders and understand the importance of meeting commitments to them

"This was a very ambitious project for the Government Finance Academy, involving a complex group of stakeholders of high profile and senior audience. These individuals are responsible for putting finance at the heart of decision making in Government. Implementation of this diagnostic tool has allowed a unique means of testing both technical competence and behavioral confidence and has been critical in giving them the awareness of their skills gaps and fundamentally changing how they plan and execute their personal development. It also gives the GFA a rich picture of skills levels in the target group and will help us to develop targeted interventions to address any gaps."

-Deputy Director
Government Finance Academy