

## Leveraging off-field leadership for on-field results.



### Challenge

Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club – ‘Wolves’ – has a long and proud history. A founding member of the Football League in 1888, the team has played at Molineux Stadium since 1889.

The 1980s and 1990s, however, were a turbulent time, characterised by phases of financial crisis, decline and rebuild. Between 2003 and 2012 Wolves was twice promoted to the Premier League, only to be relegated the following season.

But in 2016 everything changed. Chinese investment group Fosun bought the club and embarked on a major investment both on and off the pitch. Nuno Espírito Santo was appointed as head coach and Zoe Brough to the Head of HR. Brough, who had previously worked with Manchester City FC, implemented a management development programme that had the **Team Management Profile** (TMP) at its heart.

From the start, chairman Jeff Shi had high aspirations for the club. He wanted Wolves not just to get into the Premier League again, but to stay there, in no lower than sixth position. And he wanted the club to become more commercial - ‘moving from a village mentality to a city mentality’.

Brough shares, “There’d been no investment in people, no management training, no vision, no sense of ‘what great looks like’,” she says. “People were satisfied with poor performance and they had low expectations because they’d never been given the chance to see that they could do things differently.”

### Approach

The Lemontree Leadership Consultancy team was brought in, led by director Helen Hinds, an accredited practitioner in the Team Management Profile (TMP) tool. Hinds helped develop a competency framework that became a 180-degree tool allowing the management team to benchmark their effectiveness. They then built a Wolves Management Development Programme (MDP) to teach the tools and skills necessary to embody those competencies. Fundamental to the MDP was understanding ‘what great looks like’.

The Team Management Profile was an obvious choice to underpin the MDP given its power in building awareness of self and others – which is, points out Brough, “an indispensable first step in learning how to manage yourself and others better.” She continues: “Importantly, it demonstrated to everyone that it’s ok to have ‘blind spots’ or areas where you’re less strong. It’s important to own them and build bridges to compensate for them, but they don’t mean that there’s something wrong with you.”

Unsurprisingly, most of the management team’s preferences were clustered on the Eastern side of the Wheel - Assessor-Developers, Thruster-Organisers and Concluder-Producers.

But when it came to the rest of the Wheel, the picture was more concerning for them. “We were clearly less strong at evaluating what we’d done, so we just continued doing the same things without reflecting how we might do things differently – with better results,” says Brough.

‘Doing’ is clearly important, however, says Brough. “being in a perpetual cycle of doing without reflecting” was affecting performance. “Understanding the whole process helped us to see where and how to redress the balance. We don’t want to lose the energy we have, but we do need to challenge ourselves, be critical, explore different things, and encourage innovation and entrepreneurialism.”



## Outcome

The club has reaped considerable benefits from the programme – and in some areas there is “quite definitely” a causal link between the work done and improved performance, both on and off the field, says Brough.

“**There’s a common language and reference points – when we ask ourselves what great looks like now, we know.**”

The simple fact of spending time together has been invaluable, she adds. “For example, the head of ticketing and the head of physio, who are based on the two separate sites, got to know each other and find out about each other’s day-to-day challenges and motivations. As a result, there’s a much better sense that we’re all one team, and we’re more open and communicative and mutually supportive.”

But there are tangible benefits too. There’s a bigger fan base, higher-profile sponsors and record retail sales.

The re-emergence of Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club into the Premier League has much to do with the investment from owners Fosun. But what will keep it there is a new and more dynamic leadership and management approach throughout the club – from doctors and sports scientists to sponsorship and e-commerce experts.

As Wolves is discovering, the success of a football club rests on more than its players and coaches. The Team Management Profile has played a starring role in the turnaround.



Team Management Wheel

“**Everyone has the same attitude and mindset now, they’ve bought into the vision and new direction, and performance is now measured by new criteria – including coming up with ideas to move their own areas forward.**”

Zoe Brough,  
Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club, Head of HR

**Want more? Contact Team Management Systems:**

info@tmsoz.com | [www.tmsoz.com](http://www.tmsoz.com) | 07 3368 2333