

Supporting tissue viability by developing business knowledge and skills

KEY WORDS

- » Business skills
- » Change management
- » Reflection
- » Competence
- » Tissue viability

The role of the Tissue Viability Specialist is complex, encompassing not only effective, evidence-based clinical skills, but also competent leadership and management skills that enhance the ability to develop and implement successful business planning. The Tissue Viability Leading Change: Business Skills Development Module offered at the University of Huddersfield provides learners with knowledge and skills to understand business planning and change management. To date, 28 learners have completed the module and 100% have stated they would recommend the module to others. Participants acquired transferable skills and feel competent in developing a business case.

The role of the Tissue Viability Specialist is complex, encompassing not only effective, evidence-based clinical skills but also competent leadership and management skills that enhance the ability to develop and implement successful business planning. The most important aspects of management have been discussed by Kotter (1996) and include planning, budgeting, organising, staffing, controlling and problem solving. Whereas leadership, Kotter argues, 'is a set of processes that create organisations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances.' An effective leader should be able to define what the future looks like, align people with that vision, and inspire them to make it happen despite any obstacles. They are able to plan for future changes and to develop a feasible business plan. Leaders have a vision of what can be achieved and are able to communicate this to others, they motivate people and can negotiate resources to support their goals. Leadership is about creating a vision and management focuses on getting things done, all essential skills for implementing change. Colenso (1997) presented the key differences between management and leadership as demonstrated in *Table 1*.

Possessing effective management and leadership skills allows for Senior Tissue Viability Practitioners to identify areas for change, develop business plans and deliver them with confidence, allowing clinical services to meet the ever-

changing needs of health care. However, little education is provided for nurses and podiatrists via under- or post-graduate curricula to teach and enhance business planning skills. NHS Improvement's "Developing People Improving Care" framework (2016) recognised there are not enough future leaders with the skills and experience to address challenges facing the NHS. The need to develop these skills, leadership and talent management has never been more important as this will help protect and improve services for patients and staff both in the short term and in the future.

In order to address this deficit, the University of Huddersfield in partnership with URGO medical have written and validated a 30-credits Masters-level module entitled: Tissue Viability Leading Change (TVLC): Business Skills Development.

Table 1. Differences between leadership and management (Colenso, 1997)

Leadership	Management
Addresses 'why'	Addresses 'how'
Inspiration	Clarification
Service focus	Profit focus
Strategy	Operations
Innovation	Improvement
Fulfilment	Performance
Versatility	Consistency
Alignment	Accountability

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TVLC: BUSINESS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT MODULE

The module is offered once a year, over 8 days, split across 4 months (2 days per month), which allows learners to schedule their personal and professional commitments around the academic teaching programme. As it has become increasingly difficult for clinicians to access funding for post-registration courses, due to cuts in health education funding, the University of Huddersfield's partnership with URGO Medical provides access to bursaries that help finance the course fees.

This module provides learners with the knowledge and skills to understand, prepare and deliver a business plan that will assist in implementing change in clinical areas through lectures and seminars encompassing:

- » Writing a business case
- » Understanding and setting metrics
- » Identifying relevant stakeholders
- » Budget management
- » Project preparation
- » Problem solving
- » Defining and planning change
- » Effective time management
- » Dealing with challenges
- » Presentation skills.

Prior to commencing the course, it is essential that learners have prepared a draft business case that has been discussed with their managers. This ensures sessions are relevant to the learners' workplace and brings the business case to life in a real-life setting. It also helps to promote discussion surrounding potential barriers for its implementation. The identification of a mentor in practice provides support for the learner by to signposting appropriate stakeholders, discussing potential challenges, brainstorming solutions, all of which links theory to clinical practice. The assessment process consists of two parts: a reflective portfolio and oral presentation. This two-part assessment examines the learner's depth of understanding and ability to be able to transfer the business skills knowledge learnt into the real world of clinical practice.

EVALUATING THE MODULE

The TVLC: Business Skills Development

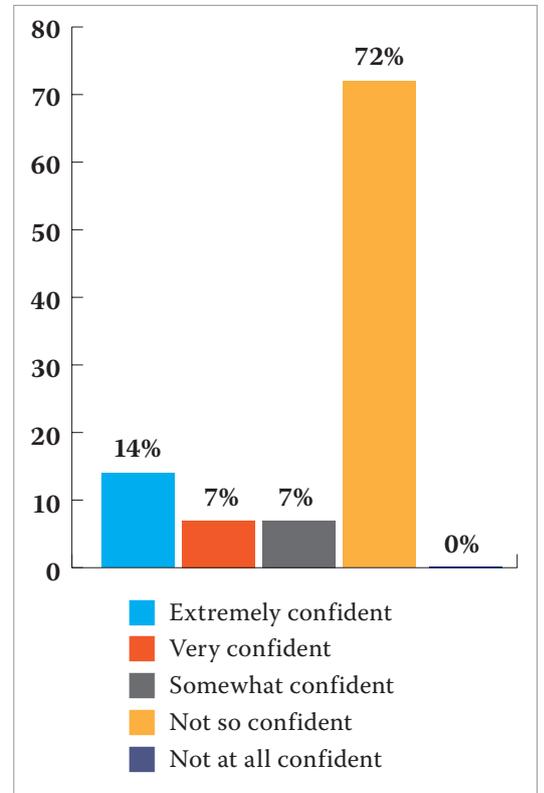


Figure 1. Course evaluation: How confident did you feel with your project and vision prior to the TVLC Business Skills Development Module?

Module has now been offered for the last three years, with a total of 28 Tissue Viability Specialists successfully completing the assessments. All learners evaluated the module via a survey monkey questionnaire, using both qualitative and quantitative data. All learners have agreed for the results to be published.

CONFIDENCE

Business planning and budgetary management were part of the required skillset expected from all learners in their clinical role. It was therefore interesting to note that when asked to score levels of confidence linked to their project vision and business planning, the majority of learners agreed that prior to attending the TVLC Business Skills Development Module, they had not felt confident (Figure 1).

On completion of the module, learners were asked to evaluate how confident they felt if they were to embark on a new project. One-hundred

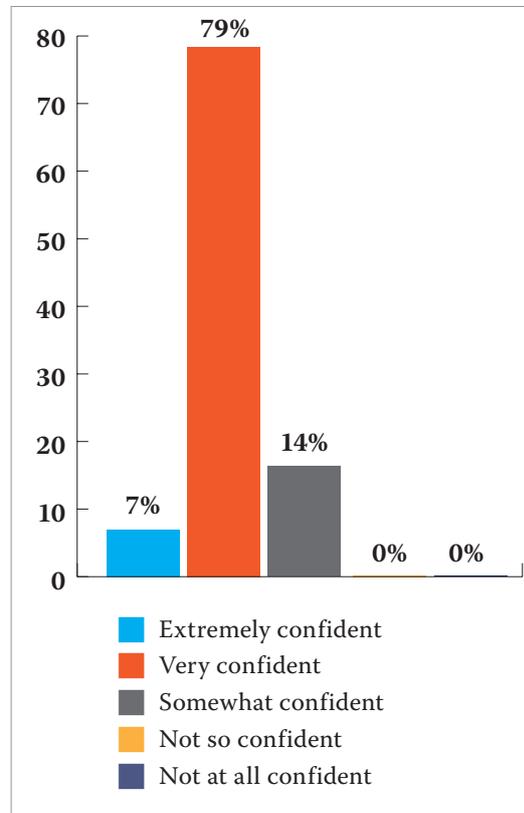


Figure 2. Course evaluation: Now that you have successfully completed the TVLC Business Skills Development Module, how confident would you feel if embarking upon a new project now?

per cent of the students (n=28) noted a positive impact and increase in their level of confidence (Figure 2). Indeed, all learners stated they would recommend the module to other Tissue Viability colleagues, with all students agreeing that the course was relevant for their roles as Tissue Viability Nurses. One student who had chosen a service-based project stated:

“A valuable course with so many transferable skills, I would recommend this to both new and experienced Tissue Viability Nurses.”

Learners were also asked what they found most beneficial about attending the TVLC Business Skills Development Module. Frequently, comments about the benefits of time spent in group discussions, sharing ideas and learning experiences with peers and other activities were linked to an increase in levels of confidence.

“I began the course thinking I knew a lot, managed to realise I didn’t know much and then learnt loads. A great group, excellent and interested tutors, a varied curriculum and I have made friends for life with the group members. I grew as a clinician in knowledge, confidence and desire to make my role even more productive. I now have the skills to do exactly that!”

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

As with any form of education, it is essential that learners are able to link theory to practice, through the development of new skills and the expansion of their knowledge base. There has been a lack of business skills development for Tissue Viability Nurses in the past and this module aimed to overcome this gap. We wanted to ensure that the business plans that had been developed while attending the module, would have a real impact on clinical practice or, at the very least, that learners would have increased their business skills, allowing them to transfer those into their daily practice. The following comments exemplify how this aim was met:

“This course has introduced me to a number of tools and skills that have helped regain my confidence as a leader and change-manager within my role. It has enabled me to produce an effective service improvement plan which has been accepted by my Trust and is progressing as a live project.”

“The business skills course gave me the skills and knowledge to create a successful business case for two additional staff members. The posts were awarded on a secondment for 12 months, this was due to an organisational re-structure and the posts will be reviewed.”

UNDERSTANDING STAKEHOLDERS

Feedback indicated a raised awareness of other departments and the importance of discussing potential business cases, with a range of stakeholders prior to developing a business case, as highlighted in this comment:

‘Prior to attending the course ... I never realised how costs and involving stakeholders

were important to my project and other elements....'

DISCUSSION

The module was positively evaluated and continues to meet the aim of supporting and developing Tissue Viability Nurses' business planning and effective change management skills. The evaluations identified that prior to attending the module, the majority of learners did not possess confidence or in-depth knowledge surrounding development of an effective business plan, budgetary considerations or use of appropriate metrics to be able measure any impact of the proposed change. The use of a reflective portfolio allows learners the opportunity to provide a critical narrative of their learning journey providing a vehicle to transfer theory into clinical areas. Dewey (1910) argued that reflective engagement was a powerful tool for learning and that learners who used reflective writing concisely wrote about the enquiry surrounding origins, conditions and the context of the issue under exploration. Kolb (1984) further explored experiential learning using a four-stage cycle:

- ▶▶ Concrete Experience — Feeling
- ▶▶ Reflective Observation — Watching
- ▶▶ Abstract Conceptualisation — Thinking
- ▶▶ Active Experimentation — Doing

Through reflection, learners are beginning to understand how to successfully develop a business plan that takes account of local priorities, local policies and national guidance that may impact on their chosen change and subsequent business plan. The effectiveness of a structured reflection programme through after event reviews in promoting experience based leadership development has been explored and examined (DeRue et al, 2012). Qualitative feedback indicated the importance of embracing a multidisciplinary approach to change, including for example, finance, audit, procurement, estates, senior Trust board members, which many learners had not previously

considered. Being competent in managing change and presenting clear and concise business plans is crucial for services to advance. Fukada (2018) argues that nurses must possess skills and personal traits necessary to effectively perform their duties while integrating multiple elements, including knowledge, techniques, attitude, thinking ability and values that are required in specific contexts. Having the ability to consider change from a strategic perspective has improved competence in the learner's abilities to embrace strategic and critical thinking.

CONCLUSION

The TVLC: Business Skills Development Module is an example of successful tripartite partnership working between academia, clinical practice and industry, with the aim of supporting clinicians to access appropriate education and training to enhance patient outcomes. This underpins the ethos of the NHS Improvement (2016) who, in their National Framework for Action on Improvement and Leadership Development in NHS-funded Services, clearly articulated that there should be sufficient training and coaching for staff at all levels and for leaders to be able to devise people development strategies that will in turn help improve healthcare services. 

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