In profitable existence for over 50 years, this site was bought by Degussa. Fierce competition from overseas subsequently affected the business badly and conditions worsened. It was clear that action had to be taken to improve the site’s profitability. A wide-ranging restructuring programme ensued, which resulted in the workforce having to be reduced. Fewer people were responsible for more priorities, with customer service a priority for everyone.

Attempts in the past to implement change had been too short-term or enjoyed only limited success. If the business didn’t want to go down that same path again, it needed to do things differently.

It needed to equip its people with the skills to deal with the changes heading their way, and it had to do it fast. From now on continuous improvement needed to become the norm if the business was going to improve its performance and output. ABB were employed to help deliver the improvements.

Solution
Having attended a seminar on ‘operational improvement’, Degussa invited ABB to undertake a Manufacturing Performance Assessment (MPA).

That assessment identified the fact that the business was over manned and performing well below its potential capability.

We identified five imperatives for the full change programme:

- Re-organisation was needed around the new manning levels
- Work that didn’t add value had to be eliminated
- A reporting and control system needed to be implemented
- Changes in behaviour and attitudes had to be developed at all levels of management
- The organisation had to have continuous improvement at its heart

For this part of the programme we were engaged to coach the site management team to deliver behavioural and attitude changes so that they became more effective and better at teamwork.

We were also asked to balance the needs of the individual in terms of behaviour and performance against the needs of the organisation.
Our programme consisted of four key stages:

1. Launching a mentor / senior management coaching programme.
   We set up a coaching and mentoring workshop for senior managers to learn how to use a variety of coaching models, at the same time developing an understanding of the difference between coaching and mentoring.

2. Briefing line management on the coaching and mentoring programme.
   Once the senior management coaching programme was up and running, attention turned to getting the line management programme underway.

3. Launching a line management mentoring programme.
   Senior managers would mentor line managers and key members of staff. We supported the senior managers throughout this period.

4. Instigating regular mentor action learning sets.
   Training and development didn’t stop once the initial workshops were complete.

An ongoing programme of monthly action learning sets was instigated.

Action learning is a method where participants apply the real learning in the workplace and review their personal learning in group sessions.

Benefits
- Customer On-Time In Full delivery (OTIF) is up from 49% to 70%
- Significant changes in behaviour from everyone involved
- Managers are now better at managing people
- Problem solving is better
- Employee involvement has vastly increased
- All change objectives are on, or above, target