



Lessons learnt: *Four organisations share the strategies that got them shortlisted in the Organisational Learning category of the CIPD People Management Awards and we meet the final contender for the Michael Kelly Outstanding Student Award*

Michael Kelly Outstanding Student Award

Sam Westwood

HR officer, McDonald's

While training of operations and restaurants staff at McDonald's has a well-established curriculum, functional training within support departments has not been as diligently supported. That is, until Sam Westwood was asked to design a technical skills competency framework to ensure greater consistency across support departments. Westwood was asked to establish a competency framework for the UK marketing team to improve skills and performance. His responsibilities included developing the business case,

designing the framework, liaising with senior marketing staff, working with the team to map marketing roles to the framework, designing and delivering training and embedding the framework. Directly applying some of what he learnt during his MA in HRM helped Westwood to implement the project. Since the framework's launch, focus groups show that 84 per cent of participants feel their technical skill level has increased. The quality of training and development plans within the team have also improved.

"Sam has dealt with some complex issues and difficult stakeholders and shown the ability to match academic theories to commercial reality."

David Morris, head of training and development, McDonald's



Organisational Learning category

Wates

Selling the Difference

Wates, a family-owned construction company, was – like many in its sector – hit hard by the recession. In 2009, demand for UK construction services fell by 20 per cent. Customer loyalty dropped and the company faced potential redundancies while needing to retain its competitive edge.

Wates decided it was the skills and behaviours of its people that set it apart. "Selling the Difference", a customer-centric strategy, was set in motion, including training on techniques to maximise sales opportunities.

A bespoke programme of six one-day workshops was designed and delivered for pivotal roles over a 12-month period, covering areas such as engaging customers, conducting effective customer meetings, developing winning strategies and negotiating.

The effect on the business has been considerable. Customer loyalty scores are the highest ever at 75 per cent and annual sales procured have increased.

"An excellent programme aimed at winning and keeping work."

Judges' comment

BNP Paribas Real Estate

Business development programme

A programme to encourage continual improvement in business development has been so successful it is now being rolled out across BNP Paribas's key operating countries in Europe.

Directors were offered advanced courses in targeting, pitching and client management, plus supporting workshops, briefings, and toolkits for their teams. The programme brought cultural and behavioural change and meant that revenue targets for 2009 were achieved.

Part of the programme included a sales champion scheme, designed to deliver a culture shift to help the company achieve revenue growth of 68 per cent over three years.

The initial priority was to target top-performing directors and those given high sales targets for skills and knowledge development in selling to both new and existing clients. Eighty directors took part in the sales champion programme but feedback was so positive that, within three months, it was extended to all 280 directors.

"Sometimes the learning needs that drive value are simple."

Judges' comment

Signet Trading

H Samuel Coach Approach scheme

In 2007, Signet, which owns H Samuel, Ernest Jones and Leslie Davis jewellers, decided to increase its emphasis on customer service. The Amazing Customer Experiences programme had already been implemented. However, the L&D team were asked to deliver a second phase to increase sales and provide sustainable results. It became clear that store culture needed to be transformed, developing a positive, energetic environment with shopfloor coaching after each customer interaction. Area managers, who were given 'Train the Trainer' development, delivered workshops to participating stores during 2008 and 2009. Stores responded enthusiastically, with sales in participating stores outperforming non-participating stores by 2.2 per cent, the equivalent of £732,891. After the programme, 91 per cent of management teams were coaching on the shop floor and 72 per cent of customer interactions were followed up by coaching.

"The secret of shining customer service lay in product knowledge."

Judges' comment

RSA Insurance Group

Leadership Development Programme

Having a leadership pipeline is a strategic priority at RSA and, with the business expanding and demand for leadership skills high, a bespoke leadership development programme was devised.

It targets high-potential leaders, capable of moving into a group, country or regional leadership role. Candidates are nominated by senior managers and assessed before participation.

The nine-month programme covers soft skills (influencing, engagement, authentic leadership), hard skills (finance, strategy, process improvement), a business project, plus 360-degree feedback and coaching.

To date, 160 delegates have taken part with impressive results. Of the 100 'graduates', over half have had their role expanded and 24 have been promoted. Engagement scores are above average and RSA is relying less on external candidates. Moreover, the projects that delegates work on, addressing live problems, are often implemented.

"L&TD specialists have listened to the business and to the customer."

Judges' comment