



## OLDHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL EMBRACES FISH!

### Motivational training helps Council scale new heights.

Oldham Council provides a wide range of services for the people of the Borough and manages an annual budget of approximately £500 million. The work of the Council is undertaken by five Departments - The Chief Executive's, Environmental Services, Regeneration, Social Services and Education and Cultural Services

Training and developing employees to their full potential is a constant challenge and it was only when Catriona Povey, Organisational Development Officer for Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, and her new team decided that change was needed did they introduce the **FISH!** Philosophy to the Council. The Council had been seen by others as a 'weak council' and Catriona knew that to get rid of this label the internal channels of communication needed to be opened, job satisfaction needed to be increased and it was essential that tension among employees was reduced.

training had been sporadic and there was a visible lack of drive among employees. "Morale was low. We were looking to re-energise our workplace culture and **FISH!** was seen as a fantastic opportunity to lift spirits" said Catriona.

After previewing a copy of **FISH!** it was decided that it would be a perfect way to get employees happy in work again. "The people in the **FISH!** video were showing all the behaviours, attitude, teamwork and commitment we were looking for" she said.

#### The Fish! story

The documentary film '**FISH!**', launched in 1998, features the workers in Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle and focuses on how they've found a new enthusiasm for their jobs. The **FISH!** Philosophy has become a global phenomenon and is helping thousands of organisations to become more alive, effective and profitable.

Adapting **FISH!** to suit your organisation Catriona and her team have trained all 500 staff in the Chief Executive's Department using the **FISH!** training philosophy. The Department includes lawyers, accountants, personnel officers, journalists, town planners and computer specialists - not those usually associated with a fish market!

However, Catriona has interpreted the programme so that it suits the Council and she finds it useful to draw on her own experiences of dealing with difficult customers while still maintaining the **FISH!** principles.

As the departments in any council are so varied ranging from 'legal' office based staff to debt collectors and canteen staff, Catriona thinks about specific ways each group can adopt the principles before she addresses the group.

"Front line functions are easier to identify however some services which we provide, such as debt collecting, aren't always welcomed. I found that in each scenario one or two of the principles are generally more applicable than the others" Catriona commented.

'Choose Your Attitude' and 'Be There' are easily applied but 'Make Their Day' and 'Play' are sometimes a little trickier. That's not to say that they can't be achieved. Often you need to turn to your colleagues for support" she continued. Catriona also believes that people sometimes get confused with the 'Play' element of the philosophy and can take it too literally. She encourages staff to think about the feelings they experience whilst engaged in play and asks them to apply those feelings to work situations.

**FISH!** is now part of the induction process in Oldham Council for all new staff.

CHOOSE YOUR  
ATTITUDE™

PLAY™

BE THERE™

MAKE THEIR  
DAY™

"I highly recommend **FISH!** to any organisation looking to empower their staff and encourage their teams to be more effective."



A number of team members had used **FISH!** in previous jobs and wanted to bring the refreshing, positive philosophy that is associated with **FISH!** to their new colleagues. Before Catriona and her team introduced **FISH!** to the Council,

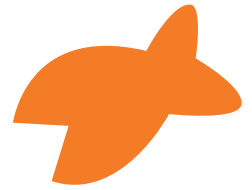
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video arts™



**"...The FISH! Philosophy is contagious - we're all hooked. We have all the videos, the books and we even have t-shirts!.."**



"Our new employees find the induction training an extremely positive experience and they find it refreshing that we believe it is important to have fun at work" said Catriona.

"People have thanked me for making them feel so welcomed, energised and excited about work. Giving employees 'permission' to enjoy their work and knowing that senior management welcome it has boosted morale considerably. The new inductees have also had a positive effect on those who have found themselves in a rut" she continued. Although there are 11,000 staff in the Council it is hoped that one day all employees will have undergone **FISH!** training.

"We have adapted the programme so that it suits our organisation and we now have **FISH!** awards with the **FISH!** adventure seminar offered as a prize to those who display one or all of the principles. The **FISH!** Philosophy is contagious - we're all hooked. We have all the videos, the books and we even have t-shirts!" commented Catriona.

According to Martin Addison, Managing Director of Video Arts, the award-winning provider of longer lasting learning, "**FISH!** changes people's perception about the jobs they do. It is conventional wisdom presented in a very unconventional setting and that's what makes it so compelling.

**FISH!** has been implemented so successfully in Oldham Council because Catriona and her colleagues managed to make the philosophy

relevant to their organisation. The main challenge associated with the **FISH!** Philosophy is trying to adapt the philosophy to suit organisations seemingly with little in common with a fish market".

**Debit and Credit**

"The finance team have really embraced the **FISH!** Philosophy and have gone from a department with low morale to a really upbeat, positive team. They use the principles in their appraisal and planning processes when looking at customer service. They even have a fish tank with two fish - debit and credit!








It was amazing to see how quickly and effortlessly the staff adapted. They now have fun, upbeat attitudes and are happy to be working in an enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere. The **FISH!** Philosophy taught us to be positive and showed us how to challenge negative energy straight away", Catriona continued.

Change requires commitment Introducing a new approach to training to a long established organisation is never going to be easy and a high level of commitment is required from the outset. Catriona recommends that other managers should use **FISH!** as part of their training programme especially as part of an induction process as it sets the tone of an organisation and ensures that new starters apply the right attitude from day one. She also warns that managers should be prepared for resistance but to have faith that the **FISH!** Philosophy works and can be applied to any situation.

Employees at the Council are not forced to adopt the **FISH!** principles. The **FISH!** Philosophy is a choice but according to Catriona it is a positive one to make. She believes that as we spend a great deal of time at work we really should enjoy it.

"The results of the **FISH!** training are there for us all to see. Our major goals - to open the channels of communication, to increase job satisfaction and to reduce tension have all been met and even exceeded beyond our beliefs. I highly recommend **FISH!** to any organisation looking to empower their staff and encourage their teams to be more effective" concluded Catriona.

**Tips for getting the most out of the FISH! Philosophy:**

-  Using **FISH!** as part of an induction process sets the tone of your organisation and ensures that new starters apply the right attitude from day one.
-  Look at your organisations values - they are sure to tie in with the 4 principles, draw on the similarities between them.
-  Sell the idea of **FISH!** as an invitation, people have to be receptive to it, you cannot force it onto people or they'll think its just today's latest craze. Allowing people to "opt-out" usually helps to engage them.
-  Praise delegates for identifying current good practice, make sure you recognise from the outset that a lot of people do this stuff naturally.
-  Don't expect instant results - **FISH!** is infectious, let it grow up and around the organisation don't ask managers to force it down.
-  **FISH!** can be used in many ways. Find the best way which will suit your organisation.
-  Be prepared for resistance and therefore don't sell the benefits lightly. Have faith that the **FISH!** Philosophy works and can be applied to any situation.

**Revolutionise your workplace with FISH! Philosophy. Speak to Video Arts.**  
**0845 601 2531 info@videoarts.co.uk www.videoarts.com**

