



IMPROVING MORALE AND REDUCING COMPLAINTS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR



You introduced FISH! to address low morale: what had caused that?

Morale in the customer service team had dipped following a period of change and consolidation and the recent re-zoning of the waste services in the city had caused a much busier than usual period.

We were already a very busy service, handling up to 3,000 calls per day on issues such as council tax, housing benefit and social care and the increased workload put the team under some pressure.

Where did you get the idea to use FISH!?

I'd used it in the past and absolutely loved it. I did a bit of research amongst councils and found that Oldham had been using it. They couldn't praise it enough and said that the benefits they got from it were amazing. So I got sign off from the Head of Department and went about rolling it out.

Bearing in mind that you're not a trainer, was it easy to use the FISH! resources?

I've never run a training session before but the trainer pack that comes with FISH! is absolutely brilliant. It includes advice on delivering a training programme and a DVD of training techniques and examples, as well as customisable

Plymouth City Council serves 250,000 residents. With 11,000 employees it is the largest employer in the city. The Council has reduced complaints from customers about how they've been treated by 64% since introducing FISH!

PowerPoint slides and documents. It's very easy to follow the guidelines and it's really easy to adapt to suit your audience. I ended up with a two-hour programme that I could put the whole team through whilst keeping the contact centre resourced. I practised on the managers first as a test run and that went really well because the resources are so easy to use.

How do you keep the messages fresh after the training session?

Afterwards, we send a weekly email to all participants, for six weeks, to remind them of the key messages from the film. And we've worked hard to make sure that the FISH! Philosophy has become an integral part of working here. For example, teams vote monthly for the individual who has shown the best 'FISH! behaviour' and that person wins a prize (usually fish related) and a certificate. The fish are extremely sought-after and people are very proud to win them! It's created a real sense of teamwork and fun.

So all of your customer service people have been through the FISH! Programme?

Yes, we initially provided training for the council's 70 customer services staff. However, word spread internally and several other departments - including HR and Revenues & Benefits - asked for their staff to be trained too. 367 people have now been trained. Plans are already in place to train a further 100 and many more

departments have requested the training. It's at all levels too: all directors and assistant directors have been invited to attend a session.

What are the business benefits?

It's helped us to provide a better service, cut customer complaints, improve employee morale and motivation and create a more enjoyable and supportive work environment.

The roll out of FISH! has helped dramatically reduce the number of complaints from customers about how they've been treated by 64% when comparing the first six months of this year to the first six months of last year.

FISH! has brought people closer together and it's created a more congenial and supportive work environment. I have never come across any other training programme that can match this.

Despite these difficult times for the public sector, our motivation is very high and working relationships have blossomed. And, because we're improving front-line services it's easy to justify the cost: which works out very low anyway at less than £20 a head.

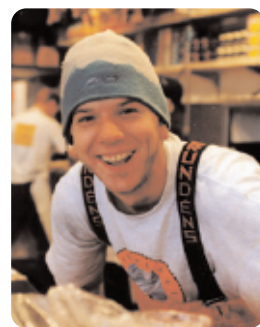
Also, after the election and the budget, we've been able to sit down as a team and say 'my attitude is going to be positive' and this has really helped us.

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FISH! is the world's best selling training film. Exclusively distributed in the UK by Video Arts, it shows how the fishmongers at Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle bring energy, commitment and fun to their work. The film has been translated into 17 languages and is an established resource for motivation, engagement, innovation and 'culture change' training.



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