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Short-listed finalists

- Argos Ltd
- Barclaycard Business
- DAMS International Ltd / Clearer Thoughts Ltd
- Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
- HSBC
- Grass Roots
- P&O Ferries



Tony Shaw director of development at Westminster Explained (left) presents Dave Barry of HSBC with their award.

WINNER LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT, HSBC UK

Background

In February 2006 there were increasing numbers of customer complaints being registered across HSBC, this was a clear indication that customer service quality levels were declining. A new service feedback system was implemented to allow the logging of all complaints, the resulting information could then be used to identify trends and hot-spots with Work Improvement Groups (WIGs) formed to tackle each business area's Top 10 Issues, identify root causes, implement solutions and improve customer service.

L&D was called upon to devise, design and deliver a creative training intervention to allow our business colleagues to run WIGs that would deliver extensive value both internally and specifically to our customers.

Working with the lead project managers the following requirements were agreed: to achieve consistency across all departments; to develop the use of recognised yet straightforward project methodology; to build a practical, useful and relevant set of tools and techniques and improve time efficiency.

The initiative

The programme was rolled out over a six month period from March to September 2006 and in line with current bank strategy, it was based around the Six Sigma project management methodology. It was recognised that not only would this enable the WIGs to make maximum progress with their given projects and maintain consistency across them, it would also raise Six Sigma awareness and consistency throughout the organisation.

The L&D team included and used: project charters; problem and goal statementing; cause and effect / Ishikawa diagrams and the voice of the customer data. As well as these proven Six Sigma tools, the L&D team used proven learning theory such as: the PDCA cycle; ideas generation; process mapping and flowcharting.

Each tool or model introduced was brought to life for the attendees using work and non-work related examples which helped to embed the learning. The development, design and delivery of the WIG training programme itself was used as an example of utilising the suggested tools successfully.

Included in the workshop design was a final activity

where the group had to begin the resolution of a non-banking related issue to demonstrate their use of the tools. Their challenge was to identify the root cause of complaints regarding late delivery from a local pizza company. Feedback was given to the group on their use of these tools, the effectiveness of their investigations and the effectiveness of their team working.

Time was also allocated during each workshop in order that the WIG members could spend time discussing their actual complaint category, begin to establish their project charter and identify initial actions and responsibilities.

Results

The programme was extensively evaluated using all of Kirkpatrick's levels, but the most important benefits came from the analysis at levels 4 and 5.

At level 4 the following results were achieved: total complaint numbers were down by 23 per cent in six months and 51 per cent were resolved by telephone. The number of complaints resolved within 48 hours of receipt was up from 22 per cent to 80 per cent and complaint numbers outstanding over 30 days was reduced from 25 per cent to less than 1 per cent.

The benefits in reduced complaints and increased service levels are evident – the 23 per cent reduction in complaint numbers alone reduced the annual cost of dealing with complaints by over £5m. What is more crucial is the added value of the increase in customer satisfaction brought about as a result of reduced complaints and greater focus on delivering service excellence.

What the judges say

The L&D team at HSBC developed an imaginative and creative training programme to help with the investigation of complaints. WIGs were established to identify and investigate complaint hotspots in an attempt to eliminate the root causes. The initiative led to a 23 per cent reduction in complaint numbers in the first 6 months and a significant improvement in customer satisfaction. Evaluation of the project showed it saved time, and avoided compensation costs to disgruntled customers. While an employee survey showed that staff at HSBC had improved engagement and greater job satisfaction. ■