South West Contact Centre Forum Awards 2017

People Development

Introduction

Jaywing Contact understands the importance of adapting and developing bespoke programmes to support our client's requirements. To help achieve their objectives we design specific modular development programmes.

We've been working with our client for two and a half years, and experienced management changes during that time. As we approached the 2016 peak time, workloads were increasing by 105%.

To support this increased demand, we recruited two new Team Leaders. It was essential to select candidates that could adapt to the new environment and challenge to help us guarantee that performance would improve quickly the whole team, 44 agents, fit for peak periods.

This prompted the development of a specifically tailored development programme for this group of Team Leaders to accelerated their working relationships, develop some common ways of working and increase their skills and capabilities.

Overall our goal was to accelerate the development of a high performing team to deliver exceptional performance. The initial development objectives were:

- To increase their awareness of their personal preferences and those of others
- To improve the trust between the individuals
- To refresh and build the key core skills of communication, coaching and problem solving
- To increase resilience through improved emotional intelligence

The new topics we introduced are Dysfunctions of a team and Emotional Intelligence. These are both designed to get to the heart of why teams — even the best ones — often struggle. Using materials from well know experts in these fields has provided powerful models and approaches that can be used build a cohesive, effective team.

The programme

In a busy inbound operation, it is a constant challenge to balance the needs of our key stakeholders – our customers, our clients and our people. Working closely with our Resource, Forecast and Planning team we agreed the best times to run the module over a six-month timeframe. This included adapting shift patterns and ensuring our Service Ambassadors (Senior Agents) were available to cover the essential duties while the Team Leaders were attending the workshops and completing their learning activities.

Our Performance Director, Julia Whiteley, worked in partnership with the Performance Delivery Manager, Amanda Graham to develop and prioritise the modules and bring the content alive and relevant to the team.

Stage 1 – Observation and assessment

Over a two-week period, the Team Leader group was observed and assessed working together. We are proud that our recruitment and selection processes result in building a team of unique individuals - individual styles, strengths and talents. The challenge this presents is how to get the best from them while making the group deliver more than the sum of the individual parts.

In a new team, how do you accelerate their understanding of each other and support them to get the best from each other.

The observations identified:

- Different communication styles
- Different levels of confidence
- A lack of consistency of messages
- A tendency to work in a silo
- One individual feeling 'out of the click'

Stage 2 – Agree development solutions

All the observations and assessment showed the lack of mutual understanding and recognition of the part each team member could play in the overall success. The team members 'got on' but hadn't developed ways of working and communicating to make the most of their collective talents.

To support a collaborative approach, it was agreed to take a modular approach with sessions lasting no longer than 4 hours. Little and often ensured that the team spent regular time working together and committing time to their own development.

Using successful previous experience Julia and Amanda agreed the first three modules:

- Module 1 – know your type – Myers Briggs Type Indicator
- Module 2 – how does your type impact others

These first two modules were designed to accelerate their mutual understanding and give them a language to use with each other to talk about their operating style. Immediately, the session encourages the individuals to talk about personal differences and how they show up in the way we prefer to work.

- Module 3 – Introduction to Patrick Lencioni's 'The five dysfunctions of a team'

This module focused on trust. Each Team Leader was presented with the book and the session focussed on how they related to the first element.

It was agreed that these behaviour and self-awareness modules needed to be supported with practical skills development events. These were the vehicle to bring the new knowledge to life and demonstrate the impact of the learning.

It is recognised that communication is the area in every business that needs constant attention and this is where the programme focused. The following modules were designed:

- Module 4 – 1 to 1 communication

Meeting structure and how the spectrums of styles from tell to sell can be used effectively. This module included a demonstration that allowed the delegates to critique the style and actions safely.

At this point it was expected that the team strength would have increased and the trust and openness would enable the group to explore their personal challenges in more detail. This allowed Module 5 to be introduced.

- Module 5 – Developing Emotional intelligence

This module built on the early 'know your type' module. It provided another opportunity to reflect on personal style and emotions and how these influence the way you work with others.

Personal journals were provided to each delegate to support their learning and begin to record how they were feeling in different situations, plus how they dealt with it.

This was followed by two more practical skill development sessions covering the final two areas which were prioritised through the observation and assessment stage.

- Module 6 – Problem solving using Fishbones and 5Ys
- Module 7 – 1-to-many communication (verbal and written)

Results

All the learning objectives have been met and through the individuals' one-to-ones their own personal development plans have been designed and amended.

- To increase their awareness of their personal preferences and those of others

Each person has recognised times when their preferences and ways of working haven't supported another member of the team. And have 'caught themselves out' doing it. The team are regularly heard talking about these times and the ways they are changing.

- To improve the trust between the individuals

The 'click' of two has disappeared. The group of three are more regularly seen together and agree who is best to do certain activities based on what they now know about each other. They regularly observe each other and prepare things together to share best practice and improve the way they communicate to each other and their teams.

- To refresh and build the key core skills of communication, coaching and problem solving

Practice, practice, practice is the key to enhancing skills. The sessions provide a safe environment to do this and try out new techniques. From the previous events the level of feedback has doubled between the delegates and confidence levels have increased.

- To increase resilience through improved emotional intelligence

The best way to demonstrate the impact of this development is through the delegates feedback included in this submission. The service the team are responsible for is complicated and lead by a demanding client. Emotions can run high at peak times throughout the year, month, week and day. The team have begun to recognise what triggers their emotions and handle things differently if needed most of the time.

Overall, through further observations the team:

- have created more effective handovers and use each other more in line with their expertise and talents.
- are sharing best practice and giving each other feedback almost daily and the 'click' of two has disappeared.

The 2016 peak was our most successful to date and a key measure linked to this is the number of leavers in the two months immediately afterwards. This

was 2.4 FTE compared to 5 FTE (52% decrease) or 3 people compared to 5 people (40% decrease) the previous year.

The Team Leader role is fundamental to the front-line teams and the increased confidence, collaboration and improved ways of working has 'quietly' influenced the whole department.

The feedback from the team best describes the impact the programme has achieved.