

## **Background/Introduction**

Kohler Mira is part of a global, privately owned business, Kohler Co., a worldwide leader in plumbing products with operations on six continents. Kohler Mira itself is made up of three brands: Mira Showers, the UK's number one shower brand, Rada, a commercial brand specialising in commercial showering and washroom controls and Kohler UK, a premium bathroom brand with a focus on "Gracious Living". The Customer Services department handles all contact with Mira and Rada brand customers. From taking pre sales advice calls, diagnosing a shower fault, to arranging a service visit to fix a shower, to advising installers or contractors on some technical detail, to arranging a spare part to be sent out. Currently we handle calls, emails and social media.

## **How are you an employer of choice?**

Kohler Mira has great employer reputation across domestic and commercial markets with sites in Gloucestershire and Hull, as well as field based associates. The business provides a comprehensive benefits package including health care and pension scheme. Kohler Mira offers a competitive salary as well as an individual progression model for development. Associates at Kohler Mira are actively involved in four key areas or "pillars" of corporate social responsibility – Arts, Community, Environment and Workplace. Each of these four pillars are supported by a committee of volunteers within the business, and chaired by a member of the Executive board. Associates from Customer Services are actively involved in these committees, adding great value to the business.

## **Recruitment strategy**

Kohler Mira is an equal opportunities employer, seeking to attract, retain and develop the very best people, whilst ensuring a reflection of the diversity of the community in which the business operates. Kohler Mira has strong links and relationships with local recruitment agencies in order to find the best possible people for our vacant roles. Recognising that the recruitment process is adapting with the change in times and technology both social media, specifically LinkedIn, and word of mouth are harnessed to attract the best talent. Significantly, we recognise our employees as brand ambassadors and therefore we operate an associate referral policy so that we can reward our associates for attracting the best people to our business. We offer a monetary reward if a friend or family member is successfully employed by the company following an associate recommendation. We ensure that our new associates are of the highest calibre by operating a robust recruitment strategy, through a telephone interview and practical exercises. We also provide the candidate in-depth insight into the role itself, as well as communicating the vibrant atmosphere, and community culture which really defines the Kohler Mira Contact Centre.

## **Commitment to training and development**

Associates are at the heart of everything the business does and each associate is encouraged to be the very best version of themselves every single day. At Kohler Mira, we are not only dedicated to developing our associates, we are passionate about it. This is exemplified in our global system, Kohler Career Management, where each Contact Centre associate has a focused, individual development plan. This involves a fair and consistent appraisal of performance against the set goals and provides the ability to spot both learning and job opportunities globally across Kohler Co. As a Kohler Mira associate in the Contact Centre, you are encouraged to think about your training and development continually with the support of your manager. Our approach is well-structured using a 70, 20, 10 model: 70% of learning is on the job, 20% is working and learning with other associates and 10% is formal training. Last year, all the CSRs were encouraged to spend a day out with a Service Engineer visiting customers in their homes and seeing the type of problems the Field team manage. This year, every associate in the Contact Centre has been encouraged to spend at least one day in another area of the business in order to have greater

business exposure – this has a double benefit of generating ideas of better ways of working between departments as well as personal development.

Our training programme equips our Customer Services associates with the highest product and consumer knowledge, truly transferable skills, which enable them to move across the business. Learning the detail of over number 70 product SKUs, our associates have the in-depth knowledge to add value to any department. This is reflected in the wealth of successful development stories which we have in the Contact Centre. From secondment to permanent roles, our development success is recognised in many different ways.

There have been 2 successful secondment opportunities across areas of the business in Field Service Planning and Marketing. A notable development opportunity involved one of our Team Leaders visiting our global Head Office in the US last year, to visit the Contact Centre of our parent company, Kohler. There have also been successful moves from Customer Services to roles throughout the business; examples include an associate who joined us from a previous role as a hairdresser, joining the call centre team, progressing to team leader and then moving to become a Project Leader in NPD.

Conversely, talent from other areas of the business have moved across to Customer Services including Product Manager – Service, and Customer Services Manager both of whom previously working in our Marketing department. As well as opportunities to move laterally within the business, we have strong progression within our Customer Services department itself, including promotions last year for two of our Team Leaders, also allowing progression for one of our Customer Service Representatives to move into their first people management position as a Customer Service Team Leader.

As part of the induction program, all customer service representatives attend a 2 day Brand Ambassador training programme. The programme is designed to help new associates understand what it takes to be a world-class Customer Service Associate to both our internal and external customers. The training is made up of a variety of tasks from interactive presentations, to role-playing scenarios and best practise. The exercises and learning equip the associates to improve listening and questioning skills, understand the importance of engagement as a Brand Ambassador, and how important complaints are and how to deal with challenging customers. In order to strive for continuous improvement, refresher courses are run every 18 months to build on existing skills; this involves reviewing the team's progress and further developing skills and confidence to manage customer needs and concerns.

## **Great physical environment to work in**

More recently, the Contact Centre recognised the need to change and evolve the current working environment to improve the wellbeing and productivity of its associates. Over the last 18 months, huge changes have been made to the department to improve efficiency, engagement and profitability. A new management team was appointed and a more effective team structure was established. A significant office refurbishment was completed to create a clean, open working environment that meets the needs of the department. The open plan setup, was adjusted so that teams are positioned together and it's easy to navigate around the room. New 'break-out' areas were introduced, to allow for meetings or private areas to work, as well as a new kitchen area where associates can enjoy a change of scenery at lunchtime. Kohler Mira operates regular workplace assessments and offer occupational health options, including an on-site physio. Once an associate's needs have been assessed, and necessary specialist equipment will be purchased to ensure their health and safety needs are met, such as chairs and computer equipment. Each associate has a wireless headset, enabling them to walk around whilst on calls if preferred, and prevent them feeling tied to their desk! A couple of times a year, the entire team are treated to a 15 minute massage if they wish to relieve tension and aid relaxation.

## **How does your centre underpin the running of the overall business?**

The Kohler Mira Executive board believe in placing our associates at the heart of everything we do. The Contact Centre is crucial to this, as each Customer Service Representative is both a brand ambassador and the voice of our brand. In 2016, a Customer Services Forum was held, to facilitate greater understanding of roles and relationships between the Contact Centre and Service Engineers. The 2-day event featured talks from senior members from across the business, listening in on live calls and working with the planning team to better understand how service visits are planned. The event exemplifies the great focus that the business is giving to service, and how intrinsic the department is to our entire Kohler Mira brand offering. Furthermore, new starters from other areas of the business spend time in the Customer Services department, listening in on consumer phone calls, to gain greater insight into the business and learning directly from our brand ambassadors. The feedback from the event was outstanding...

*"I felt it was brilliant to put names to faces and feel we are more of a team instead of individual. I feel more involved in Mira." CSR*

*"I thought it was great and made me feel appreciated" CSR*

*"There was a great mix & atmosphere, it seemed to give everyone a big buzz. Thank you" CSR*

## **How the centre delivers world class service to its customers**

The Contact Centre restructured in late 2015 to accommodate for the changing customer needs. Teams now support different audiences; a Specialist Housing team dealing with specifiers and contractors. Our Customer Relations team deal with any escalations, serious incidents and respond to queries or complaints on social media, providing real-time responses. Another team focuses specifically on supporting our Rada brand; this team has high technical knowledge, dealing with a different clientele including hospitals and specification businesses. As our businesses have expanded into new product categories, including shower trays and enclosures, the contact centre has adapted, creating new teams to support these areas.

Abandoned rates have improved from March 2015 from 13.35% to a figure of 6.43% following our departmental restructure and the creation of a Resource Planner role. In January this year, we introduced a new customer satisfaction metric and started to monitor NPS. Our average score for Q1 this is 58. Since March 2014, Kohler Mira has been working with a fully integrated call booking system allowing our customers to book a fully committed service visit at their point of contact with our business. This is often the decision maker for the customer to work with us rather than a local plumber or installer and is therefore a critical service offering. To be able to deliver this service to our customers, four existing employees that had no previous experience of scheduling field resource learned a new system and new processes whilst ensuring the customer needs were always met. Despite the inevitable hiccups that come with a new system, the team persevered and we are now seeing the benefits both through personal development opportunities along with delivering consistent improvements in their KPI metrics.

## **What makes the centre an extraordinary place to work in?**

Put simply, our people. Our Kohler Mira associates show exemplary dedication to their work and our business and are true ambassadors. Our long-serving associates represent this best, with 32 current associates having over 5 years of service, up to our longest-serving associate at an impressive 20 years of service. In addition, over 90 Bravo awards have been awarded to our Customer Service representatives during the 3 year period that the scheme has been running; this is a testament to the commitment and dedication of our employees and their engagement with the business.



Our E-Team are a social committee, who arrange regular social events and activities – both in and outside of working hours. Previous events have included a bring and share lunch, walking groups and trips to the local theatre to support the amateur actors from the department. Plus, fundraising is a big focus with frequent bake sales and any excuse for the team to dress-up days, contributing to the business’s chosen charity.



Although without having visited the Contact Centre to experience the environment and experience it is difficult to convey, our engagement result speaks for itself. As Kohler Mira, we were awarded 1\* status from Best Companies. As a department in 2015 we achieved 2\* status as well as having several 3\* managers, a result which reflects how much our Customer Services associates enjoy their workplace. The engagement score showed a 6% increase from 2015 (the biggest growth within the business), a true reflection of both the structural and environment changes that have been implemented; more importantly still, a true reflection of the combined team effort that continues to enable the department to go from strength to strength.

**So why is Kohler Mira a worthy winner of the Contact Centre of the Year Award?**

As market leader in showering the service we provide sets us head and shoulders above our competitors. Continued investment in our environment, our people and our technologies gives us the opportunity to continue to evolve and ensure our customers can contact us via any channel they choose. That’s what makes us no 1.

## Customer Testimonials

Extracted from customer survey feedback:-

*coxxxx@btinternet.com*                      *The lady was very helpful, happy to want to help. A pleasure to do business with. Thank you.*

*mail@petexxxx.plus.com*                      *as long as other agents act the same as one I dealt with, then you cannot improve.*

*houxxxxxx@70torcavenue.net*                      *The representative was very helpful and found the cheapest way of fulfilling our requirements*

*johnnixon470@msn.com*                      *I am much impressed with the quality of your staff and your products.*

*phil@xxxx-with-xxxx.co.uk*                      *keep up the good work, the lady I spoke to is a credit to your company*

*rex.xxxxxxxx@btinternet.com*                      *Keep going as you are....you have excellent after sales service. A number of companies could learn from you...A lot out there are very poor at it.*

*simon.xxxxx@gmail.com*                      *I think the scores say it all. I was very impressed. Did not have to wait on the phone long. Service rep very friendly and helpful. Problem sorted easily, thanks.*