



Case Study - South West Trains

Engaging employees to deliver company values

South West Trains is Britain's busiest commuter railway, with over 5,000 staff delivering services across 207 stations for 143 million passenger journeys every year. The company's aim is to provide safe and high quality train services, and to steadily improve the quality of those services year on year. This is against a background of increasing passenger growth; indeed, since taking on the franchise South West Trains has run an additional 405 trains each week and added in excess of 12,000 additional peak time seats.

To support its drive to improve, the company has developed a set of core values to describe how its people should deliver excellent customer service. Developed through consultation with employees, the values were initially communicated to the organisation via the management team, thereby mitigating the risk of being viewed as "all words and no substance".

HarknessKennett were asked by Kelly Barlow, Employee Communications Manager to support the next phase of the values communication; to engage employees to deliver the values, ensuring that they become integral to how people do their jobs.

The first step was to assess employee views of the values and related communication, and to establish some baselines for assessment of future activities. A cross section of employees attended some discussion groups and shared views on their experiences to date.

The findings helped to set priorities for next steps, including enhancing the visual identity of the values and creating materials to support the next phase of communication. A key finding was that employees struggled to make the connection between the values and their daily jobs, so a core set of messages was developed to clearly position the values as the way the company would deliver its commitment to customer service.

With employee opinion survey results pointing to the need for greater recognition of employee efforts at work, the next activity was to design and launch a new scheme to encourage everyone to say "Thank you" to colleagues who have done a good job. A special card was made available to all South West Trains people, and guides for managers and employees developed to explain the new scheme.

"HarknessKennett has supported us with many different aspects of our values communication; from measurement and strategic communication to production of high impact materials to get our messages across.

"Our priority was to ensure that our focus on improving customer service through our values is not viewed as some 'flash in the pan initiative'. HarknessKennett's work has helped ensure that our values have become part of everyday life at South West Trains."

Client Verdict