



Engaging the staff in a long term programme yields dividends

Client: Hong Kong Transport Department

Sector: Airlines, Travel and Hospitality

Service: Employee Engagement

The Client

Edgecumbe's relationship with the HKTD dates back to 1998. The department is responsible for the planning and provision of public transport in Hong Kong and has an outstanding record of providing world class transportation in a densely populated area.

In 1998 the Commissioner for Transport and his management team set out on an ambitious programme to improve the morale and motivation of their 1100 staff. Edgecumbe were proud to be their partners in the programme, and the relationship continues to this day.

Edgecumbe's Contribution

The management team recognised that the key to their success was in creating a culture where people felt inclined to give their best - to go the extra mile. We started by designing and running an annual staff opinion survey to get a clear understanding of what it was like to work for the Transport Department. But we wanted to know more than that; we wanted to understand what was important to them. This first survey provided a wealth of information, which we further enhanced in discussion groups.

We then met with the senior management group to help them to make sense of the data and to decide what to do about it. The group decided on a series of interventions or initiatives that were to be introduced through out all parts of the department. These initiatives were well publicised amongst all the staff and it was made clear that this was a response to the survey.

Each year, the survey helps identify the dominant HR theme for the year ahead and guides the management team in its execution. Over the years, these themes have formed a coherent programme of action and development, and have been given titles appropriate to Hong Kong. Themes have included: vision and values ('dream tree'), customer service ('putting our hearts into it'), managing and leading staff ('listening with our hearts'), and the like. At each stage, a development initiative for the managers ran in parallel so that they felt able to support the staff themes fully. A full programme of internal communication supported the development initiatives and the whole project has become a normal part of leading the Transport Department.

Regular staff surveys continued to maintain the dialogue with staff. They also monitor and measure progress with the programme and explore issues of importance, when required, in more detail.

The Outcome

The programme has been a huge success for the department. Despite a number of adverse factors during the course of the programme, such as economic downturn in Hong Kong (that led to two wage freezes), 9/11, and SARS, the morale within the department steadily improved along with its performance. The engagement of the staff is widely recognised to have been a key to that success.