



Case Study: Out in Front at Intercontinental Hotels Group

The Client

Intercontinental Hotels Group is an international hotel company whose goal is to create Great Hotels Guests Love. There are nine hotel brands in the group with 4,600 hotels in nearly 100 countries.

The Situation

IHG recently rebranded their Holiday Inn hotels and after listening to feedback from their guests they created a new set of service behaviours. Their training failed to embed the new service behaviours. In a hierarchical structure and with 26 objectives senior managers had become focused on managing costs and reporting on objectives. Many had lost confidence in getting out in front of their teams and hotel guests. A new executive leadership team decided to embark on a journey in the UK & Ireland to **develop a more customer centric culture and to create one of the greatest places to work**. To achieve this they knew that they needed great leaders who could inspire their people to bring their brand experience to life, day after day. They created just four key objectives with 60% of the focus on the guest experience and employee engagement and then asked Inspired Experiences to help them to embed the new behaviours and to get their operational managers engaged in a programme to lead from the front and **to energise and coach their teams**.

What We Did

We began by immersing ourselves in the world of IHG because we knew that there were a number of programmes and initiatives taking place; we felt that it was important to understand how to best align anything we designed to other programmes and initiatives. We also wanted to ensure a sense of continuity rather than what might be seen as 'more initiatives and work'. It was also important to identify and involve key stakeholders, outline the extent of change required, and identify key issues that needed to be addressed by the programme to achieve tangible business benefits. It also enabled us to pre-empt resistance and barriers to success. At the end of the immersion exercise we produced a report outlining key elements to consider in the design of a development programme for 6500 management and staff.

Then we designed a programme to build the confidence of leaders to lead from the front, model the behaviours and coach their teams. As research tells us that it is more difficult to implement coaching in a hierarchical organisation it was important that the design of any intervention helped senior managers to understand how coaching would support both key business objectives and delivery of their departmental objectives.

We started the programme with an event attended by all senior managers to ensure that they were really clear on the compelling argument for developing and delivering a guest experience that guests

love and that that they had a clearer understanding of the role that leaders at all levels have in leading and inspiring their teams. This included developing an understanding of the **Service ProfitChain**– recognising the importance of **leadership, communication and employee engagement** in creating a model for customer focused behaviour and supporting their teams through change.

Senior managers then co-facilitated the coaching module of the programme with an Inspired Experiences lead coach to demonstrate the commitment to coaching.

We agreed to focus on one part of the guest experience and developed a touch-point map to use in workshops where we practised bringing the new service behaviours to life at the different touch-points. Staff and managers attended these workshops which were co-facilitated initially by an Inspired Experiences facilitator and an internal facilitator until the internal facilitators were trained and confident to deliver them themselves.

We simultaneously developed bespoke coaching workshops for all leaders to develop their coaching skills. These workshops were designed to focus on practise of real scenarios and interweaved with theory and reflection. After delivering these workshops to ten groups of managers a small group of internal trainers were trained to continue delivery of the workshops and implement an accreditations process.

We also ran workshops to embed the new service behaviours for all staff. We knew that there was resistance to role-plays so it was important that we fostered an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect and encouraged supportiveness. We gave everyone a coaching experience during the workshops and told them to expect more coaching from their managers.

The Results

A 7% increase in customer satisfaction ratings.

A 3% increase in employee engagement rating.

IHG won The Sunday Times Employer Special Training Award for the programme.

Julie, I just wanted to say a big personal thank you for what a great job you have done in launching the Out in Front workshop – the event at Coventry was fantastic!

Zareena Brown

VP HR for UK & Ireland