

Customer Service
Development Programme

Office of Fair Trading

Introduction

Diane Bailey Associates (DBA) is working with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) to develop and deliver a Customer Service Development Programme (CSDP) for the whole of the Operations Team. The Programme was undertaken by nearly 70 staff from Human Resources (HR), Finance (FIN), Facilities Management (FM) and Information Technology (IT) throughout Spring 2007.

DBA is currently nearing completion of a Customer Service Support Programme, working with all managers, including the Chief Operating Officer (COO) to drive forward action plans and sustainable development.

Background

The OFT a government department (non-ministerial), has been in a period of significant change. A new senior management team is in place and OFT has taken on significant new responsibilities. The work and staff profile, means it is more like a professional organisation than a Whitehall Department.

The OFT employs some 750 people comprising lawyers, economists, statisticians, financial analysts and managers/administrators. There is an Operations Division in addition to the business units.

Since August 2005 the service provision teams of the OFT have been situated in the Operations section, under the overall management of the COO. In the late 2005 a staff survey focusing on service delivery by Operations staff was carried out. The results of this survey have been used by Operations to look at ways of working and of improving the standard of service delivery for both internal and external customers.

In March 2006 it was announced that the OFT would undergo a change programme which would impact on both the structure and culture of the OFT. The change programme revised structure and new ways of working were implemented in October 2006.

The Training Need

The OFT were seeking a training provider to deliver a customer service programme which would provide tips and techniques on service delivery. As an Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Catalyst training provider, DBA tendered for and was successful in the award of the contract.

A customer service programme was required which would:

- recognise and take into account the previous experience of currently serving staff
- be attended/participated in by all Operations staff at some level

- cover grade bands from administrative and management up to and including team leaders and senior managers.
- train up to 60 operations staff
- deliver in spring 2007
- be run for groups of 10-15 delegates from mixed teams and across grades
- be based on either a one day programme or two half day sessions.

Success Criteria

Four required outcomes were identified. These were that OFT Operations staff would:

- have better understanding of their customers – both internal and external – how best to meet their needs
- be more customer-focused, and work more collaboratively and supportively with Operations colleagues to best meet customer and business needs
- be perceived as professionals in customer service provision
- be better able to communicate what service, and how, would be available to customers.

The success of the programme was to be gauged by:

- positive feedback from participants
- team leaders' confidence in the ability of their staff to provide the services required by customers
- Operations staff being equipped and able to deal with customer requests in a professional manner
- positive customer and colleague feedback on service provision
- customers (both internal and external) reporting that they received a professional and co-ordinated service from Operations staff
- Chief Operating Officer considering that communication both within Operations and with the rest of OFT had improved.

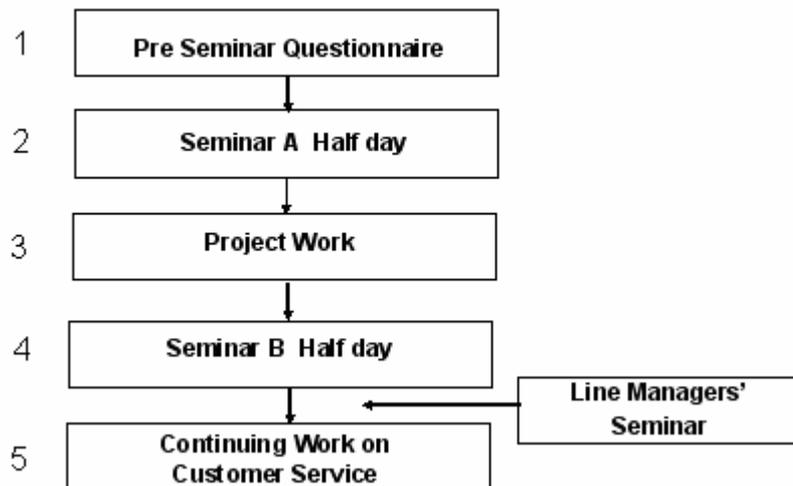
DBA suggested further success criteria and these were agreed as:

- take into account other changes effected in the OFT
- recognise that for some individuals there may be a level of discomfort involved in the changes to their work/culture/circumstances
- emphasise that effective customer service and service provision is as much about attitude and mental-set as it is about tools and techniques
- equip managers to support the transfer of their own learning and that of their staff to the workplace
- be capable of being sustained once DBA had withdrawn (for new entrants and newly appointed managers)
- involve the group in identifying what needs to be done/changed
- help managers and staff identify and work out specific actions and changes which need to be made to move service, internal and external, from the current state to the required state
- emphasise necessary and appropriate behaviours

- assist OFT Operation's staff to develop a group view of effective service provision.

Approach to the Customer Service Development Programme

OFT Customer Service Development Programme



Stage 1 – Participants were asked to complete a pre-seminar questionnaire and to return it directly to DBA before they attended Seminar A. The information obtained was used to:

- identify their understanding of their customers' needs and expectations
- highlight best practice or areas for improvement
- gather ideas for project work
- obtain personal learning objectives for the overall programme
- inform the content of the Line Managers' Seminar.

Stage 2 – Seminar A objectives – on completion of this first half day seminar, participants would be able to:

- describe the importance of effective service provision to OFT
- state their personal responsibilities for service provision
- explain the importance of effective internal customer service
- list key customer groups, internal and external and their general expectations and needs
- identify their customer service project.

Stage 3 – All participants completed a project as part of the CSDP. The purpose of the project was to focus their minds on real areas of need or improvement. A list of potential projects was published along with guidance and a suggested timescale of one day in total.

Stage 4 – Seminar B included:

- reporting back on project work, sharing best practice, identifying next steps and evaluating progress and/or outcomes
- developing customer service standards

- action planning for continuing customer service development and transfer of learning.

Stage 5 – Line Managers’ Seminar and Continuing Work on Customer Service:

- in addition to taking an equal part in the CSDP by attending both Seminars and carrying out their project, line managers also attended a further one day seminar/workshop
- the aim of the workshop was to “equip line managers to manage and monitor transfer of learning and support the integration of the changes to customer service”
- participants of the CSDP highlighted several areas where continuing work on customer service would prove most effective. DBA are currently working with OT to achieve these requirements in the following ways:
 1. Developing an OFT wide action plan for continuous customer service improvement
 2. Facilitating team leader workshops offering Coaching, Time Management, Assertiveness and Customer Service Skills for further development
 3. Consulting with the COO to develop and implement an Annual User Survey with their customers
 4. Supporting the newly identified role of Customer Service Champion
 5. Agreeing customer service objectives in Appraisal.

Logistics and Delivery

DBA worked closely with staff at all grades including the Chief Operating Officer, Senior Management Team, team leaders, staff and support personnel to clarify real needs and design a successful solution.

We delivered a total of 14 half day seminars to nearly 70 staff. Each of the two required seminars was delivered by the same DBA trainer to ensure consistency, understanding of each group’s needs and support for participants’ project work.

Seminars were delivered using a blend of learning methods including:

- Tutorial
- Group work
- Self-study
- Assessment questionnaire
- Action planning
- Discussions.

All supporting materials (slides, wall laminates, handouts, project briefs) were designed as self –instruction to ensure re-usability.

Evaluation

The CSDP success criteria were agreed in advance between the OFT and DBA. Various methods were used to validate the learning and undertake formative and summative evaluation including:

- Pre-seminar questionnaire
- Seminar A – formative evaluation using a template with key questions
- Learning Logs
- Seminar B – measuring project progress, content for Line Managers' Seminar and identification of further training needs, including an evaluation questionnaire and project report (summative evaluation)
- Chief Operating Officer feedback report.

Further evaluation of the CSDP will take place:

- during appraisal
- findings from the Annual User Survey
- customer complaint statistics
- three to six month evaluation by participants.

Results/Outcomes

Following Seminar B, participants were asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire. Feedback was excellent and two key results are shown here, based on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest):

- 92% rated the achievement of the CSDP objectives as seven or above.
- 96% rated the Tutor's delivery contribution to personal learning and their knowledge of the subject as seven or above (many stating 10).

Valerie Orr
DBA Associate
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