

Thursday, 08 March 2007

**Re: Clearer Thoughts Training programme for Littlewoods Shop Direct Group
Facilities Management**

LSDG has successfully worked with Clearer Thoughts for a number of years and they have a reputation within the organisation for high quality training and good customer service towards clients. Consequently, I turned to them when we decided to carry out a programme of staff development within my department.

The purpose of the programme was threefold: to enhance job-related skills, to build confidence and to offer staff the opportunity for personal development.

Phase 1 from December 2005 to January 2006 was the rollout of Customer Care training for the whole department. Facilities Management is responsible for the safe and effective running of the organisation's buildings and facilities. Some tasks are carried out in-house, others sub-contracted and the department handles all queries and deals with all events regarding facilities. My staff, therefore, have operational, commissioning, monitoring and customer services roles. I wanted to ensure that there was a common approach to customer service, applied equally to internal and external parties across all elements of their jobs.

Clearer Thoughts devised a programme which combined their usual Customer Care modules with specific features centred on our own policies, procedures and standards. No charge was made for this tailoring process. Delegate feedback showed a high appreciation of the training - almost 90% rated all aspects as Excellent, the rest as Good. Following completion of this training, Clearer Thoughts offered a review meeting at which we discussed issues arising from the training covering both general departmental matters and specific questions relating to staff. I found their feedback to be insightful and helpful.

Phase 2 from November 2006 to February 2007 was principally concerned with the development of IT skills. The department included staff with a wide range of individual experience from those who had never used a computer at all to those who were already highly skilled in some applications. We established at the planning stage that the overall objective was to get all staff to a general level of computer literacy such that they could use Windows, Outlook and at least one application to a basic level. Specific goals were also established for particular individuals in particular applications.

Clearer Thoughts then undertook the analysis of existing skills based on their own Training Needs Analysis system. In this, potential delegates are asked to rate themselves in each topic of each application. Based on the information collected, Clearer Thoughts then divided the delegates into groups of similar experience, recommending accelerated training for some and adjusting content as relevant for each group. Again the feedback was excellent.

We found Clearer Thoughts very responsive to any issues that were raised and training was adjusted where necessary. They coped easily and without fuss with changes of dates, delegates and locations

The programme proved more successful even than anticipated in that staff visibly gained in confidence and authority as well as technical skills. Amongst other side effects has been an improvement in team work and group adhesion. At the post-programme review meeting Clearer Thoughts produced statistical analysis of all aspects of the programme and were able to discuss individuals with regard to their personal as well as technical skills. This programme has helped to identify individuals with further potential, who we will be developing going forward.

Phase 3 will start in May 2007 and will largely comprise further management training, together with Customer Service for those who have joined the department since Phase 1 and some advanced IT training.

Overall, we have found Clearer Thoughts friendly, responsive, highly effective and efficient. As an organisation they display clear pride in their work and a desire to help the client organisation develop its staff.