

Best Managed Workplaces in Wales

2003



Cyngor Rheolaeth Cymru
Wales Management Council



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The Wales Management Council is an employer-led body funded by the Welsh Assembly Government to promote the development of managers in the private, public and voluntary sectors in Wales.

The Wales Management Council aims to inspire, motivate and drive change in the perception, delivery, take-up and funding of management and leadership development in Wales.

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Best Managed Workplaces in Wales 2003

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FOREWORD

The Wales Management Council promotes excellence in management and leadership across Wales by sharing best practice, stimulating debate, identifying management development needs, and promoting the key messages contained in our recent report Management and Leadership Development and Training in Wales – An Agenda for Action.

One of these messages is that we should do more to identify and celebrate excellent managers and excellence in management.

In Wales 98% of all businesses have under 20 staff, and current research has clearly identified that for small businesses learning from each other and sharing best practice is one of the most effective routes to the development of both managers and their business.

We wanted to find real exemplars of good management practice from organisations in the private, public and not-for-profit sector that would be an inspiration and a benchmark for others.

We were therefore delighted to collaborate with University of Wales Bangor who initiated the idea of a survey to find the Best Managed Workplaces in Wales.

The project is the first of its kind, and in future years we hope to see greater numbers of companies taking part.

Over time we will therefore be able identify and celebrate more and more companies that are exemplars of good management in Wales, not just in the opinion of the managers themselves, but validated by each manager's greatest critics, their own employees.

Wales Management Council

October 2003

INTRODUCTION

As the business guru Peter Drucker once famously stated, “So much of what we call management consists in making it difficult for people to work”.

For many managers, the essence of developing their organisation within today’s increasingly competitive market-place is ensuring that their most valuable resource, namely their employees, can contribute effectively to achieving their strategic and operational goals. Today, every organisation in the private, public, voluntary or government sectors of the economy recognises that without developing and encouraging its workforce, it will not succeed. As a result, a range of human resource management practices, such as homeworking, empowerment and 360-degree evaluations, are becoming increasingly prevalent in the day-to-day operations of many organisations as they try to maximise the potential of their staff.

The Wales Management Council and the Centre for Enterprise and Regional Development at the University of Wales Bangor have collaborated to conduct a research exercise to find exemplars of these good management practices in Wales.

The research was undertaken in two stages. First, a questionnaire was sent out to over six hundred organisations in Wales within the private, public, voluntary, education and government sectors. The questionnaire acted as a filter to identify those organisations to be chosen for a more detailed interview in the second stage. Following a scoring exercise, a number of organisations were chosen to be interviewed in greater detail. The interviews lasted an average of around one and a half hours and were supplemented by documentation supplied by the participating organisation.

The initial questionnaire and the interview focused on various key areas related to working practices within each organisation including:

- **Organisational background:** numbers employed by organisation; number of women employed; number who have worked for organisation for over five years; proportion of turnover spent on training; proportion of training budget spent on management development
- **Organisational policy:** staff appraisals; regular departmental meetings; detailed job descriptions for staff; quality assurance strategies; energy efficiency policies; health and safety policies; homeworking policies; staff suggestion schemes; first name policy for staff; staff attitude surveys
- **Flexible working:** job sharing; rewarding outstanding performance; flexitime operation; contributions to personal pension plans; compassionate leave and ‘duvet’ days; holiday entitlement; reward and recognition schemes for staff
- **Equal opportunities:** policy; crèche facilities; kindergarten facilities during school holidays; benefits to new parents; maternity leave
- **Management development:** evaluation and impact on performance; mechanisms for identifying leadership potential; mentoring programmes for managers; team building exercises; progress meetings; Investor in People status; quality management systems; resources devoted to management development training.

From this research we have identified ten case studies to highlight the “good employment practice” that makes a difference to the workplace. This good practice includes:

- suggestion schemes
- ethnic and religious sensitivity policies
- family and friendly policies
- homeworking
- mentoring
- motivation of employees
- performance and development planning
- probation process
- recognition of staff achievements
- staff development training policy.

This study has identified those exemplars within the Welsh economy – the best managed workplaces – that value their employees and, subsequently, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their organisation. Contrary to Drucker’s prediction, they have succeeded in creating places where it is easy, rather than difficult, for people to work, and are making a real difference to their day-to-day operations and long term strategic development.



ACEN

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- Acen is a company that trades and manages bilingually and all employees are offered bilingual training. As the firm draws on staff from all communities - Welsh, Somali, Israeli, Chinese, Afghan, Greek and Jamaican – the philosophy and strategy of the firm concentrates on getting everyone to work towards a common aim which respects different approaches.

INTRODUCTION

- Acen was originally established by S4C in 1989 as a six month project to teach Welsh to adults through a new series called 'Now You're Talking'. Today, Acen is a limited company in its own right and currently employs sixty three people across five departments namely design, technology, research, administration and language unit. The company motto is "Yn gwasanaethu dysgwyr y Gymraeg" or "Serving Welsh learners".

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- Staff appraisals are undertaken annually although, in exceptional circumstances, these can be more frequent depending on the manager's discretion and any personnel problems.
- The appraisal covers an in-depth account of how the employee is developing within their position, looking closely at their job description, establishing whether targets are being met and examining the opportunity for a salary regrading. The appraisals take place on a one-to-one basis between individual employee and their immediate line manager. Negative issues - such as problems with punctuality and high levels of absence due to illness - might be discussed if necessary.
- To assess the quality of management within Acen, each department is monitored to establish whether there are any management issues. These issues are initially assessed by establishing whether departmental deadlines are being met. Training is offered to staff members in large groups and, wherever possible, a manager accompanies them to gain an understanding of the elements of various practices - such as customer care – to be undertaken by departmental staff.
- At Acen, there is an open door policy which welcomes new ideas - whether it is to introduce a new piece of software to the company to enhance performance or to organise a social event. There is no survey to assess staff attitude in the usual structured way where staff have to tick boxes which is thought to restrict individuals' views. Instead, the company relies on an open door policy and the appraisal system as the most effective way possible of gauging employee opinion.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND REWARDS

- Although there is no formal job sharing policy at Acen, the company regards itself as sympathetic and flexible to the individual's personal needs. The company has a flexi-time policy where staff have to be in the office between the hours of 9.30am and 3.30pm and are expected to work a thirty seven hour week. Staff have a swipe card to log in and out and attention is drawn to those individuals who overwork (or underwork) more than eleven hours every month (unless major projects are underway or staff are attending events such as the National Eisteddfod). Only reception staff have set hours as the main desk has to be manned during traditional office hours.
- Acen has a bonus scheme which is awarded on an individual basis. This scheme is awarded to members of staff who have shown an extremely high level of competency and have given 110% in motivation towards a specific task. Five members of staff had a bonus this year.
- It is not just financial rewards that employees receive. For example, one employee had shown an interest in teaching and has observed several classes before moving on to teaching a class of his own. Employees and their families are also invited to the launch of projects.
- There is also a company contribution to the annual Christmas party and a carol service is held every year. However, Acen accommodates people of all religions by observing holidays and celebrations of the Christian, Moslem and Jewish faith as well as Chinese customary holidays.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- As long as staff communicate fully their particular family or personal circumstances, Acen will try to accommodate those needs.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Acen measures the impact of management development on the impact of performance via board meetings and whether or not financial and progress targets are being met.
- Although there is no formal mechanism for identifying leadership potential, a re-grading system that is used within the context of appraisal meetings works effectively. This essentially ascertains whether those individuals that show potential are interested in pursuing a career at Acen and, from this, training interventions are discussed which can help them develop into their proposed managerial positions.
- All staff are made to feel valuable to the company through invitations to the launch of new products. There are also opportunities for teams to be mentioned within in-house media. There are regular progress meetings between department heads and employees who are working on particular projects or products. This ensures that everybody understands whether targets are being met and how this fits into the company's main agenda of progress targets.
- The systems in place to assess the quality of management are at board level which consists of trustees and the managing director.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE – ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS SENSITIVITY

- Acen is an organisation which promotes the Welsh language, but it is unique in having a flexible policy regarding its employees' family, cultural and religious background. For example, those of the Moslem faith have their own prayer room situated in the warehouse where they can pray for 10 minutes 3-4 times a day.
- Religious festivals are also catered for even if people have already used up their holiday - they can still receive the day off without pay to ensure they do not miss the celebrations. For example, when the Moslem members of staff celebrate Ramadan they are not allowed to eat in daylight hours. As a result leniency is given to this specific period of time.

EMPLOYEES' OPINION

Key points mentioned by employees were:

- learning and training opportunities
- approachable managers
- religious sensitivity
- family friendly policies
- flexible working.

Information for this report was gathered by interviewing Elen Rhys, Director of Acen and Jamashad Khan who works in the warehouse. Information was taken from policy documents and Acen website www.acen.co.uk



ADMIRAL

ADMIRAL INSURANCE

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- Admiral listens to its people in developing potential and is innovative in its approach in creating a friendly, supportive and exciting environment for its employees. With a majority of its staff being under 30, Admiral believes it can develop from strength to strength as a large organisation that still possesses the enthusiastic atmosphere of a small start-up.

INTRODUCTION

- Admiral was launched in 1993 in Cardiff as an insurance company whose main aim was to offer lower premiums to more people. It now specialises in providing low cost car insurance for younger drivers, people living in cities and those driving performance cars. It employs over fourteen hundred people and has over 700,000 customers across five different brands, namely Admiral, Gladiator, Diamond, Bell Direct and the internet based Elephant.co.uk.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- Staff appraisal – known as performance review - is undertaken annually. Whilst the initial form was complex requiring eight to nine pages of information to be submitted, this has been reviewed.
- The performance review document is now a more manageable couple of pages addressing the key issues of the role of the individual within the organisation and focusing on performance and behaviour since the last review meeting and objectives for the future.
- The main aim of the performance review is to enable staff to review past performance, highlight any training needs or development areas and identify new goals and objectives for the next year. Two weeks prior to the meeting with the appropriate line manager, the employee is given the performance review document along with the necessary guidelines for completion.
- Normally lasting an hour, the Performance Review meeting between the line manager and the employee is structured to concentrate on four key aspects, namely a review of performance and attitudes; evaluation of skills against 'core competencies', identification of any development and training needs; and setting of new objectives. The employee is also encouraged to discuss any other issues that impact on performance and agreement is reached as to the extra skills or responsibilities that the employee needs to acquire to improve their performance (as well as the timescale to achieve them). After, the meeting, the line manager will complete the form and add the relevant evidence to support his/her rating.

- Managers within the organisation encourage the use of e-mail and the intranet for staff suggestions, many of which seem to be for small incremental improvements to the operation of the organisation. For example, one member of staff suggested the introduction of a standard message to the 'hold' music on the telephone system, which would ask the policyholder to have their policy number ready. The aim being to save time and reduce stress on staff when the call centres are busy. If suggestions are not taken forward, then staff are provided with a comprehensive feedback as to why this is the case. The best ideas are put forward for the 'Suggestion of the Quarter' and the staff forum vote for the top three, which then receive prizes of £75, £50 and £25 respectively.
- Whilst there is a 'staff forum' for employees' concerns and issues, senior managers also sit with staff on a monthly basis to try and find out what their concerns are about the organisation and its management. There is also an annual staff general meeting where senior managers make presentations to all staff about how the company is performing and its strategic direction for the future, as well as regular events including quarterly updates between senior managers.
- The company has a 'speak up' form on the intranet where staff can pose questions, comments or criticisms anonymously to management with the further option of discussing this matter personally with a manager. There are also regular 'tea-parties' between the chief executive and half-a-dozen members of staff around the company to discuss current issues and give staff the opportunity to speak their mind directly to the head of the firm.
- There are numerous surveys carried out within the organisation on a monthly and annual basis. Whilst key issues are repeated regularly within the annual study, more specific issues are examined within the monthly staff surveys. For example, a recent survey examined the continuing damage to company property and consulted staff whether the costs for repairing such damage should be taken from the staff profit share.
- Admiral has a 'Ministry of Fun' that rotates around departments and enables people to tailor the type of fun they have in the workplace.
- In 1998, the chief executive of Admiral – Henry Engelhardt – set up a fund called 'Henry's Pot' which provides funding to local teams and organisations in which employees' and their families are involved. The company also heavily subsidises company parties, allows employees to choose their own dress code, provides staff with time off to do voluntary work, arranges a monthly visit from a mortgage advisor (and a head masseur) and has negotiated deals from financial services and holiday companies for its staff.
- Admiral has not yet qualified for Investors in People but a lot of the processes and infrastructure are already in place for the award. It was felt that iP was not the way forward for the company at the time but may be reconsidered in the future.

FLEXIBLE WORKING

- As a call centre operation, flexible working is at the heart of the working practices of the organisation and, as a result, the organisation will tend to work around the requirements of the individual. If staff want to change hours, they are able to do so easily and if there are any issues, then a compromise is reached or a trial period is tried out. As the company is open seven days a week, nearly all work patterns can be catered for and hours and shifts can be swapped and changed - some prefer to work evenings, others prefer to work at weekends.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Admiral gives out BusyBee Nursery childcare vouchers for local nurseries and this is open to all employees. However, it is the experience of the company that flexitime enables employees to use family and friends to support any childcare needs. The company did consider a crèche given the number of staff within the centre but it was very expensive and there were logistical issues surrounding a city centre location. There are few childcare issues within the organisation and the absence of a crèche is not a big issue amongst employees.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- There is a structured team management training programme within Admiral that begins during the probation period when an employee joins the firm, with the majority of training undertaken in-house although specialist areas are taught by external trainers. All internal trainers are CIPD accredited.
- The company pays the costs of undertaking professional qualifications and there is also time-off for employees to participate in such courses. Admiral also has several Open Learning Centres and Learning Library which are dedicated study rooms with PCs and online and printed material.
- In addition, qualifications become important organisationally as promotion is largely based on the skills that people have and their relevance to the organisation. Therefore, employees are encouraged through a range of professional qualifications (CIPD, MBA, CIM, CTP) which are available to everyone within the organisation. There is also an internal programme for call centre advisors – the Admiral Group Personal Development Programme – where financial rewards are offered on reaching levels three and four.
- In identifying leadership potential, the organisation relies on an annual performance review scheme. Personal advancement relies very much on feedback and there is an opportunity for further development of all staff if they want it. Indeed, all senior managers have 'come up through the ranks' within the various divisions of Admiral. All positions are advertised internally before going out to external advertisement.
- The development of teams is part of the Admiral philosophy and all call centre teams consist of around 10-12 people with a team manager as leader. Each department runs regular team meetings where the monthly Admiral Group Briefing is discussed and its relevance to that particular team. There are various formal and informal competitions between the teams and the company provides 'fun money' to enable teams to develop closer working relationships. The company largely relies on the team managers to develop the different teams within the organisation. There is also an annual 'Managers' away day' to bring different parts of the organisation together – this year, the managers had an away day at the Sherman theatre in Cardiff where they had to work together to put on a show.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE – RECOGNITION OF STAFF

- All salaries and other payments are based on performance within the company and there are regular salary reviews for staff. In addition, the firm operates a staff profit share scheme that is based on length of service only. There are also incentives such as one-off bonus payments, incentive budgets, vouchers, five year and ten year long service awards. Outstanding performance recognised by a customer is rewarded through the “Wow factor”, where one employee is chosen every month as the leading worker in the organisation. Their accomplishment is highlighted in ‘Compass’, the company’s in-house magazine, which is also used to highlight promotions, staff who exceed sales targets and personal events such as birthdays.
- Admiral encourages all of their different brands to develop their own recognition and award schemes. Departmental managers and directors nominate the recipients of the awards, who receive an individual plaque and have their name added to the ‘role of honour’ on the company plaque. In addition, the departmental managers are asked, three times a year, to choose one member of staff who deserves special recognition to go out for a ‘star lunch’ with the chief executive.
- There are various competitions across the company to recognise staff. For example, improver of the month where a prize is awarded to the employee whose performance has improved due to hard work or additional training. Teams are also allocated ‘fun money’ of £30/month for day-to-day competitions, which are valued (and beneficial) within a sales culture such as Admiral. There are also monthly competitions for teams with a prize for excelling monthly targets – usually a day out for the team such as go-karting, meal out and paintballing.

EMPLOYEES’ OPINION

Key points mentioned by employees were:

- meetings with managers
- staff recognition competitions
- ‘fun money’
- open friendly atmosphere
- team working
- talent is recognised and valued.

Information for this report was gathered by interviewing Louisa Scadden (Communications Manager) and Richard Thorne (Operations Manager, People Services) and from various organisational policy documentation.



ALLEVARD SPRINGS Ltd.

ALLEVARD SPRINGS LIMITED

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- Allevard Springs works in the automotive supply industry and is located within a deprived area. The firm is considered by the local community as an excellent employer, provides a good salary structure for all the employees, and has specific overall company policy for motivating its employees.

INTRODUCTION

- Allevard Springs manufactures coil suspension springs for all vehicles and supplies stock to the automotive industry. Originally founded as the Bramber Engineering Company by the Isaacs family in 1914, it is now a subsidiary of Allevard Ressorts Automobile, a major European automotive spring group.
- Based in Clydach Vale, Allevard Springs currently employs ninety-nine people and has exceptionally low staff turnover with eighty three employees having worked at the plant for over five years.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- As a company, Allevard relies heavily on staff appraisals for the development of individuals and the organisation, with changes linked directly to the result of appraisal meetings. Every employee undertakes an appraisal - from shop floor to the senior management team – and these occur annually on a one-to-one basis between the individual employee and the appropriate line manager.
- Each appraisal considers issues such as the annual achievements of the individual, goals for the forthcoming year, identification of training needs and how these are to be achieved.
- Different progress meetings are also held within the company (on a daily, weekly and monthly basis) to examine the working processes of the firm and to ascertain work quality and whether deadlines are being met.
- Kaizen teams have been established throughout the plant. Each team consists of up to six employees and includes at least one manager and one engineer. The role of each team is to discuss new ideas which can make the company more effective. Teams compete against each other for the best idea, with the best being given the opportunity to go to a sister company in France or Germany to present their idea.
- Staff always have an opportunity to give opinions and ideas on how to make the company more efficient. There is also an annual staff attitude survey which discusses key areas such as quality, working conditions, information/communication and work relations.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND REWARDS

- There is no job sharing at Allevard Springs and employees work across five shift patterns namely Morning (0515-1420), Afternoon (1305-2300), Night (1900-0630), Split shift (1000-1800) and long day working (0730-1700). However, an individual can only work the maximum eight and a half hours per shift.
- The plant has an annual bonus scheme for attendance of £200 for any worker that takes no days off (other than for annual leave).
- Staff also have a chance to receive a bonus if, at their annual appraisal, the line manager considers that they have worked to best of their ability.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Allevard Springs Ltd is an equal opportunities employer and everyone has the opportunity to train for the improvement of his or her career. Five women work at the plant although the company does not have a crèche as there is no real demand for this.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- In 1998, Allevard Springs Ltd was awarded Investors in People status which encouraged the company to implement an appraisal system to monitor people.
- 0.05% of the annual budget is spent on training, with 60% of this is spent on management training. Managers are given plenty of opportunity to train as long as it benefits the company.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE – MOTIVATION OF EMPLOYEES POLICY

- Allevard Springs has an overall written policy regarding the motivation of employees at its plant which benefits the development of the business and the future success of the organisation. This 'motivation' policy encompasses a number of key areas.
- There is a personal annual appraisal for all employees with key training objectives set and training opportunities are open to all staff. All staff are encouraged to develop their activities and operate in an empowered manner and there is a quarterly pay bonus if targets are met, as well as an annual pay bonus for acceptable attendance levels.
- There are clear objectives established for the firm within the 'Continuous Improvement Programme and Quality Policy' and all personnel are fully involved and encouraged to participate in the continuous improvement activities of the firm. There is a quarterly feedback for continuous improvement targets by senior management and, annually, one continuous improvement team is selected to present their project to the main group.
- An important part of the motivation of employees within the firm is the belief that everyone has a voice. This is mainly achieved through the staff satisfaction questionnaire and the fact that suggestions for continuous improvement, which drives the competitive nature of the organisation, are open to every member of staff.

EMPLOYEES' OPINION

Key points mentioned by employees were:

- pension scheme
- attendance bonus
- quarterly bonus linked to targets
- training opportunities
- approachable managers
- appraisal system.

Information for this report was gathered by interviewing Perry Stephens (Management Services Manager), Byron Adams (shop steward) and Peter Lane (Team Leader Process Technician) and from organisational policy documentation.



CONCEPTS WALES LIMITED

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- Concepts Wales, despite being an SME, aims to offer the same levels of investment and development in its team as large corporates do. The whole team – not just the Managing Director - is committed to taking the company forward. Major company decisions are made together with everyone's suggestion and opinions carefully considered. Whilst Concepts is managed by quality processes and procedures, its greatest asset is the people.

INTRODUCTION

- Concepts Wales Ltd. is an established people development organisation focusing on IT, Personal Development and Management Development. As well as helping organisations to develop their staff through training programmes, Concepts provides a comprehensive consultancy service to businesses of all sizes.
- It offers an excellent standard of service in training, recognised in South Wales for its cost effectiveness and focus on educating the businessperson with new skills and knowledge that may be implemented effectively in the workplace. Its aims are to 'understand, acknowledge and help individuals to exceed their goals and achieve their potential, by providing an environment that enhances the learning experience'.
- Concepts is a small business employing twelve people, five of whom have worked at the company for over five years. It spends 10% of its annual budget on training with half of this spent on management training.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- In January and February of each year, the managing director and appropriate line manager give each member of staff an appraisal. Prior to the appraisal, the manager and individual are both given guide sheets and last year's appraisal form. Each of them is set clear objectives and reviews last year's appraisal to monitor the achievement of any goals set. This happens before the actual appraisal meeting.
- Concepts Wales has clear objectives regarding the business plan and realises the importance of all employees knowing the performance targets and where the business is heading.
- The Managing Director understands the importance of continuous improvement and assessment and therefore employs a mentor from outside the organisation, whom she meets once a month. Other members of staff - from the management team to the secretaries - all have internal or external mentors.

- Members of staff can always approach the Managing Director with ideas or queries and the company has a suggestions box featured on its intranet site. The Managing Director accepts that any ideas for improving organisational systems are very important and encourages each person making a suggestion to back this up with supportive material. If the idea is deemed to be beneficial to the development of that one individual's job, then it is implemented straight away. If it affects the entire organisation, everyone within the firm has the opportunity to input on whether that idea is taken further.
- Every two months, Concepts Wales shuts down its operations to hold a development day for every member of staff, whilst the senior managers have a half-day review every fortnight. Issues such as action for the company, staff development and the business plan are discussed, as well as issues such as facilitation of new ideas. Managers realise that without the team working closely together, there is no Concepts Wales.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND REWARDS

- Concepts Wales endorses job sharing, especially with staff that have young families. A flexible working system is in place so that employees don't have to work nine to five. Two female employees currently job share and support each other – for example, the member of staff on the afternoon shift comes in ten minutes early to ensure a quick and efficient handover. There is total flexitime with working hours, as long as the work is covered and completed on time.
- Concepts Wales also realises the importance of appreciating the employees' hard work. Financial bonuses are awarded annually (usually before Christmas) and extra days off are also given (such as one or two days either side of the Easter and Christmas holidays). Occasionally, when one individual has excelled in their work, a special bonus or pay rise is given.
- Concepts Wales has team building days where the company closes and visits various locations for team building exercises. Every summer, there is a company barbeque and every Christmas there is a party for every employee. On every member of staff's birthday, all employees go out for a drink and, if it is quiet, the firm closes early to celebrate.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- As Concepts Wales is quite a small company, there are not enough children of pre-school age to make a company crèche financially viable. The Managing Director did discuss this with another company to create a partnership for such a facility but it was not possible. If the company gets larger, Concepts Wales intends to introduce an after school or holiday childcare service.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Concepts Wales evaluates the impact of management development by mentoring, training and coaching. As yet, there is not enough structure to provide a written evaluation but in depth meetings do focus on both the company and every individual's training needs.
- The Managing Director relies heavily on her own instinct to determine the potential of leadership in members of staff. She will first discuss this directly the member of staff concerned to ascertain whether they would be happy to progress up the career ladder. She then establishes whether the employee is interested in developing their enthusiasm through a training programme. As long as Finance and Human Resources approve of this, the programme is implemented straight away.

- The Managing Director realises that no one can be a perfect manager. In her mind, an excellent manager is not too proud to call in help whether it is in the form of training, coaching or mentoring.
- At the moment, Concepts Wales is not qualified for the Investors in People Award although the firm believes that most of the criteria for being awarded the certificate have already been met. From the point of view of the firm, such documentation is unimportant as long as the staff are happy and receive as much training that they need or require.
- To develop the company, which is an ongoing process, there has to be great teamwork from all employees. Every person that is employed by Concepts Wales has huge potential and if this is not nurtured, it could mean the company is not taking full advantage of its opportunities.
- Concepts Wales is a relaxed and happy place to work. It has therefore earned the respect and loyalty from all its employees and this is obvious to their clients.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE – FAMILY AND FRIENDLY POLICY

- Concepts Wales' policy is to be as flexible and fair as possible when it comes to family issues. Therefore, in addition to the statutory rights each employee has, Concepts Wales has enhanced its 'Family and Friendly Policy'. The details of the policy are featured in the Staff Handbook which is distributed to all members of staff upon commencement of employment. It covers issues such as special leave, flexible care leave, special leave for medical purposes, court attendance, examinations and study leave and career breaks.
- In terms of special leave, employees may be allowed:
 - Up to five days special leave with pay for the death of partner, mother, father, brother, sister or child
 - Up to two days special leave with pay for the death of a mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law or grandparent
 - Up to one day's special leave without pay to attend the funeral of a more distant relative.
- An allowance of up to three days paid leave within a twelve month period may be given to employees who, due to unforeseen circumstances, have to take care of a relative e.g. ill health or breakdown in childcare arrangements.
- Staff are allowed special leave for study and for undertaking examinations.
- Career breaks are available to employees to give them the opportunity for an extended period away from work to deal with domestic responsibilities. Staff remain as employees of Concepts Wales and will be kept informed of any developments during their special leave.
- All special leave requests must be agreed with the Managing Director and, if the request is refused, the reasons for this must be clearly explained to the employee.

EMPLOYEES' OPINION

Key points mentioned by employees were:

- teamwork
- small organisation
- new challenges
- training opportunities
- flexible working arrangements.

Information for this report was gathered by interviewing Linda Narberth (the Managing Director) at Concepts Wales, undertaking a telephone interview with Nicola Brown (Finance Manager) and examining various organisational policy documentation.



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DWR CYMRU CUSTOMER SERVICES

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- Dwr Cymru Customer Services invests both time and effort into making the company an efficient and effective provider of service to customers. It has a clear business vision (understood by staff) to be the best billing and collections business in its industry. Vacancies are frequently filled internally and the company is fully committed to developing its people by offering training to enable them to fulfil their potential. The attrition rate is below the average for service industries and reflects the positive attitude within the business. The company values are commitment to success, responsiveness, professionalism, honesty and integrity, respect for others and challenge and innovation.

INTRODUCTION

- Based in St Mellons near Cardiff, Thames Water was awarded the contract to manage the billing, cash collection and customer services function for Dwr Cymru Welsh Water for a period of four years, starting from 1st April 2001. Dwr Cymru Welsh Water is the regulated company that provides water supply and sewerage services to over three million people living and working in Wales and some adjoining areas of England. The company has household customers and over 110,000 business customers, making it the sixth largest regulated water company in England and Wales.
- Dwr Cymru Customer Services centre answered more than one million calls in 2002/03 and collected over £432 million in payments. There are 400 employees mostly working at the St. Mellons centre and an average of £617 per head is spent on training and development. There is low staff turnover with over 229 employees working for the organisation for over five years. Staff turnover is unusually low for a call centre operation.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- Appraisal meetings are held twice a year. The annual appraisal takes place in December to discuss personal development plans and progress. There is also an interim appraisal meeting every June. There is a performance rating scale graded 1-5 and the appraisal gives the manager an opportunity to evaluate whether the pay of the employee needs to increase. Prior to the appraisals, each employee is presented with a preparation sheet that presents questions to ask themselves e.g. how do you feel you have met both your key tasks and other objectives set at your last appraisal? What are your development needs over the next 12 months?
- The assessment of the quality of management is also heavily monitored and there is always feedback and reviews for each job and section to establish essential needs for managers, including courses for management development.

- The firm conducts an annual staff attitude survey which is run on the intranet. This year, the tick box questionnaire was completed by 50.4% of staff within the organisation. The results of the survey are then compiled and a Communication Survey Report is produced. Staff are encouraged to take part in follow up focus groups to more closely examine the survey results and suggest solutions.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND REWARDS

- Although the company encourages job sharing under its equal opportunities policy, this has become largely superfluous as employees can influence the pattern of their work shift. There are currently over 35 different full time and part time shift patterns available which means that employees can in the main match their working hours to suit their lifestyle.
- Rewarding employees on a financial basis is heavily dependant on the appraisal interviews. Other reward schemes that staff benefit from are the 'goody cupboard' – where individuals who exceed targets can choose a gift from the call centre goody cupboard. This could be a bottle of wine, chocolates or vouchers. There are also evenings out that are heavily subsidised by the company.
- Staff also have the option to join a final salary pension scheme on commencement of work, each new employee receives a Thames Water pension pack.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- The organisation also has a detailed equal opportunities policy, which covers job sharing, sexual and racial harassment, career break scheme, pensions, maternity leave and an employee assistance help line.
- As the building at St Mellons is rented, the management has less control over the environment in which they work. However, the owner of the building is considering putting a crèche on the premises. Dwr Cymru Customer Services also allow staff to change working hours to allow for family commitments.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Evaluation of the impact of management development is mostly done by key performance indicators and appraisals, and includes an assessment of whether internal or external training is needed in weak areas. Training and development needs are all determined against the organisation's best value policy, depending on money and need.
- Within the appraisal system there is a talent profile, which ascertains whether someone has leadership potential. This examines factors such as delivering results through others, their influence on colleagues and their achievement drive. If individuals have the potential for leadership, then they join the succession planning initiative within the firm.

- When new staff members start working at the company, they undergo a period of formal off job training. They are then placed in a development team and an experienced member of staff is allocated to give them support and 'show them the ropes'.
- For management training, as well as formal training key mentors from within Dwr Cymru Customer Services or the Thames Water Company are assigned to help staff.
- Although Dwr Cymru Customer Services has no IIP status, the company is extremely people-oriented. Front line staff are encouraged to undertake externally recognised qualifications such as NVQs and Institute of Customer Services (ICS). Dwr Cymru Customer Services is the first organisation to undertake a Customer Services NVQ through the medium of the Welsh language. Management believes that it more important to actually develop their people rather than the company achieving recognition for it. The company firmly believes that if you treat people with respect and facilitate them to succeed, the company will get back what it gives out to those individuals. The whole philosophy is that people come first and that the company operates in an open, friendly and relaxed environment, which is always open to change. Dwr Cymru Customer Services is always looking to improve and because of this, employees feel empowered and are confident enough to suggest new ideas.
- About half the staff are call centre based which brings its own challenges. A culture is encouraged that balances professionalism to customers and service delivery with ensuring staff enjoy their working life. The company is fully committed to giving something back to the community in which it operates. It has been involved through Business in the Community mentoring schemes with local primary and secondary schools for a number of years, and staff are given time off to attend the schools on a weekly basis.
- Dwr Cymru Customer Services tries to encourage teamwork through many different channels, predominantly through helping local charities and community work. Raising funds - such as having fancy dress days and fun runs - are all supported by the company. This not only raises money for good causes but also helps to build teamwork and improve relationships. Staff willingly give their own time in support of these charity events. The company operates a £ for £ matched funding scheme for employee fundraising which results in an even greater contribution from Thames Water.
- The company thinks it is very important to listen to its staff and have a number of forums to encourage their participation. Bi-monthly Managers Question and Answer sessions with members of the Senior Management team are always well attended. Through the partnership agreement with Trade Unions, secure terms and conditions of employment are offered to all members of staff.
- Dwr Cymru has had recent external recognition via a national complaints culture survey, where its performance indicates that staff understanding and acceptance of issues around complaints is substantially better than the average for the UK utility sectors.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE - BRAINWAVES SCHEME

- Two years ago, a special suggestion scheme - called the Brainwave scheme – was introduced and was established to assist Dwr Cymru Customer Services to get best value across the organisation. Each idea must meet at least one the following criteria, increased revenue, increased customer satisfaction, fewer customer complaints, improved process and cash savings.
- The scheme provides a blank notebook for staff to write down ideas, the best of which are then discussed in a Brainwaves newsletter. New ideas suggested have included
 - rural water meters to have an Ordnance Survey reference to help meter readers
 - let customers know the queue time when waiting on the phone
 - new occupiers within metered properties to receive information and water efficiency pack
 - courier service to be handled through an identified person in the centre
- There is also a database of suggestions, which provide details and review of every idea, its business benefit, whether it was passed and the next step for implementation or reason why the idea has been rejected.
- Brainwave prizes are given to staff whose suggestions are successfully implemented.

EMPLOYEES' OPINION

Key points mentioned by employees were:

- relaxed atmosphere
- use of appraisal system
- supportive managers
- training opportunities
- promotion opportunities.

Information for this report was gathered by interviewing Rob Shingler (HR) and Debi Parfit via an on-site visit to the call centre, interviews with the management team, organisational policy documentation and an interview with a member of staff.



ASiantaeth yr Amgylchedd Cymru
ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WALES

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WALES

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- The Environment Agency considers itself a good employer that has a clear vision and a comprehensive understanding of how to achieve that vision. The organisation has low staff turnover which is supported through a good pension scheme, salary progression and flexible-work policies that assist in making their employees' lives enjoyable during and after working at the Agency. The Agency's policy is to ensure that all employees are actively supported in giving their best contribution to the Agency's aims. This involves attracting people from all spheres, valuing the different and diverse skills and abilities of all employees and responding flexibly to the needs of individuals in achieving organisational goals.

INTRODUCTION

- Environment Agency Wales is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body (ASPB), while also being part of the corporate Environment Agency for England and Wales. It receives much of its funding and direction from the Welsh Assembly Government, and report backs to them. As part of the Environment Agency - the most powerful environmental regulator in Europe – it also benefits from the resources and expertise of the larger organisation.
- Like the rest of the Agency, the Wales office has wide responsibilities for managing the environment including acting as a champion for the environment; reducing pollution and enforcing pollution legislation; overseeing the management of waste, water resources and freshwater fisheries; reducing the harm caused by flooding; influencing others to achieve positive environmental outcomes by changing attitudes and behaviour.
- Through all its activities, the Agency aims to contribute to achieving sustainable development - prosperity along with a healthy, rich and diverse environment for present and future generations. Its primary purpose is to 'protect and enhance the environment, and make a contribution towards the delivery of sustainable development through integrated management of air, land and water'.
- There are currently 1,000 people working at the Agency, 550 of whom are women.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- The Environment Agency conducts staff appraisals on a quarterly basis to discuss a variety of issues. Each appraisal is conducted using a standard format and aims to evaluate the individual's performance and ascertain training needs. By the third quarter review, the employee will begin to receive feedback on performance to date.
- Each employee has a 'Personnel Development Plan'. This catalogues the behaviour issues and skills that have been achieved or need to be acquired to progress within the organisation.

- The quality of management is evaluated through the use of a 'balanced scorecard', which each area and the regional office has to complete. The scores are compared to the Key Performance Indicators of the organisation.
- To increase communication within the organisation there is a 'cascade brief' every month for staff. In addition, there is also a 'main document' which helps managers to discuss issues and new policies with staff.
- There is an annual staff survey to monitor policies and procedures within the organisation.
- Employees can go directly to management to discuss new ideas which can increase efficiency. Alternatively, they can post new ideas on the Agency's 'Chat Room' that is available on the intranet.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND REWARDS

- Like many other organisations, the Environment Agency has a specific flexible working policy. However, each employee has to request any change in working hours to enable management to measure the possible effect on productivity. Requests to adjust working hours are normally put forward by women who have returned from maternity leave. Similarly, employees have to put the business case forward for either working from home or reducing working hours to a part-time status. Therefore, whilst EA management strongly supports the concept of flexi-time, any change in practice must equally be non-detrimental to the business at the same time as being accommodating to employees.
- Flexitime - with core hours between 10am-3pm - was initially introduced because of demand from parents wanting to collect their children from school. The flexitime system also allows for employees who work more than their core hours to claim additional time off work, although this is usually at the discretion of the line manager. In normal circumstances, employees are allowed (in addition to their annual leave) twelve flexi-days every year.
- The Agency provides additional incentives for staff through a variety of different reward schemes including concessions/corporate membership with local gyms and subsidised Christmas parties and other social events.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- The Agency does not have any crèche facilities or childcare voucher scheme, and any family requirements are supported largely through the flexitime system. In addition, the organisation also has a special information telephone line that can be accessed by staff to suggest suitable local childcare facilities.
- The Agency has advanced maternity and parental leave policies with information easily accessed by staff from the intranet. Maternity leave can be up to 52 weeks with the first eighteen weeks on full pay. Paternity leave - which lasts up to ten days on full pay - was introduced before legislation came into effect. The Agency also accommodates employees who wish to take unpaid parental leave to accommodate family life.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- London Business School recently evaluated the management development within the Environment Agency and demonstrated that the organisation goes to great lengths to ensure that team leaders and managers develop their role through participating in self-awareness and leadership courses.
- The Agency also has a 'Succession Planning Scheme', which was initially piloted in the Midlands region. This identifies the areas of the business (and the senior staff within them) that need to be developed further. This programme therefore encourages the development of key individuals to achieve the organisation's vision. Whilst the Agency has always had a succession planning system, this scheme introduces a more defined and formal process.
- At present there is an initiative in Wales to introduce mentors to the organisation. These will assist senior managers in writing key reports although this is considered to be coaching rather than actual structured mentoring. In addition, as part of the 'Springboard' policy, there are occupational health mentors within the Agency who evaluate work-life balance issues.
- To encourage greater teamwork, managers within a department will often socialise, although this is not unstructured as a management specialist will facilitate discussion in the group. They are often joined by other departmental staff on the following day to develop the discussion further. Managers also encourage other teambuilding events – such as paintball – to improve interaction and develop trust between staff in each department.
- Weekly and monthly team meetings are held amongst the staff to increase communication about the progress of the organisation. This is supported by the 'Grass Roots' magazine, which celebrates the Agency's achievements.
- The Agency has created a special team which will develop an action plan by the autumn as part of the evaluation process for Investors in People accreditation.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE - HOMEWORKING

- The Environment Agency has an advanced homeworking code of practice. As a result, any employee can have his/her particular case considered for improving their patterns of flexible working through homeworking. This policy is especially relevant to employees that have caring roles (parental or as carers for elderly relatives).
- For example, before giving permission for homeworking, line managers have to consider the following:
 - Effectiveness – can the individual work effectively from home with less direct support?
 - Communications – is the individual aware of communication issues, especially with customers and colleagues?
 - Teamwork issues - relating to other members of the team or group and are those issues manageable?
 - Seamless Operation – ask the question 'Will anybody notice a difference?'
 - Equality – especially in assessments for reasons of performance related pay, training and progression.

- The Homeworking Policy document covers issues such as health and safety, equipment needs for working effectively from home, and the social effects of isolation from the office.
- Although the policy has been created to make life easier for employees, it is worth noting that the process to apply for homeworking involves complex procedures which every request has to comply with. This ensures that the Agency is balancing the welfare of the individual with the needs of the organisation.

EMPLOYEES' OPINION

Key points mentioned by employees were:

- friendly, helpful colleagues
- information on Intranet
- job security
- flexible arrangements
- family friendly policies
- good communication.

Information for this report was compiled via an on-site visit to the Agency's head office in Cardiff by interviewing the Human Resources management team, reading the Agency's policy documentation and interviewing an employee in the Human Relations department.

PEMBROKESHIRE COLLEGE

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- Pembrokeshire College recognises that its staff are its most valuable asset in meeting its strategic aims and, during the last few years, has increased staff involvement, expanded training opportunities to encourage professional and personnel development and is constantly reviewing employment policies. The College has made significant progress which has been recognised nationally in quality grades and employer awards such as Chartermark and IIP.

INTRODUCTION

- Pembrokeshire College's mission as a further education institution is to provide the highest quality education, training and support services for young people, adult learners and employers in West Wales. In seeking to fulfil this mission, the college:
 - Promotes efficiency, flexibility, responsiveness and innovation in its provision
 - Supports principles of equal opportunity and inclusivity
 - Seeks partnership to advance community regeneration and economic prosperity
- The College employs 669 people, 411 of who are women. 280 of the total employees have worked in the organisation for over 5 years.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- Each year, every member of staff goes through the 'Performance and Development' management process which aims to increase job satisfaction, help the college sustainably improve on performance and increase relationship and communication channels between line managers and staff.
- The appraisal system is used to encourage members of staff to set personal objectives to assist in organisational progression.
- Pembrokeshire College prefers to educate staff in holistic management methods and to be more relevant to organisational needs. For example, the college is currently encouraging retraining staff to teach more popular courses when the course they have normally been teaching for years is no longer popular with students.
- Staff also give their opinion each year of how they think the college is being managed through a quality group questionnaire.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND REWARDS

- Pembrokeshire College endorses flexible working (whether at home or through job sharing). However, staff have to apply through the appropriate channels to change their working pattern. The college has a flexible working policy document and it covers seven major categories namely:
 - Job sharing – where two employees share the duties, responsibilities and benefits of a full time post, have equal responsibility for the job, and must co-ordinate and collaborate to ensure that the whole job is completed
 - Fractional working - when an employee is working less than normal full time hours
 - Flexible working hours – where employees can choose (within set limits) when to begin and end work providing they are present during certain core hours
 - Annual Working hours - where the period of time within which an employee must work is defined over a whole year whilst ensuring the needs of the service are met
 - Temporary Workers - who have fixed term contracts for the job's duration.
 - Variable Hourly Paid working - when employee is on a permanent contract but hours are varied due to student enrolments etc.
 - Relief Contract – a permanent contract when the employee will cover staff in a certain department whenever they are required to do so.
- The College does not have a financial reward scheme and all jobs are graded and paid according to that grade. In some circumstances (such as staff taking over work from a sick colleague), extra money is paid for any additional work e.g. admission staff were paid extra for working until 8 pm during August/September due to shortage of available personnel to deal with admissions.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- The college has crèche facilities that the staff and students established in 1990. Paternal leave was in place before the legislation had been enforced. Job share options are also given to new parents if they wish to opt for these.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Ten per cent of the annual training budget is spent on management development and all programmes are evaluated.
- Financial management training is also important as managers have to control their own department's budget. Consideration is also taken of personalities and individual management styles in developing individual roles within the organisation.
- Although there is no formal structure in place for identifying leadership potential, managers observe staff in the workplace. If they consider that certain individuals should be progressed in the company and training is required, a training timetable is established for those members of staff who wish to further their career.
- All new staff have a mentor. In addition, teaching staff have a teaching and learning mentor group which consists of various lecturers from across the College. The College also provides ongoing development to improve teaching techniques.

- Each department has performance reviews and members of staff within that department will often spend days together undertaking tasks such as brainstorming which enable the team to address key issues and work more effectively.
- There is also cross-group training and development which enables staff to understand the role of others within a variety of different departments, discuss working practices and build up new working relationships.
- The IIP status has given the college credibility to new members of staff and college, whose previous focus was the development of students, is now equally as concerned with the development of its staff.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE – STAFF DEVELOPMENT TRAINING POLICY

- Pembrokeshire College has its own Staff Development Training Policy. As an FE college, most of the training provision is provided by in-house facilitators and trainers. Every new member of staff has to undertake the standard induction training and a mentor is assigned to each individual to provide support and guidance.
- To meet the aims of its strategic plan, the college has developed systems and procedures which enable staff development needs to be identified and prioritised. It has also developed a structured staff development programme that
 - meets the needs of the college and helps staff to fulfil their responsibilities more effectively
 - provides opportunities to develop their skills and increase their expertise
 - responds to national initiatives and statutory requirements
 - raises staff awareness to relevant developments in education, industry and commerce.
- Training of staff is seen by senior management as enhancing the strategic plan, aims and objectives of the College. It has a development programme in which staff can participate to improve their own personal development and any professional development training is initially discussed with the line manager before it is undertaken. Any request for staff development is considered against the College's operational plan and discussed initially with the appropriate line manager. Approved training is financed through the Staff Development Fund.
- The College undertakes four main types of training within its policy:
 - Induction training – for newly appointed staff and is linked to a probationary period. The induction programme is agreed between the individual, line manager and staff development officer
 - Professional development and training – this is to support changes in functions, duties and responsibilities of individual members of staff; changes in coursework or syllabi; development of new courses; requirement to be accredited in new areas of expertise; updating related to assessment or evaluation methods; updating with regard to change in policy. These can be acquired through external courses, in house events, conferences or self-study
 - Personal development – which fits in with the College's work-life balance policy
 - Management development - the staff development panel reviews the management development needs of the college annually and, from this, a programme of training in management and supervisory skills will be instigated.

EMPLOYEES' OPINION

Key points mentioned by employees were:

- holistic approach to development
- promotion opportunities
- training voucher scheme
- full funding of training
- use of college gym
- approachable management
- relaxed but close working teams.

Information for this report was obtained from Pembrokeshire College Policy documents. Interviews with Margaret Coldwell Personnel Manager and Patrick Groves the college's Marketing Manager also gave an insight to the management mechanism of the college. Information was also used from a telephone interview with Julie Havens who is a Personnel Officer at the college.



SOLUTIA UK

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- Solutia believes that its main source of competitive advantage comes from its employees and that continuous development of staff is key to the company's success. It supports staff in developing their abilities as employees and, as a result, has seen a 100% improvement in productivity in the last five years.

INTRODUCTION

- Solutia is a global chemical business and is the world's leading company in producing plastic, resins, industrial products and nylon. Originally part of Monsanto, Solutia was created as an independent spin-off of the company's chemical businesses. Today, Solutia is a speciality chemicals company with a growth-oriented business strategy that is committed to excellent customer service. Solutia now has more than \$3 billion in annual sales, \$4 billion in assets and more than 9,000 employees located at thirty-five manufacturing sites throughout thirty countries.
- Solutia UK is based in Newport, South Wales and employs two hundred people at its plant, thirty one of whom are women. They have a very low staff turnover with 164 employees having worked there for over five years. As a chemical manufacturer, Solutia has strict security and regulations are tightly enforced, although the working environment within the plant itself is relaxed. The plant is open twenty four hours every day of the year, so all 'shop floor staff' work in shift teams.
- Currently, two per cent of the plant's annual budget is allocated to training, with a tenth of this reserved for management development. Managers currently devote five days per year to training.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- Appraisals take place annually in December when Solutia's priorities are discussed with staff and how each individual fits into the picture of how the plant is to achieve this.
- Each employee receives an annual score card of what s/he has achieved over the last year and new goals are set for each individual for the year ahead. Solutia has a goal document where both personal goals and teams goals are documented.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND REWARDS

- Employees have twenty five days annual leave. As the plant works on a shift rota basis, teams work five weeks and then receive ten days off. There are also two cases of job sharing amongst the female members of staff in the clerical office.

- There is no formal flexitime but managers are allowed to use their discretion, such as time off for a visit to the doctor or dentist. Mutual swaps of shifts are also allowed - as long as the job is completed managers have no problem with this way of working. For example, one employee works half an hour extra each day so he can pick his child up from school on a Thursday afternoon.
- Solutia rewards outstanding performance with an annual bonus although it also holds achievement awards, long time service awards and various other dinners to celebrate success.
- Each employee has free BUPA private medical care with half-rate for spouse and quarter-rate for children. They also have a staff advice service contact number for any employee having work or private related concerns.
- There is an on site gym that can be used at any time by employees, and they have subsidised meals in the canteen on site.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- At the present time, Solutia is thinking of introducing childcare vouchers but remains unsure of the cost effectiveness of this proposal. Solutia is also considering opening a crèche with other local businesses as there are many companies based near Solutia on the industrial park that could share this facility.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- There is an annual review to evaluate the impact of management development and performance. In terms of career progression, employees are normally asked at their annual appraisal whether they would like to progress up the company career ladder. If interest is shown, then the employee is given a time matrix evaluation - this assesses their current state of 'readiness' as well as evaluating the training required to be ready to take on a management role (this is usually an NVQ level 4-5 in association with Swansea College).
- The employees that are approached to become managers are those people who work well and have been noticed by present managers to have managerial qualities in them. Solutia does the majority of its employee training on-site although senior management allocates a £90k budget for external training on the understanding that the training undertaken would be job related.
- Although Solutia does not have a formal mentoring system for employees, experienced managers will mentor new staff for as long as they require it.
- Management generally regard team-building events as a celebration of performance where the whole production unit is awarded and taken out for a meal with a proportion of other staff in production. As the plant is open 24 hours it is difficult for everybody to socialise all at once.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE – TRAINING POLICY

- Solutia's 'Site Procedure in Training Policy' covers the establishment and meeting of training needs and the recording and reporting of the activities for Solutia staff. The procedure is in line with the company's philosophy which emphasises that its employees are 'its primary source of competitive advantage and that continuous development of employees is essential to the future success of the business'.
- Therefore, Solutia aims to ensure that all of its employees have the necessary knowledge, skills, competencies and tools to manage their development and aims to meet this commitment through:
 - Ensuring all employees are aware of the broad aims and objectives of the organisation.
 - Encouraging all employees to help identify and meet their own development needs.
 - Ensuring all Line Managers regularly review and actively support the training and development needs of all employees.
 - Encouraging all new employees are introduced effectively to the organisation and are given the training and development they need to do their jobs.
 - Reviewing the effectiveness of all training and development activities.
- Most of the training and development needs are established in the appraisal meetings. However, if a training and development need has suddenly been discovered which cannot be met by any existing course, HR managers are able to develop a course with the help of specialists in the particular field.
- Management at Solutia finds it beneficial (to both the company and the individual that has undertaken a particular training course) to undergo an evaluation of the course once the training has been completed, establish how it helped the individual's performance in the job.
- Due to the type of work that Solutia undertakes, working with others is essential. As a result, teamwork is encouraged and staff are given the opportunity to get to know each other through training courses and social nights out. Solutia also rewards its employees through presentations at company award dinners and a bonus scheme when the company has surpassed its targets. On such occasions, the whole team involved is rewarded.

EMPLOYEES' OPINION

Key points mentioned by employees were:

- respect for staff
- work on own initiative
- bonus for exceptional performance
- private health care
- approachable management
- availability of training
- valuable appraisal system.

Information for this report was obtain by interviewing Mike Lynham, Steve Westhead, Human Resources Manager and Phil Phillips, Training Manager. Solutia Ltd policies and the company's website were also used. Mike Davies – who works in the Quality Assurance Department – was also interviewed.



UNITED WELSH HOUSING ASSOCIATION

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- The United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA) places its people at the heart of the business and its core values include supporting and empowering its staff as it recognises that business successes only come from the willing contribution and commitment of its people. UWHA has an innovative people strategy which gives a clear commitment to developing positive employment relationships based on trust and mutual respect. It provides a working environment where people are valued, encouraged to learn, develop new ideas, and to influence and participate in business decisions. UWHA was the first mainstream UK housing association to be chosen by the DTI to implement a 'Partnership at Work' project which aims to modernise the way staff work together. As a result, the Association has adopted a new approach which actively encourages staff to become in charge of their own decision making. To achieve this, UWHA promotes consultation with staff on matters that affect them, ensuring that staff feel valued and recognised as a key part of the business.

INTRODUCTION

- United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA) is based in Caerphilly and Cardiff, South Wales. It provides over 3,500 homes to rent for single people, couples, families, older people and people who may have additional support needs. These homes are based mainly in the Cardiff, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent areas. UWHA is an innovator in developing environmentally sustainable new homes and provides homes to purchase under its Low Cost Home Ownership scheme.
- The aim of UWHA is that by developing as part of the local communities, it will be the organisation people choose to work with to provide housing and related services. It employs one hundred and nineteen people, half of whom have worked for the organisation for over five years. The Association's values are equality of opportunity; commitment to growth and improvement; supporting and empowering staff; making sound financial decisions; being accountable; and putting customers first.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- Each member of staff has an annual appraisal, which entails completing a self-assessment. The line manager for each individual member of staff will fill out a 'Personal Development Plan' for both of them to identify training and development needs. Staff also have quarterly reviews where performance indicators and targets are considered.

- UWHA considers staff as the main asset within the organisation and therefore has a people strategy included in its corporate strategy. It also has a 'partnership at work' programme which encourages staff to make decisions. This programme (which is also incorporated into the appraisal scheme) is regarded as an example of how to work as part of a team and has proved to be effective in enabling staff to understand key issues in how the company is managed.
- Whilst there is a staff suggestion scheme, this is rarely used as there are action groups in place to help tackle various issues and develop appropriate solutions. For example, one project was organised to address the problems regarding increase in rent arrears and came up with the solution of introducing loyalty cards to tenants that paid on time. This enabled those who qualified to get discounts in local shops and supermarkets and reduced arrears for the organisation.
- UWHA also holds an annual staff survey to ascertain whether staff are happy working for the organisation and their perceptions of their role in the organisation and how it is currently being managed.
- UWHA is proud to be recognised as an Investor in People and the most recent assessment recognised that 'The culture is neither bureaucratic nor traditional. This organisation has become an advocate of involvement and participation, promoting two way communication, encouraging managers to take ownership for their area of work and for the development of their people. It was refreshing to visit an organisation that is so positive, open and responsive'.
- The Association has progressive employment policies and provides excellent opportunities for people to learn and develop in their roles. It structures its jobs so that people are stimulated to contribute and develop to their full potential. Positive leadership at all levels is promoted and it recognises the value of diversity as a means of achieving its objectives.

FLEXIBLE WORKING

- UWHA prides itself on being one of the most family friendly organisations in Wales. For example, paternity leave was already in place months before the new legislation was enforced this year. Job sharing and homeworking is also allowed as long as the individual goes through the proper approval channels and it does not affect the efficiency of the day to day running of the Association.
- There is no bonus system attached to actual salary increases. If targets have been met within the agreed objectives set during the previous appraisal, staff can gain additional increments on the pay scale.
- Away days to develop teamworking and staff bonding are encouraged and there are various corporate events, organised by the social committee, which are held when performance improvements against corporate objectives are achieved. Employees also have holiday entitlements that range from twenty five days annual leave (plus bank holidays) when first employed to as much as thirty two days after a certain period of employment within the Association.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- At present, there are eighty two women working at UWHA. All are entitled to fifty two weeks maternity leave with the option of being employed on a part-time basis on their return to work.
- Although UWHA does not provide a kindergarten, it has established a committee to evaluate the positive and negative aspects of facilitating a crèche for employees' children. However, it does provide a voucher system (to the value of £22.00 a week) towards childcare for dependents under 6 years old.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- UWHA has a formal training programme process where each employee requesting training which benefits the organisation is supported. For example, UWHA supports programmes such as MBAs for managers and potential managers which is funded entirely by the Association with time off given for study. Staff are also encouraged to improve themselves by undertaking secondment opportunities to cover staffing in the eventuality of either maternity leave or illness.
- The impact of the qualification or training is evaluated after the programme has been completed through a review meeting with the line manager. This discusses the impact of the course on both the individual's work performance and the efficiency of the organisation. On average, managers are allocated twenty days per year to devote to their own training and development and around twenty five per cent of the annual training budget is spent on management training.
- Line Managers act as coaches and mentors for employees in their department. This role is not limited to the staff induction process but also includes mentoring staff within the organisation with new responsibilities for those that have moved across departments. At present, the use of external mentors to support staff development has not been considered by the organisation.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE – TERM-TIME CONTRACTS

- United Welsh Housing Association operates an active flexible working policy which is extremely family friendly. Several of its employees have opted for either part time or term time contracts or both.
- The most innovative approach developed by UWHA is the introduction of term-time contracts. These enable parents to work only in term time and have proved very beneficial to a number of employees with children. It has also generated a lot of positive publicity regarding its working practices as a result of this policy.

EMPLOYEES' OPINION

Points mentioned by employees were:

- approachable management
- flexible working
- training opportunities
- friendly environment.

Information for this report was gathered from the UWHA website www.uwha.co.uk, interviews with Juliet Mainwaring (Head of Personnel and Administration) and Nia Roblin (Corporate Services Advisor) and company policy documentation.



UNIVERSITY OF WALES COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

BEST MANAGED WORKPLACE?

- UWCM is the first pre-1992 University in England and Wales to achieve Investor in People status for the whole institution (awarded March 2003). The College is also the first institution covering a range of health sciences to be awarded IIP status in the UK.

INTRODUCTION

- The University of Wales College of Medicine incorporates the only medical and dental school in Wales, and shares a 53-acre site with the University Hospital of Wales and Dental Hospital at Heath Park, some three miles north of the centre of Cardiff.
- The College's academic departments are integrated with the hospitals in order that medical and dental education and research can be closely combined with first-class healthcare delivery. The academic activities of the College include medicine, nursing, dentistry, physiotherapy, radiography, and occupational therapy, making it a broadly based "healthcare university".
- Though most academic departments and support services are based at Heath Park, the College also has academic departments and units at Llandough and Whitchurch hospitals in Cardiff, while the College's department of General Practice is based at a health centre in the east of the city. In addition, the College has established a number of academic units at hospitals elsewhere in Wales and, consistent with its all-Wales perspective, students obtain some of their clinical training well beyond the boundaries of Cardiff.
- The College of Medicine enjoys close co-operation with the NHS throughout Wales. The main features of this co-operation are the key contributions made by NHS staff to the undergraduate and postgraduate education and training activities for which the College is responsible. Altogether, a joint approach is taken towards producing high-quality research and development relevant to the needs of the NHS. The ethos of collaboration also informs the major contribution made by the College's clinical academic departments to the delivery of exemplary healthcare to people of Wales.
- The University of Wales College of Medicine mission statement is:
 - High quality education in a research-led environment
 - Internationally distinguished biomedical, clinical and health sciences research
 - Innovation in provision of healthcare; delivery of high quality services
 - With NHS partners, leadership in the development and implementation of health policy locally within Wales and UK
 - Significant contribution to the local and national economy through links with industry.
- UWCM is a large organisation employing 1498 staff, 754 of whom have worked there for over 5 years.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

- Every new member of staff undergoes one year's probationary period. In addition to the introductory meeting, a new employee will have FOUR feedback meetings in the first year of employment – at 3, 6 and 9 months and then finally a twelve-month meeting.
- In the probationary year, training needs are examined and suitable training interventions are found to address these development needs. Appraisals are then held from January to April each year for every employee. Senior team members also undertake a 360-degree appraisal annually. UWCM was the first Medical University in the UK to adopt Joint Appraisals with the NHS for Senior Clinical Academics.
- Appraisals are compulsory for all staff and are held on a one-to-one basis with the appropriate line manager. Appraisal includes a discussion on development needed to enhance personal and organisational objectives. Each employee develops a personal development plan. These plans are then incorporated into an organisational training and organisational development plan for the whole College. All staff are entitled to a minimum of three days training and development per annum. Some Schools offer up to 20 development days per annum. There are a number of mandatory courses including Health and Safety, Recruitment and Selection and Equal Opportunities Training. During 2003/4, stress management training (for appropriate staff) and appraiser training for line managers will also become compulsory.
- The College has developed a comprehensive communication strategy that recognises the input of all employees and have set up appropriate mechanisms to facilitate better communication at all levels. For example the Vice Chancellor has his own website where staff can post ideas or suggestions.
- Every department within the College has a communications facilitator. The Vice Chancellor holds a meeting with the facilitators every three months to inform them of the College's objectives and to listen to their aims and ideas. This information, along with core messages and request for responses, is then channelled through to every member of each department by the Communication Facilitators.

FLEXIBLE WORKING AND REWARDS

- UWCM recognises the need to promote work life balance by offering best practice flexible working practices which includes flexi time, maternity, paternity, parental, depenants, adoption, and bereavement leave etc. This has recently been reviewed and a new Flexible Working Policy is being developed to build upon the existing flexible practices evident throughout the organisation. This will also provide guidance on term time working. Working hours at UWCM can be adjusted to cater for different departmental and individual needs. This is achieved in consultation between the individual, their line manager and the Head of Department. Employees are also given unofficial time off at the discretion of their manager.
- UWCM has established a Recognition of Contribution Implementation Group to develop a standardised recognition framework. The Vice Chancellor sends letters of appreciation and congratulations when a team and or individuals have worked exceptionally well. A Promotions Exercise is run annually at the College, which allows Heads of Departments on behalf of

individuals - as well as individuals themselves - to put forward applications for promotion. There are five schools and two administrative units within UWCM and, consequently, keeping managers to one style of management practice is difficult but work is being undertaken in this area. At present there is no performance-related pay mechanism at UWCM.

- Other rewards that members of staff receive include subsidised meals at the staff canteen, subsidised Christmas staff party, subsidised use of a gym and access to Health Promotion activities at the Hospital site.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- UWCM has crèche facilities that are shared with hospital staff and a summer school camp to ease the burden of childcare arrangements for staff. The college also shares the social club and several refectories with the hospital, as well a small shopping area / concourse which includes a post office, bank, coffee shop, flower shop and newsagents etc.
- Equal Opportunities training is compulsory at UWCM for all staff. In addition staff with responsibility for recruiting either staff or students undertake further training in this area. The College has a portfolio of family friendly policies, which have been successfully implemented across the organisation.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

- For strategic and senior managers a 360-degree feedback process linked to development and performance has been introduced. Each senior manager receives a feedback report highlighting strengths and weaknesses and receives feedback on their performance. Senior Managers take these reports to their annual appraisals for further discussion. For both Management Board Executive and Management Board a Senior Management Development Programme involving mentoring, coaching and modular development activities has been initiated.
- The College has initiated a Leadership and Management development framework, underpinned by management standards. This framework of multiple models and encompasses innovative practices, approaches, styles and opportunities which reflect the diverse and evolving notions of management. The evaluation of whether an employee has leadership potential is partly undertaken at the annual appraisal meeting. This enables management to determine whether staff are interested in progressing within the College and to establish the appropriate development needs. This activity underpins succession-planning activities at UWCM.
- To enhance teamwork within the departments, there are team-coaching sessions that encourage individuals and sections to work and communicate with each other. These can range from traditional methods to more innovative techniques - for example, some departments have been on three-day course to improve communication by playing drums. One particular School has invested over £30,000 in Team-Coaching activities to support re-structuring activities.

- Committing to Investors in People accreditation (which UWCM has been awarded) has altered the mindset of the College and has facilitated a significant cultural change. The institution has consequently become more business-like in its activities over recent years. Therefore, as well as being an organisation of learning, it is increasingly evident that UWCM is becoming a learning organisation in itself.
- All staff have had the opportunity to be involved in the change process under the Investor in People umbrella, as well as through other initiatives.
- The College has developed its own set of Leadership and Management standards' (competencies) and these have already been incorporated into some of the processes for promotion, succession planning and Leadership and Management development. The College undertook a full Leadership and Management audit in November 2002, which included training and needs analysis for all management levels.
- UWCM successfully implemented a 360-degree feedback process for the strategic management team (Management Board Executive) in 2002 with the 'management standards' used to underpin this process. This is being extended to the next tier of management in 2003/4. The further training of subject and raters is presently being undertaken to facilitate the extension of the 360 degree feedback process in 2003/4.
- The College is "fine tuning" and evolving its Leadership and Management Development Framework for staff with managerial responsibilities, to be fully implemented in January 2004.
- A strategic 'Management Development Programme' has been introduced for strategic managers at a cost of £18,000, which includes team facilitation, mentoring, team coaching, individual coaching and a modular intuitive leadership programme. The strategic management 360-degree team report was used to help design and facilitate this provision. A similar programme will be rolled out to the members of the Management Board in May 2004 at a further cost of £26,000.
- The College will introduce a pilot Institute of Leadership and Management Introductory Certificate for its first line managers in December 2003 based on its management standards at an estimated cost of £17,000 for 12 managers. It is envisaged that this programme will be further extended in 2004.
- The College was recently described as a traditional institution operating in a very modern way. This is exemplified by the fact that considerable resources have been invested in the successful delivery of change management activities to facilitate IIP and by the proposed merger with Cardiff University.
- The Management and Development Framework is beginning to empower line managers with the skills, knowledge and abilities to successfully deliver people management at local level. Since the College has adopted a new approach to management development and training, staff satisfaction levels have risen dramatically.

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE – PROBATION PROCESS

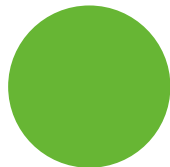
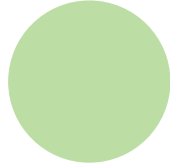
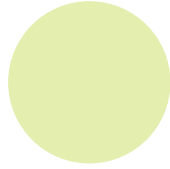
- The probationary process that every new member of staff experiences for the first 12 months of their employment is a unique policy for an educational organisation.
- Each probationer is allocated a probationary review manager to give regular feedback and set training and personal objectives within the first 12 months of their employment and review progress on a regular basis. These set goals and guidelines using the Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Resourced and Time scaled method of practice.
- There is a comprehensive flowchart of what is expected of everybody involved in looking after the probationer's welfare and in each feedback meeting there is a detailed report to fill concerning the probationers' progress.
- After the employee has completed their probationary period, there is also a form for them to fill in to reflect on what they have achieved in the last 12 months and whether there have been any shortfalls in the training provided.

EMPLOYEES' OPINION

Key points mentioned by employees were:

- training opportunities
- pay rewards related to attaining qualifications
- pension scheme
- approachable management
- informal, relaxed atmosphere
- helpful appraisals
- team meetings
- recognition of work well done.

Information for this report was collected by interviewing Christopher Williams and Martin Udwin who work in the Personnel Department at the University, by holding a telephone interview with Julie Player (an employee on her probationary period) and by examining organisational policy documentation.



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