

HR & Training Solutions takes Virgin Atlantic to new heights at Heathrow



HR & Training Solutions has undertaken a management training programme for Virgin Atlantic, following the launch of brand new facilities at Heathrow's Terminal 3 (T3).

Virgin Atlantic's Heathrow management team is responsible for some 750 people who ensure service provision to the company's 2m passengers who fly from Heathrow's T3 each year.

Towards the end of 2007 Virgin Atlantic launched the brand new Upper Class Wing at T3, which introduced a private security corridor exclusively for Virgin Atlantic's Upper Class passengers so they could get from their limo through to the airline's flagship Clubhouse in less than ten minutes. The airline's check-in area in A Zone was also completely refurbished making it wider, brighter and more spacious, enabling passengers to check-in at kiosks in a fast, efficient and stress-free way. The development is part of BAA's £1bn investment plan for T3 over the next ten years.

The change in design and layout of Virgin Atlantic's facilities meant that its team management had to implement brand new processes.

In addition, Virgin Atlantic needed something to harness greater team cohesion, empower tangible leadership and encourage personal accountability. This was vital in order to meet stringent safety standards and customer satisfaction results.

Virgin Atlantic approached Richard Lowe, Managing Director of HR & Training Solutions (www.hrandtrainingsolutions.co.uk), after hearing about the Bristol-based company's 'Best Year Yet' approach.

The Best Year Yet approach offered a unique and effective way to align Virgin Atlantic's efforts to improve their performance and results. The programme provides visible and clear accountability, which was one of the key things that most attracted Virgin Atlantic to choosing this programme.

The programme started in April 2007, with a two day kick-off event to put together a Heathrow Best Year Yet plan. This is a highly motivating process that aligned Virgin Atlantic's management team thinking on what needed to change and be implemented over the next year.

"The team set clear goals that we felt would be stretching and defined clear commitments for how they needed to work more collaboratively to generate a breakthrough in their results," said HR & Training Solutions' Richard Lowe.

Andy Cross, Head of Organisational & People Development at Virgin Atlantic, said: "Best Year Yet brought energy, structure and a winning process to the Heathrow team, allowing them to deliver the best results possible".

"Unlike many programmes, Best Year Yet is rigorous in driving the change and results into reality. The regular review process, which included development support tailored to a team specific needs, ensures they make the progress in the year that they need."

According to Richard Lowe, key factors in the success of a 'Best Year Yet' programme are:

- Be decisive and ensure everyone is clear that this is a fundamentally important programme to you and your business.
- Be prescriptive and set clear expectations for attending the scheduled reviews.
- The programme works in any business environment so, if you don't operate in a typical 'nine-to-five' operation, be creative and make sure you integrate your review meetings into your regular monthly meetings.
- Nominate an enthusiastic and respected 'champion' within your team to maintain the focus of the programme in-between review meetings.