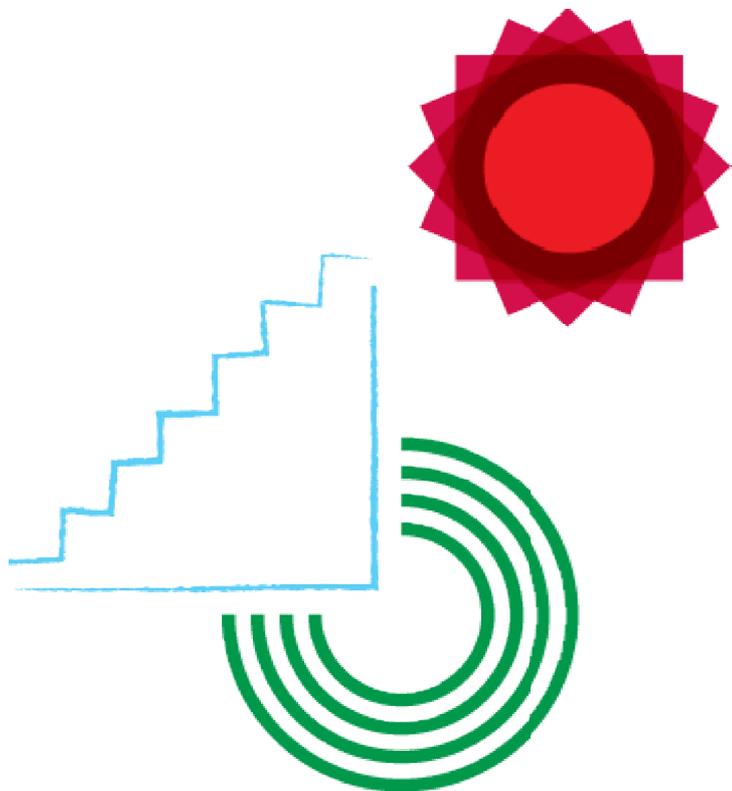


ENGAGE  
FOR  
SUCCESS

# SOUTHERN RAILWAYS – MAKING EVERY JOURNEY BETTER

Case Study



# SOUTHERN RAILWAYS – MAKING EVERY JOURNEY BETTER



## Background

Southern is a rail company operating in the South of England, we employ just over 4000 employees and operate 2320 rail journeys a day.

Southern's new franchise began in September 2009. This franchise has been granted by the Government for a period of five years and ten months until July 2015 – we are already bidding for a new franchise which will be bigger and include the existing Southern franchise and the First Capital Connect franchise. The decision on who will operate this franchise will be made in 2013 and we are therefore entering another huge time of change and uncertainty for our people.

We are the first third generation franchise which means we are leading the way in terms of changing how people perceive rail travel and how we adapt to deliver this, no other train operating company has had this opportunity so this has been an incredibly exciting and challenging time.

## The Engagement Challenge

Our vision is to create a better journey for passengers, reflected in our strap line "Making Every Journey Better". We know that the only way to deliver a better passenger experience is through a highly engaged team of people. However, there were serious underlying people issues threatening achievement of this vision. In 2010, our employee survey revealed issues across a number of areas, but principally:

- People did not see the big picture, nor understand the reasons behind many of our activities.
- Scores for line manager behaviour were poor.
- People felt under-valued (just 34% felt they received the recognition they deserve)

As a result, our average engagement score was 51% which, though not far off the industry benchmark, was below the high standards we set for us and our people. With the proven link between employee engagement and customer service delivery, this was likely to be impacting on performance and ultimately our ability to deliver a better customer journey.

## Improving Engagement

Our response to this challenge was a company-wide engagement strategy that overhauled everything from communication tools and channels right through to managers' ways of working.

The programme had a clear aim: To improve passenger experience, by improving employee engagement. We undertook extensive research across the company to really understand what makes our people tick, find out what they *really* think and most crucially, where we were really falling short.

The engagement programme we developed had four key strands:

- Enabling our people to having their say
- Listening to our people and customers
- Acting on feedback and ideas
- Finding new ways of working



Supporting these four strands was an internal communications strategy, which we branded 'Making our people's journey better' - a reflection of our company strap line 'Making every journey better' and a reminder that our people are key to achieving this vision. The chosen branding was an umbrella, with each colour of the umbrella representing the different strands of our engagement programme created to 'make your journey better'.

Some examples of the activities we undertook:

- **Team Briefs:** to encourage colleague co-operation, communication and increased awareness of business strategy we introduced a minimum of three face-to-face team briefings a year covering the team's role in the big vision, how to improve passenger experience as well as providing an opportunity for colleagues to share ideas and experiences.
- **Time with Your Manager:** our 'Time with your manager' strand is all about relationship building and appreciation between managers and their team. For example, every member of staff now has a minimum of two face-to-face conversations a year with their line manager.
- **Employee Survey:** we have introduced an annual employee engagement survey as a genuine two-way communication tool and opportunity for our people to directly influence strategy and operations. We now take the key issues and suggestions and action them.

Finally, running through every one of the coloured strands is reward and recognition.

Our research had shown that staff felt undervalued and their hard work not recognised. We have ensured staff now get the recognition they deserve through:

- Our new 'Exceptionally Southern' recognition programme aimed at driving local recognition from line managers as well as corporate level acknowledgment of our peoples achievements.
- Enhanced our employee benefit programme by offering even more discounts across a range of retail and leisure activities.
- Launched 'Share in Success' - an employee bonus scheme linked to business performance.

#### **Benefits to the organisation, financial and motivational**

Three years in and the picture at Southern is very different. Southern is now IIP bronze accredited, engagement is up, staff turnover down and we are delivering 82% passenger satisfaction.

## People Engagement

Our 2011 staff survey reveals a significant increase in employee engagement from 51% to 58%. Participation in the survey alone was up 17% on the previous year and 10% above the TOC average, and our 2012 participation results are now in and we achieved 71%, an incredible increase of 33% participation since our first survey in 2010.

Overall, 68% of questions answered had a 5% or more increase in scores compared to the previous survey.

We have successfully encouraged managers to adopt new working practices, as evidenced by:

- 69% of employees across the business have been on the receiving end of a 121 conversation with their manager
- 81% staff say 'My manager treats me with respect' - an **increase** of 10%.
- An 11% **increase** in staff feeling managers care about their employees and they are able to contribute their views
- A 13% **in increase** staff belief that action will be taken and managers effectively communicate reasons behind change
- A 10% **increase** in confidence in managers and being treated with respect by a manager, and managers supporting development.
- A 9% **increase** in number of staff who felt encouraged to come up with innovative ideas, satisfaction with the amount of manager contact, and managers motivating and inspiring.
- 84% have experienced a team brief

Added to this our 2011 IIP report commented:

*"Virtually everybody spoken to said that managers and supervisors had improved since the changes made last year. People talked of managers that are approachable, encouraging of new ideas and very willing to listen.*

*Increasingly people are more aware of their business and how through their efforts the business will thrive."*

## Customer Engagement

Our latest internal Customer Experience Report (EQuIP) shows:

- 79% of stations scored in excess of 90%.
- Train performance scored 89% against a target of 85%
- Customer Service is 3% above target

### **Our National Passenger Scores echo this improvement with:**

59% of passengers rating availability of staff as 'satisfied' or 'good' (+2 from last survey)

Our latest results show that we have delivered an overall level of satisfaction of 82%.

*"Southern demonstrate a strong commitment to engaging staff at all levels, emphasising the important role that everyone plays in delivering the business objectives. What is particularly pleasing is to see a clear focus in all work*



*streams on harnessing everyone to deliver an improved service for the end-user, the passenger". Sharon Hedges, Passenger Issues Manager, Passenger Focus*

