

Our Networking Day at Royal Holloway, University of London

Employee Engagement & Development



September's successful networking event at the Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL) was a complete sell out. Even though we managed to persuade RHUL to extend the invites from 30 - 40, we still had a waiting list!! We have decided to do a brief summary of the day for those of you who missed out on this spectacular and interesting event. Thanks to all who attended and we hope you enjoyed the day.

A big thank you to the Commercial Services team at RHUL for hosting the day in the impressive picture gallery and for the most fantastic food that the catering team produced and served. The amazing tapas style breakfast brunch was only to be surpassed by the spectacular lunch. Both menus included interesting dishes so appetisingly presented as well as mouth wateringly tasty along with the excellent customer service provided by other team members.

RHUL have won many hospitality services awards - it's easy to see why!
 Carol Hay - Director of Marketing UK & Europe from the Caribbean Tourism Organisation described the day

"An interesting day listening to the views of the panel in a fantastic venue with outstanding catering"

Following initial introductions by Heather Lishman, Hospitality Assured Director, Gillian Almond – Director of Commercial Services at RHUL started off the event with the fascinating history of RHUL, the first women’s higher education college in Britain. The Founder’s Building and grounds are popular locations for TV shows and films. The art collections in the picture gallery, several quite inappropriate for young girls in the 19th century, include some of the 19th century’s most iconic works of art, originally purchased to form a collection for Thomas Holloway’s students in 1881.



A big thank you to our fantastic panel who kindly gave up their time. Neil Graham (SpaYse - International recruitment experts), Sophia Franc (Salt – consultancy service that brings out the best in people), and Kate Nightingale (Style Psychology Ltd - human experience consultancy) were the panel experts answering questions posed by Heather and from the floor, on the topic ‘Employee Engagement & Development - How to get it right’.

Enlightening responses and interesting and lively discussions followed around culture, induction, training, wellbeing, recruitment and selection trends and criteria, mental health, and engagement strategies especially with Millennials and Generation Z.

10 Key thoughts and learning from this session:

- Recruit for attitude not for skills
- Interview and treat people as an individual not an asset
- Culture and company values in recruitment and selection are critical. Base the interview on establishing if the company fits with the prospective employee’s ethos and values... not vice-versa
- Good questioning and listening skills are key. Ask questions on what the interviewee is passionate about, hobbies, travelling experiences. Listen and establish if their answers correlate with the company culture.
- Develop innovative approaches to the skills shortage. Link up with schools, colleges and develop apprenticeship programmes. Set up a Chefs school/academy.
- Live and breathe what the company is about. The culture, values, people, and strategy are talked about, understood and at the heart of all you do as a business.
- Millennials and Generation Z are concerned about making the world a better place - not necessarily about money. Joining a company that care about the environment, sustainability and people is important as is joining a ‘family’
- Appraisals with no surprises, supported by on-going coffee/job/welfare chats and focussed on the employee because you know their aspirations.
- ‘One Company’, ‘One Family’ ethos exists. ‘It’s not my job’ attitude is not an option. Cross training and job swaps enable a consistent approach.
- Mental Health training and a proactive supportive approach especially is terms of recognising the symptom’s of stress and mental health issues. Involve staff in developing the policy and strategy.

The Afternoon Session

HA Director, Max Lawrence introduced some interesting thoughts on team wellbeing in the workplace and identified that many of the steps in the Hospitality Assured standard can be linked to physical, psychological, social and health. Teams that feel great, are more likely physically and mentally to contribute in the work environment. Studies show in happiness mapping that work features as number two in a list of 40 things that make people unhappy, the first is ill health.

We were reminded that when we recruit, we recruit for technical skills and knowledge but we also take on the physical, emotional and psychological aspect of that individual as well. Studies show that managers are largely ill equipped to deal with spotting signs of workplace wellbeing and managing absence. A values driven culture is proven to be the number one driver on health in the workplace. Team members are looking for firstly values-aligned & ethical behaviour, teamwork, work environment and processes and lastly recognition. This is especially so as the Millennial generation become so prevalent in our work based teams.

A forum during the presentation encouraged delegates to share their workplace wellbeing practices. One organisation has implemented monthly wellbeing focused one-to-ones.

KEY TAKE AWAYS:

- Train managers/supervisors in identifying workplace wellbeing issues
- Develop a wellbeing charter
- Educate on healthy eating and diet
- Wellbeing initiatives are many and don't have to be costly
- Training does not always have to be technical. Positive thinking and Neuro Linguistic Programming workshops can be a very effective tool
- California employers were now responsible for the musculoskeletal wellbeing of housekeeping teams. This has slowly introduced a light exercise element into daily team briefings and it could be with us soon.

Measuring and Tracking Engagement

Trisha Bennett and Graham Walker, Hospitality Assured Director's, closed the session by exploring 'measuring and tracking engagement'.

We were reminded that the Hospitality Assured Standard requires every step to be tracked and measured to ensure effectiveness, enable trend analysis and improvement. Measuring and tracking is an aspect that many businesses find most challenging and therefore often results in the lowest scoring rating within the Hospitality Assured Standard.

'What gets measured - gets managed'

Key Points: ↓

- Implement employee surveys, pulse surveys and management by walk about to establish what is going well and not so well
- Develop action plans and set targets for improvement following analysis of employee surveys. Involve employees in this process.
- Measure the competency and behaviours of leaders and managers. Lead by example and a common purpose 'say what you do, do what you say'
- Practice flexible working and work life balance to truly value employees
- Implement appraisals, job/welfare chats and two-way communication. Include praise and constructive feedback. Set objectives and measure success
- Set measures for corporate social responsibility and involve staff
- Workspace and wellbeing are the foundations of staff engagement, everything is measurable.

