

BUSINESS GROWTH FOR DIAL-A-CAB

Qualification and skills specialist Best Practice is working with Dial-a-Cab to provide Level 2 National Vocational Qualifications to their Contact Centre staff. This programme has delivered a significant improvement in staff morale and engagement, driving up customer service through consistency and professionalism. Improved career development means Dial-a-Cab is attracting higher calibre candidates to its ever growing Contact Centre; whilst the commitment to professional qualifications is gaining significant approval from customers, boosting satisfaction and supporting an increase in business growth in excess of 16% in the past year.

STATE OF THE ART CALL CENTRE

When Dial-a-Cab was established in 1953 by a small number of taxi drivers, little could they have known how successful the operation would be today. The turnover last year was in excess of £50 million. The radio circuit moved to new premises at DAC House last year where they now accommodate a



fast growing team of 250 employees. With much of DAC's work coming from large corporate accounts the fully computerised dispatching system means thousands of trips are processed each day via its state-of-the-art Contact Centre, enabling customers to both book and track the driver's progress in real time.

In recent years, Dial-a-Cab has invested heavily in not only new technology and Contact Centre facilities but also in staff career development. As Daren Morley, training manager, Dial-a-Cab, explains: "Dial-a-Cab's sustained growth is highly dependent on the quality of the front line staff, both Contact Centre staff and drivers: customers must receive consistent, high quality service. One of the main problems with Contact Centres is that staff are often not part of the corporate culture. This can dent morale and undermine the quality of work. To ensure consistent service levels in a fast growing Contact Centre, Dial-a-Cab needed to invest in training and career development."

STAFF TRAINING FOR CALL CENTRE TEAM

In the past, Dial-a-Cab has provided initial staff induction training, then relied on supervisors to ensure call handling quality. However, with only limited call monitoring and no follow up training it was impossible to achieve consistency across every team or ensure staff remained motivated long term.

"Without continual development even the most efficient staff can become stale, disengaged and lack motivation," Morley insists. "By its very nature, Contact Centre work is often repetitive. Yet it is also extremely challenging, demanding the effective management of diverse customer needs and expectations. To keep staff engaged and involved in the organisation it is essential to provide career development."

Dial-a-Cab works hard to keep staff motivated, getting people to move around the Contact Centre to handle outbound as well as inbound calls, for example, to ensure variety. However, to really motivate and support employees, Dial-a-Cab decided to offer Contact Centre staff the opportunity to attain a Level 2 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). "NVQs are a great way of benchmarking performance against the industry standard," says Morley. "The qualification both enables staff to be assessed on their existing skills and hone those skills further. It also provides Dial-a-Cab with performance standards and a clear structure to support on going process improvements within the Contact Centre."

The company turned to training organisation Best Practice to deliver NVQ workshops and staff assessment. Morley explains, "Whilst the majority of Dial-a-Cab training is handled internally, NVQs demand lengthy and intensive staff assessment. Best Practice employs highly experienced assessors who can work closely with our staff to help them through the NVQ process."



The government is strongly committed to ongoing professional development, offering funding through a variety of bodies such as the Learning & Skills Council and Train to Gain. However, as Morley explains, it is often time consuming and complex to access this funding. "Best Practice has many years of delivering NVQs to a variety of organisations, both with and without government funding. That experience streamlined the process of applying for funding," he says. "Whilst Dial-a-Cab is committed to delivering career progression through nationally recognised qualifications, the ability to harness government funding without doubt boosted board level commitment to the project."

Some Dial-a-Cab staff had initial reservations about 'going back to school' and fears about the amount of work involved. However, Best Practice was able to allay those fears and has tailored the NVQ programme to meet the company's specific needs. This has included the removal of the cross/up selling module, since these skills are not required at Dial-a-Cab. In addition, Best Practice has streamlined the number of workbooks from six to three, enabling the entire NVQ to be achieved within three months. As Morley explains, "By reducing the time taken to attain the NVQ, Dial-a-Cab can ensure individuals continue to be motivated throughout the process and, critically, we lose few candidates to natural wastage."

TRAINING TO BE OFFERED TO CAB DRIVERS

To date, 46 Contact Centre staff have achieved NVQ Level 2 qualifications, with eight team leaders also taking the Team Leader NVQ. After the initial reluctance, the company now has a waiting list of employees keen to join the programme. Dial-a-Cab is now embarking on an NVQ programme with their cab drivers, under a government funded programme by Go Skills. Drivers will attain an NVQ Level 2 in passenger transport - encompassing customer service, dealing with difficult customers and passengers with disability.

In addition to gaining significant staff commitment, the introduction of the NVQ programme has enabled Dial-a-Cab to refine and improve its customer service policies. "We have added components to the training, such as handling difficult customers, to reflect the requirements of the NVQ," Morley explains. "The programme has also provided staff with a greater understanding of the entire customer service process, including the role of team leaders, which has helped to drive up standards."

As Chairman Brian Rice, concludes: "We are extremely pleased with the number of staff participating in the NVQ programme to-date and the continued interest in development, which will only help to enhance the quality of our Call Taker and our overall reputation. Dial-a-Cab are committed to staff training and producing the best qualified staff within our industry, for the benefit of not only the client but also for our organisation. It is now through our work with Best Practice that we are able to clearly demonstrate our position at the forefront of the industry."

