

the client

Buchanan Galleries is a high-profile shopping centre of 80 retail outlets in the heart of Glasgow which, since its opening in March 1999, has proved hugely popular, attracting 400,000 customers per week. The centre is managed by 'Buchanan Galleries Centre Management'; a private limited company that employs 62 people. The company takes care of customer service (both to the individual shoppers and to the business customers on site), security, cleaning, car park facilities, administration, marketing and management.

staff development

Approached in the summer of 2003, Buchanan Galleries were attracted to working with WBS due to the kind of employee development we were offering the company. As Hamish Millar, (Centre Manager) comments,

'We're always looking for opportunities to develop the staff. When Workbase Scotland approached me and asked if we'd be interested in having a Training Needs Analysis conducted with the view to providing communications training - I saw this as an excellent opportunity for staff development.'

The Training Needs Analysis, conducted in November 2003 showed a wide range of different communication skill requirements. These skills ranged from providing a polite and coherent information to shoppers, to dealing with aggressive behaviour, to writing incident and accident reports and calculating space in the car park. From the information gathered from the TNA, a series of courses were designed by Workbase Scotland – covering Writing Skills, Number Skills and Interpersonal Skills.

positive feedback

The end of course evaluations from participants were overwhelmingly positive showing that almost everyone benefited from the training. According to Hamish,

'Feedback from the employees has been very positive. The tutor from Workbase Scotland arrived here and delivered the courses how management hoped they would – in a very professional manner. I think some of the staff didn't know what to expect at first but everyone enjoyed the courses and seemed to benefit. And, importantly, they were all prepared to say that they had benefited too, which is encouraging.'

outcomes

Although it is perhaps too early to measure the effect of the training on individuals and the company's performance, Hamish Millar commented

'I know a lot of the staff have to write incident reports - a number of them have been given the confidence in their own ability on paper to do that better. Writing and number ability can't be turned around overnight. But, for example, in the car park, the team leaders who did the Number skills course found it really useful for understanding how the figures for reports are put together (reading charts, working out percentages etc.) This will, of course, improve the feedback we get from them.'

According to Grant Currie, Operations Manager at Buchanan Galleries, there have been visible improvements in specific communication skills,

'I have noticed that written communication is improving e.g. incident reports and patrol checklists etc. I have also noticed in the Control Room that our assistants are more confident in communicating with colleagues and contractors due to the participation in the Interpersonal Skills Course. I would also comment that overall, the training has been good for motivating the staff due to the opportunity of self-development.'

On customer service, Hamish commented

'We are entirely committed to providing excellent customer service and that's all about communication, so if we improve communication at any level, we improve our service to our customers.'

