

CASE STUDY

# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT; WHY IT'S WORTH THE INVESTMENT

SkillsActive has been promoting the benefits of training and staff development for some time now, but do employers think this investment is paying off and has the sector learnt anything new?

West Lothian Leisure is a social enterprise that delivers access to public sport and leisure services in the local community in Scotland. It manages ten multi purpose leisure facilities and employs over 180 staff. West Lothian Leisure has recognised the need and benefit of integrating training initiatives into all levels of the organisation.

Training and development manager, Ian Henry, joined West Lothian Leisure having previously gained experience in the private sector. He recognised the need to evaluate the skills gaps in an organisation that is constantly changing and moving forward and began working on a strategy to improve the training opportunities available to the staff;

“My aim for West Lothian Leisure was to improve the training we provide across the whole of the business. This meant identifying our skills gaps and addressing them accordingly. We have invested in development for the whole of the organisation; for facility managers, the senior management team but also for all employees on the ground. We identified that our lifeguards, gym instructors, duty managers, coaches and reception staff were the ones who have the biggest impact, in terms of service excellence, on our customers. It therefore is equally important that we invest in our entire workforce’s personal development and improve skills.”

“It was crucial to integrate national occupational standards (NOS) into our training strategy, ensuring our staff are continually equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, as identified by the sector, to excel in their job roles. I am also a firm advocate of the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs), and encourage all of our staff to undergo the necessary training to achieve their appropriate status on the register.”

“We have also invested in a unique and comprehensive two month induction programme for all our staff which includes an assessment at the end of the induction, helping us to identify any skills gaps and then provide the relevant training needs for our staff at an early stage. We have found that getting employee buy-in is really valuable.”



“We have offered our facility managers ownership of their training plans and got staff involved from the outset. When staff understand both the personal and organisational benefits of training they are more likely to invest their time and effort into the initiatives. I would say that a competent well-trained workforce is vital to the success of your business.”

“We have linked employee development reviews to employee one to ones, meaning that there is just one document being revisited each month, and this ensures that our employee’s contribution to the business and the required development and support is constantly at the forefront of all of our minds. Workforce development doesn’t always have to cost a lot. I also think it’s about being innovative and creative with style and delivery. For example, ensuring that health and safety training is heavily attended and is consistent across the business can be a challenge. The coordinating of staff across the business and the inclusion of external training providers to deliver health and safety can potentially have huge cost implications, so we decided to implement

compulsory health and safety training days covering all the necessary topics run over eight specific days, the larger groups brought the costs down and ensured over the period a significant improvement on attendance.”

“I would also recommend partnership building with colleges, universities or training providers. My work with colleges and universities has enabled me, as an employer, to have a voice in the development frameworks of courses becoming available to staff - educational institutions are keen to hear from employers, taking advice from people actually working in the sector. Partnership building also helps with funding and encourages good practice across the sector.”

To find out more about the vocational and professional courses and workshops available for staff and managers alike visit: [www.westlothianleisure.com](http://www.westlothianleisure.com)

For more information on NOS, REPS or other training initiatives which may benefit your organisation contact Ben Gittus at SkillsActive: 020 7632 2000

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