

# CASE STUDY



## THE HEADLAND HOTEL

*“This new approach helped us maximise skills and capabilities linked to employee benefits, and the organisational strategy, to effectively bring into line people and objectives for the business. By managing change effectively we feel we have ensured that we continue to exceed customer expectations and for such a simple process what we gained was beyond our expectations and our people’s.”*

**Michelle Brown,**  
Human Resources Manager

### BACKGROUND

- Size:** 107 employees
- Sector:** Hospitality
- Location:** Newquay
- Status:** Most recently recognised in 2008

### THE ORGANISATION

The Headland Hotel is a luxury hotel in Newquay, and is a blend of Victorian grandeur and casual luxury. A classic icon of the stunning coastline on which it stands, this four-star hotel is a family-run establishment with charming staff whose aim is to engage with guests and make them feel welcome.

The Headland Hotel has been recognised regionally and nationally, winning many awards, both for its high quality accommodation and food, and also for its approach to employing and developing staff. The Headland was the first company in Cornwall to gain Investor in People status in January 1993 and have recently taken part in the pilot of the new approach from Investors in People as they take training and development of their team very seriously.



- The review ‘firmed up’ areas that need improving and will help to engage staff in moving the hotel forward.
- The draft action plan was very useful in summarising improvement areas and to assist with practical action planning.
- Staff now feel more able to raise issues but also come up with solutions.

## THE CHALLENGE

The Hotel is experiencing a period of considerable change, with a £17.5 million investment planned for a new conference centre and leisure facilities – one of the most significant investments in Cornwall's tourism industry in recent years. This follows their £10 million investment in Cornwall's first 5 star holiday village. Their many returning customers will see more change than ever before and this has the potential to cause much disquiet if not managed well by the entire Headland team.

The Hotel management team had set a definitive business objective for 2008 and to gain more within their Investors in People review. However it became apparent that the new approach was a more productive way to use the review and they were totally signed on to this once it became clear. Engaging their people with this was a primary importance as they planned to interview approximately 31 staff from a workforce of 107 employees (29%).

They had also undertaken the re branding of 2 of their restaurants as part of the refurb. They wanted to make the formal one slightly more relaxed, in tune with current trends, whilst maintaining the separate identity of the informal one. This re brand was crucial, and imperative to the success was that the staff were fully involved. They embraced it all in name but not the ethos of what it was all about. Staff found it difficult to sign on to this without actually seeing it and they hoped The Standard would help identify what was expected of them.

The challenge was furthermore to make sure there was enough stretch for their people to grow into the changes that were happening and to make sure they were all aligned. The task of cascading information and knowledge across a busy hotel and impart the most important information to their people made them determined to get the most out of The Standard. They wanted to use the review and any information gleaned as emphasis on action not just assessment. It was also hoped it would help drive down costs by making the best of their people by delivering improvement which would then impact on the bottom line.

## THE STRATEGY

They compiled a review plan tailored to reflect the information relevant to the new approach from Investors in People planning process following discussions with their assessor. The appropriate evidence requirements across the framework were identified, again drawing from (but not duplicating) the mapping example, and a matrix was incorporated within the review plan.

Whilst the management team were keen on having good practice recognised, they also wanted to focus on improving their performance. The new approach provided a cost-effective means of identifying current strengths that will support the effective management of change, but would also highlight areas that might be improved. The main body of the report centred on good practices within the hotel which supported effective change management and potential for improvement.

The Standard identified both good practice achieved and where and how it was established. This evidence put them in a great place to gain the most from the standard and demonstrated how the process was not a one off but could develop with them and continue to provide company growth. Focus was on the planning of key issues to take forward and facilitate the practical delivery of improvements to support change management. The action plan considered four themes for further improvement:

- Vision and strategies for change
- Communication
- Performance indicators
- Developing management capacity

Additional 'paper' evidence was accumulated as the review progressed, at the suggestion of interviewees, offering a document as a good example to illustrate a particular practice.

## THE RESULTS

The new approach from Investors in People enabled The Headland Hotel to explore some of the factors that they felt needed to move forward in order to implement change successfully, for example: communicating with and engaging staff more fully in change; empowering staff to implement new ways of working; line managers being more proactive in delegating to team members, etc. Top management have a very proactive approach in involving staff in plans for improving the Hotel and its performance. But it was felt that this could be taken further, and cascaded more effectively within individual departments. However communication was identified as exceptionally strong across the business which is something they hold as a high priority especially within their sector.

Staff retention has undoubtedly improved year on year since participating in Investors in People and new staff often approach them because of The Standard. As a company they are exceptionally people driven which puts them at the heart of the business. They therefore offer exceptional staff benefits and career progression which is seen as a paramount part of their employment. Even though progression with Investors in People has meant they expect more from their people this is reflected in what they get back. Demonstrated by the fact they have achieved a high consistency with their current management team. People want to work at the hotel and they attract the right staff because of the clear path The Standard demonstrates encouraging applications even when no jobs are advertised!

The framework of the new approach from Investors in People was seen as very straightforward and was easily tailored to support their changes and particularly to help the management team to engage staff. Staff were aware of the way Investors in People has helped the hotel to manage their business issues effectively. They now feel more able to raise issues but also come with a solution because they are passionate about what they do and want themselves and the business to thrive. It helped them to see the value in their participation, thus ensuring that their contribution was very constructive. It also helped employees focus on what they required from the restaurants to make them work seamlessly following all the changes.

Working with The Standard the Hotel Directors and HR Manager's objective was to confirm understanding of the feedback contained within the report. This gave transparency to what they hoped to achieve which in turn helped to drive staff through the changes that were imminently going to happen. Investors in People principals now sit alongside their action plan making sure as a collective they all understand the key objectives.

Key points from the feedback were:

- The report format was thorough; understandable and 'made sense'
- It 'firmed up' areas that need improving and will help to engage staff in moving the hotel forward
- It gave a thorough understanding of the breadth of good practices in place
- The draft action plan was very useful in summarising improvement areas and to assist with practical action planning
- Overall an effective approach for a review and delivered good value for money

## INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSOR COMMENTS

Clive Tabiner, Investors in People assessor comments, "This review demonstrates that the new approach from Investors in People can be a fairly short – in this case 7 weeks - but have a deep impact. We reaffirmed their action plan and the senior managers involved consulted widely with their departmental managers, to ensure that there was good 'buy in' throughout the hotel."