



CABLE & WIRELESS

Cable & Wireless

Cable & Wireless is one of the world's leading international communications companies. It operates integrated telecommunications companies in 33 countries offering mobile, broadband, domestic and international fixed line services to residential and business customers, with principal operations in the Caribbean, Panama, Macau, Monaco and the Channel Islands. The Europe, Asia and United States business unit provides enterprise and carrier solutions to the largest users of telecoms services across the UK, US, continental Europe and Asia, and wholesale broadband services in the UK.

The Business Challenge

Over the past few years, Cable & Wireless has undergone massive change, including downsizing and restructuring in order to improve performance. It has expanded into new markets, and exited various countries. As part of these changes, the company decided it needed to re-energise its performance management process, so that its employees could deliver the business strategy effectively.

Peter Dugmore, a senior member of the Reward and Performance team at Cable & Wireless commented that “the performance management system had lost credibility. It was strongly linked to bonus payments, and because of the large number of organisational changes, there was a lack of management capability in, and commitment to, the system. Employees were challenging us over pay, asking how fair decisions could be made around salary and specifically bonus decisions, when the system was not robust. In addition, the performance management ratings were used as criteria for redundancy selection causing further angst amongst those staff who felt that if the system was not being used properly, then decisions could not be made fairly.”

Cable & Wireless recognised that their managers needed further training to effectively use the performance management system that had been put in place. Peter explained that “there was a definite understanding amongst senior management that something needed to be done – that performance management needed to change.”

Cable & Wireless had already engaged a number of consultants to help decide what the performance management framework should look like, but approached Hunter Roberts to help drive a better understanding of the new processes. At the time Peter said “I had previously worked with Hunter Roberts in a previous role, and knew that they could deliver a robust programme. We didn't have the internal resources ourselves – and so it was important to work with a partner. ”

The Solution

Peter describes the solution that Hunter Roberts worked on, “initially, Hunter Roberts helped to scope out the improvements we wanted to make, and provided further ideas and structure to our processes. The team then devised a programme of e-learning and workshop modules called ‘Managing for High Performance’ that would be rolled out to all managers.” Susy Roberts, Director of Hunter Roberts, explained that “it was important to introduce an e-learning module as the managers were busy, and we needed to minimise the time they would be out of the office. The e-learning module allowed employees to complete preparation work prior to the workshops at their own pace, and at a time that was convenient.”

For Cable & Wireless, the combination of e-learning and workshops was a new approach. The modular training had significant advantages, in that the training was not completed in one block, enabling managers to manage their time out of the office more effectively. Hunter Roberts decided to use human resources professionals at Cable & Wireless to help roll out the workshops. The human resources staff that volunteered were put through a one-day assessment centre to ascertain whether they had the skills to facilitate the workshops, and received tough and specific feedback around their capabilities. Feedback from them was extremely positive, and helped individuals clarify whether this was an activity they wanted to be involved with.

Susy was pleased with the success of this first stage, “this assessment centre process really raised the profile of the forthcoming workshops, as people across the business were hearing about the robust methods used to ensure the right people were helping to facilitate the programme.” The first module was open to all employees to raise the level of comprehension about performance management. It was approached in two different ways, depending on the delegates. Some were run with mixed groups of managers who wanted to gain an understanding of how to set objectives effectively, and how to put measures in place. Others gathered their entire teams together, and enabled the group to set both individual and team objectives at the workshop.

Measuring Success

The new robust performance management system at Cable & Wireless ensures that all employees have clarity about the organisation’s strategic vision, and that this is cascaded down into team and individual objectives. The ongoing programme has to date seen around 600 employees attend with minimal disruption to the everyday operation of the business. Employees now have clear objectives with strong measures of success in place. A significantly improved culture of coaching and feedback has been created to support increased business performance, and an enhanced focus on individual development. The level of debate and challenge around objective setting is of a high standard, and employees are now clear about their ongoing development.



Peter was delighted with the outcome, “the visible commitment to performance management has been welcomed across the organisation. The workshop approach has been very well received, particularly as they were run as ‘working sessions’ enabling delegates to leave with clear results each time. We have done this in two ways – first, in the introduction of a changed performance management system which has been accepted across the business. Secondly, we have looked at the end of our last financial year, when formal assessments are held. During this time, assessments were managed smoothly and efficiently and we saw very few disputes with regards to the ratings and subsequent pay reviews that employees received. Employees are feeling much more positive about their ratings, due to the increased transparency of the process.”

Peter added “we have had a very flexible and positive relationship with Hunter Roberts. The quality of the Hunter Roberts team running the workshops has added significant credibility to the training, ensuring a consistent high quality. Hunter Roberts was invaluable in helping us manage constant organisational change, keeping the momentum going. The fact that other people throughout the business have since asked Hunter Roberts for help in other areas is a testament to their abilities.”