

Silversea is the leading provider of luxury cruises in the small luxury cruise ship market. It has a fleet, purpose-built for luxury, establishing a new class of smaller vessels that could access exotic ports off the beaten path. Specifically designed for fewer guests, they have more space and the highest levels of personalised service, combined with the sort of amenities you would expect on a large cruise ship. Silversea has consistently been awarded the highest accolades by leading consumer and trade publications.

The Business Challenge

As a luxury cruise operator Silversea had been voted the “World’s Best” by Conde Nast readers for seven consecutive years until 2003. In that year, Silversea did not win the award and such are the high standards demanded in the business that this led to an immediate analysis of what had happened. It was felt that standards on board the fleet needed addressing and that this could be traced to issues with on-board leadership. In order to regain the number one spot in the industry, Silversea embarked on a number of people and commercial initiatives, using Hunter Roberts to work alongside the business to analyse problems and implement the right solutions

It quickly became apparent to the Hunter Roberts team that recruiting and developing the right people was critical in the delivery of the standards demanded by their customer base. In addition, building the capability of leadership on board was essential. During the research period, Hunter Roberts was able to identify a number of organisational issues including; the range of different working hours and environments, long shifts over sustained periods, living closely with work colleagues, facing customers up to 15 hours a day and the cultural problems of a staff base of 39 different nationalities.

The Solution

These factors meant that anyone with a people responsibility needed to draw on a significant management toolkit to lead effectively and to create a motivational environment in which to manage their people’s performance, it was clear that a management development programme was needed, specifically addressing leadership competencies and how their individual leadership style impacts staff.

Hunter Roberts worked alongside the business to construct a modular package of development that could be delivered in line with the demanding working environment of the ship and still make a personal impact for the managers on board. Two programmes were developed covering leadership behaviour, personal analysis, sharing of experiences and ways of working. This was accompanied by on the job shadowing and feedback from the Hunter Roberts team. The training

was both targeted and stimulating, given that it was being slotted into an already hectic schedule for managers.

At the time Silversea had no dedicated HR resource on board to identify and deal with people issues. This project led to the recognition that HR managers need to be recruited for all ships, with Hunter Roberts supporting their induction.

Measuring Success

Feedback from delegates has been excellent. In particular, line managers felt motivated by individual time spent with them on developing their teams. Since the initial programme was introduced, managers have a deeper understanding of their leadership styles, and their impact on staff cultural issues. This has led to a dramatic change in leadership culture on board with more personal accountability and ownership being encouraged through targeted, flexible and appropriate leadership styles being applied.

The change has also been recognised by customers. In 2007 alone Silversea won the following; "Five Star Diamond Award" from the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences, "Number One" small-ship line in the Readers' Choice" survey conducted by Britain's *Condé Nast Traveller* magazine, "Five Anchors" for Gastronomy and Service in Germany's *Kreuzfahrt* Guide; "Best Small Cruise Line" by Australia's *Luxury Travel* Magazine and "Best Luxury Cruise Operator" according to Asia's *Travel Weekly*.