

Case Study: AmicusHorizon

During 2010 Amicus Horizon with a new management team in place began to overhaul the company's performance. They approached culture change very actively, realizing that to embed change, you need every part of the business to display the behaviour and attitude you want the managers and staff to adopt. Steve Walker, the new Chief Executive, decided on two programmes for all staff: a customer care introduction run by Mary Gober International and our Customer-friendly Writing programme. Amicus asked us to embed a customer-focussed culture through written communication, which was very different to the bureaucratic writing style they had in place. As part of our brief they also asked us to align our messages with some of those from their customer service training provided by Mary Gober.

We worked in partnership with the management team to plan the programme. We began with sessions to take the 'top 100' through the training so that they were the first to learn about the new way of writing. This made sure those who followed could rely on support from their managers as they adapted to the new writing style. As well as the training, Amicus reinforced the messages with regular poster campaigns, video clips from the trainers for staff conference days, and a new rule for board reports excluding any that had not passed the 'Park Sims' good writing test.

After a year of engaging with the programme, we held a review session for the 35 most senior managers and directors to give them the confidence to coach the writing techniques.

AmicusHorizon improved hugely its customer service standards, winning several awards in the year after the programme began and beyond.

Of any one thing, their success is down to the drive and enthusiasm of the senior team. They made sure that the messages they put in place – from a variety of suppliers including us – were repeated and publicized, embodied in the way they behaved and reinforced by the standards they demanded from everyone around them. We were delighted to be a part of the culture change process.

So what did we learn from working with Amicus? To be effective any learning intervention needs to have support from the top – with genuine support and enthusiasm from the leadership, huge change becomes possible. But even when you're done, you're not done. Change is continuous. And culture will always change to adapt to the environment... It's only when you keep your focus on the change you need, that you get the change you deserve.