

Case Study // imago Services - Strengths-based Performance Management



imago Services is the brand name for the hospitality department at Loughborough University, which includes 2 hotels and a campus serving 5,500 students with a full catering offering. imago has an established and enviable reputation in the hospitality and university sector, having won many national awards. imago employs a diverse workforce of 650 staff.

The Challenge

imago Services was looking to introduce a performance management process that would:

- Link directly to imago's values
- Be easy for managers to adopt and use in practice
- Enable managers to help people develop and perform against the delivery of their targets
- Harness individual capability to deliver organisational performance
- Be person-centred and have the buy-in and support of staff.

Capp's Approach

Capp worked in partnership with Ellie Roberts to establish what 'outstanding performance' looked like. This was achieved through focus groups with high performing staff across the business and interviews conducted with managers and senior leaders. Following on from this:

- Content analysis established the most frequent themes, clustered by strengths, which were in turn validated by key stakeholders
- Post validation, a levelled strengths-based performance matrix was developed, highlighting that all levels from 1-7 had 6 strengths in common. Additional strengths were required as responsibilities increased
- At level 7, performance was measured against 13 strengths, from which Capp designed a strengths-based appraisal process
- Strengths champions were identified and a cartoonist illustrated each strengths champion using their respective strength
- Capp trained imago's internal HR team to deliver strengths-based performance management training for managers and employees.

Ellie Roberts, HR
 Director, imago
 Services says "We are now confident that managers and staff can understand exactly what their strengths are and how these relate to their required capabilities for their work performance. This tool helps us to determine where we need to develop and/or focus our staff to meet the business requirements but also recognises their individual strengths."

Outcomes

Part of Ellie's ambition for this project was for employees to view performance conversations positively. As a result, the strengths-based performance management process was called 'Celebrating You', given its emphasis on making the most of the strengths of each person and aligning those strengths to business performance. Key outcomes from the project included:

- Improved business performance
- Better performance management conversations between managers and employees
- Increased clarity of strengths language and strengths use
- Improved engagement and performance against individual objectives
- Clearer progression and promotion criteria for staff to progress within imago.

This project was also featured as an invited presentation at the 2nd Applied Positive Psychology Conference (April 2009), and as a case study in IDS HR Studies 938 (March 2011), pages 26-32.