

Manchester Celebrates Training Award Winners

Two Manchester Based Businesses Win National Training Awards

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Two Manchester based organisations are celebrating after success at this year's National Training Awards, the UK's premier accolade for organisations and individuals that have achieved excellence through training. RBS Insurance (Direct Line Brand) and Optimum Contact Solutions were amongst the six North West winners at a recent ceremony held at the Palace Hotel, Manchester.

Direct Line Insurance set out to 'remodel' its army of contact centre representatives (CCRs) by giving them new competence training. The solution was 'Developing Excellence', a programme that has earned Direct Line, now part of RBS Insurance, a coveted National Training Award.

Under the programme 1,743 CCRs, who work on the phones dealing with customer queries, were trained between January 2004 and December 2005. The business benefits have been significant. Staff turnover rates in contact centres are generally high, many leaving within the first 12 months. At Direct Line staff turnover has been reduced from more than 50 per cent to 12 per cent – saving the company in marketing, recruitment and training costs.

Optimum Contact Solutions, the contact centre division of Littlewoods Shop Direct Group faced a challenge to resolve cultural differences between companies when they merged to create one new venture. Training was the answer so they up-skilled their learning and development managers who then developed and delivered a two-day training programme for 480 managers to address performance management issues and help drive through behavioural change.

The Delivering High Performance workshop helped improve managers' ability to conduct quality performance reviews of staff and create a high performing organisation. So far, 98 per cent of managers have completed the course and the remainder will attend this year.

Again, the company has achieved significant benefits with a 10 per cent reduction in customer complaints, a demonstrable increase in sales and an increase in staff attendance.

At the ceremony television presenter Suzi Perry presented both companies with golden tickets to the National Training Awards UK gala ceremony on 14 December at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, London, where they will receive their trophies.

Award sponsors included the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Elaine Bowker, Director for LSC Greater Manchester said:

“I extend my warmest congratulations to Direct Line Insurance and Optimum Contact Solutions. These success stories are an inspiration about what can be achieved through learning. These awards have always been about excellence, achievement and improvement. We all benefit from a highly skilled workforce: the individuals themselves, because they are able to fulfil their potential and the organisations who employ them, because they have motivated, loyal and creative employees.”

In a successful night for the area four other Greater Manchester organisations also received recognition with North West Training Awards; First Trans Pennine Express and Pipex Home Call, both from Manchester, and Salford based companies Ashtead Plant Hire Company Ltd, in partnership with Ian Woodward (DLD Solutions), Luton and First Choice Holidays, in partnership with Blue Sky Consulting, Guildford.

The City and Guilds Award also found its way back to Greater Manchester, won by Darran Glenn Yates from Wigan.

Ends

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NOTES TO EDITORS

National Training Award

Cumbria: Karen James, Penrith and Paul Irving, Ulverston

Greater Manchester: Optimum Contact Solutions, Manchester and RBS Insurance (Direct Line Brand), Manchester

Isle of Man: Fairbairn Private Bank Limited, Douglas

Lancashire: Burnley College, Burnley

North West Training Award

Greater Manchester: First Trans Pennine Express, Manchester, Pipex Home Call, Manchester, Ashtead Plant Hire Company Ltd, Salford, in partnership with Ian Woodward (DLD Solutions), Luton, First Choice Holidays, Salford, in partnership with Blue Sky Consulting, Guildford and **City & Guilds Award Winner** Darran Glenn Yates, Wigan

Greater Merseyside: Johnsons Apparelmaster, Bootle, Everyday Financial Solutions, Bootle and Mersey Care NHS Trust, Liverpool

Lancashire: United Utilities North West, Hoscar, in partnership with C2B Media Limited, Sheffield and Legal & Trade Financial Services Ltd, Preston

Learning and Skills Council

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

Top Level Messages

- We plan and invest in high quality education and training for young people and adults that will build a skilled and competitive workforce.
- We help employers to get the training and skills they need for their business.
- We are transforming the further education sector to meet the needs of employers and the local community.
- We are committed to improving learning opportunities for everyone.