

Developing
efficiencies,
partnerships
& excellence

TOTC plays key role in helping Fenland District Council to achieve Government acclaimed 'Excellent' status

When The Outsourced Training Company (TOTC) won the contract to deliver a comprehensive Management Development Programme to Fenland District Council against stiff competition from over 70 training companies, it was the beginning of a journey that has resulted in the council becoming one of the most successful authorities in the country.

TOTC's private sector management training skills were a key element in the Fenland District Council journey to achieve official Government recognition as an 'Excellent' authority.

TOTC not only devised and delivered a bespoke training package for 60 middle managers and rising stars, it worked with the senior management team to ensure what had been learned was embedded into the council's new thrusting, go-ahead culture.

Fenland's Chief Executive, Tim Pilsbury embarked on a complete restructure of the senior management team, streamlining it and realigning responsibilities in line with services that local people said they wanted.

It was a bold move to comprehensively canvas public opinion on the council's service priorities and then create the senior management team to deliver those services.

It led to the formation of four town one-stop shops that integrated fully with a new in-house contact centre. Both the contact centre and the one-stop shops for all council services, bill paying, planning inquiries and benefits claims, now consistently achieve above 99 per cent public satisfaction levels.

In addition, it paved the way for the council to aspire to change the economic fortunes of Fenland by embarking on a massive £50m regeneration of a derelict and contaminated river front site. The Nene Waterfront Regeneration Project has won several prestigious national awards and it is acknowledged at the highest level in Government that Fenland consistently punches above its weight.

The top-to-bottom culture change and management restructure led to a highly motivated workforce at all levels that now revel in the fact that their council has won more than 35 national awards in the last 18 months.



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So what did TOTC do to help Fenland District Council achieve this astonishing transformation?

Firstly, their pitch for the contract wowed the council. Shari Khan, the council's internal project manager, said: "We were extremely impressed with the fact that they were very creative and that they were prepared to challenge us. They have been ideal partners on our journey to excellence and we continue to work with them on developing our middle managers.

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TOTC began by conducting a 360 degree review of candidates roles, abilities and performance, which culminated in a report to the council's senior management team as the basis for devising a tailored training programme.

Six training modules with associated assignments were specifically developed to ensure learning was embedded into the new culture. The modules were designed to be delivered to groups of 12 delegates at a time. The modules, based on the council's core competencies, were: Interpersonal effectiveness, effective leadership, managing workloads and pressure, managing performance, coaching and developing others and managing Fenland's future.

In addition to the main modules, a set of four 'bite-sized' topical modules were also created encompassing the managing of change and creativity. All delegates submit a final piece of work for appraisal.

Performance evaluation is conducted through both self assessment and outside assessment in order to build a clear picture of each delegates strengths and weaknesses.

After the modules have been completed, TOTC trainers and each delegate meet to evaluate how the newly-acquired learning is being transferred to the workplace. Then the 360 degree appraisal of each delegate is repeated so that the senior management team can get a clear handle on how the training is being absorbed and how it is changing the performance and the culture of the authority. The whole training programme is endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).

Close liaison between TOTC's project manager, Sue Oliver and her counterpart at Fenland District Council, Shari Khan, ensured the programme has remained on-track and has delivered the outcomes identified by the council's senior management team.

Fenland's Deputy Chief Executive, Sandra Claxton, said: "We embarked on a journey that took a 'fair' performing council to an 'excellent' performing council. We leapfrogged the Government's 'good' performance category, something that has never been done before by any district council in the country.

"Our astonishing success is largely down to giving our staff the management tools to do the job and giving them the confidence and desire to go for gold. Our Management Training Programme, delivered by The Outsourced Training Company has played a key role in helping us to challenge and stimulate our middle managers and to give them the leadership tools to thrive in a dynamic and changing culture."

John Brownbill, TOTC's Chief Executive Officer, said: "We have been able to utilise many of the private sector management training techniques in delivering our tailor-made management development programme for Fenland District Council. "We have enjoyed a very fruitful partnership with the council and we are delighted that we have been able to contribute their remarkable success."



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