

case study



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Yell Group plc



Background

Size:	3,250 people
Sector:	Publishing and new media
Location:	International
Status:	First achieved the Standard in 1997. Awarded Investors in People Champion status in 2005, extended in 2009.

The organisation

From a single classified directory in Brighton in 1966, Yell has grown to become a leading international directories business operating in the classified advertising market in the United Kingdom, United States, Spain and Latin America.

In the UK, the Group's products and services include Yell.com, Yellow Pages and 118 24 7 directory enquiries service. Yell employs a team of 3,250 in the UK, 5,750 in the US and 3,000 in Spain and Latin America.

Strong and consistent revenue growth has been achieved through organic growth in existing markets, the development and launch of new products and services, and, internationally, through the acquisition of other directory companies.

- **In March 2008, Yell was ranked 9th in the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to work for**
- **Employee satisfaction is regularly over 90%**
- **Managers spend 80% of their time coaching which has a positive and lasting impact on levels of customer service.**

“Yell has been working with the Investors in People Standard since 1997, not because it's a ‘nice to have’ but because it delivers real benefits for our organisation.”

John Condron, Chief Executive



The challenge

Yell began a company-wide quality improvement programme in the mid-1980s with the aim of improving customer satisfaction by reducing errors, improving levels of service and delivering greater value for money.

This has led to Yell winning the European Quality Award on 2 occasions, the only company in Europe to have achieved this.

The strategy

In 1996 the Investors in People Standard was chosen by the senior team as a means of reviewing and further improving links between the desired quality culture and the leadership and people management practices. They also saw an opportunity to more closely align people management and development with business strategy and ensure that training and development activities clearly supported business, team and individual objectives.

"The pursuit of business excellence is seen as a strategic leadership issue in Yell," says Phil Barr, Head of HR. "The principles of excellence, such as providing clear purpose, developing and involving people, and continuous learning and improvement have been integral to our corporate strategy and values for over 20 years, and are now well embedded in our culture."

Continuous improvement is a company-wide responsibility shared by everyone at Yell. It is one of Yell's Values and is a core competency against which all Yell people are assessed in their annual performance review.

Typically, preparation for the Investors in People assessment at Yell involves an internal review against the standard using a cross-functional team sponsored by the executive group. The reviews have brought about a number of direct actions including the introduction of 'Yell leave' for people with caring responsibilities as well as the implementation of the Employee Advisory Service (EAR) - a counselling service designed to support Yell's work-life balance philosophy.

"We have got much smarter at tailoring development interventions to meet business, team and individual needs," says Philip. "Coaching skills have significantly improved and front line managers now spend 80% of their time coaching and developing their people."

Over the years improvements have included the introduction of Yell 'thank you' cards to reinforce spontaneous recognition, and the Yell Gold Awards for Excellence. Now in their ninth year, the Gold Awards are linked directly to Yell's Values and are the company's most prestigious form of recognition.

The results

In addition to awards for products and advertising campaigns and Investors In People recognition, Yell received the Queen's Award for Enterprise in 2002 and has won prizes for 'Leadership & Constancy of Purpose' and 'People Development & Involvement' in the European Quality Awards. In 1999 Yell won the European Quality Award and won it again in 2004 - the only company ever to win twice.

In March 2008, Yell was ranked 9th in the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to work for building on a rating of 22nd in 2005, and 93rd in 2004 in the same survey.

Internal measures of people satisfaction, such as those in the annual "Tell Yell" employee survey are outstanding. The independent research company which runs the survey has confirmed that Yell outperforms high performing company norms across all criteria.

Philip says: "We are very proud of the excellent response rates we achieve which are consistently in excess of 90%. This gives us great confidence in the accuracy of the results and in the relevance of improvement plans based upon them."



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