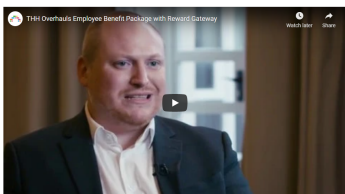


Tower Hamlets Homes

Tower Hamlets Homes improves employee wellbeing and customer satisfaction with 83% of employees registered and £314k employee spend



Summary

The team at Tower Hamlets Homes had four key aims in its engagement journey, identified through research and conducted as part of the wider business transformation. The main goal surrounded increasing employee engagement through new wellbeing initiatives, leading to higher customer satisfaction and fewer customer complaints across the board.

 Industry Social Housing	 Number of employees: 486
 Average age: 43 yrs	 Male to female ratio: 1.8:1
 Number of Locations: 200	 Platform features: Employee benefits, employee wellbeing, Childcare Vouchers

Being in the public sector brings challenges when it comes to offering staff reasonable pay increases, which is something that has had a negative effect on THH staff.



The challenge

Ten years ago, Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) was created through a staff transfer from the local council and its employee benefits offer hadn't changed since. As a result, it lacked a distinctive "THH identity". A February 2018 staff opinion "pulse" survey reported that only 57% of staff were proud to work for THH, and therefore there was a need to create a strong, exciting and distinctive THH offer that staff could see value in.

Being in the public sector brings challenges when it comes to offering staff reasonable pay increases, which is something that has had a negative effect on THH staff. In the October 2017 staff workshops, staff had consistently raised "reward and recognition" as an area they felt the company should be doing more work on.

The THH team wanted to evoke staff to take greater personal ownership of the customer experience. Feedback from customers brought up an area of concern with the services the organisation provides. Therefore, the team felt that giving staff greater ownership over the employee experience in terms of pay, benefits and wellbeing, would encourage the corresponding behaviour when it came to customers.

As an organisation, there are high sickness levels across the board compared to the industry average. As part of the pulse survey, the team had discovered that 47% of staff didn't believe THH cared about employee wellbeing, inspiring the team to develop a better employee wellbeing offering to reach beyond the traditional reactive approaches.

Lastly, a challenge was to develop a solution which would support THH's highly dispersed workforce, with 47% without office or computer access. And the remaining 53% employees spread across four separate offices, meaning communicating the launch of the solution was a barrier the organisation needed to overcome.

The team wanted to put in place a suite of benefits that would be low-admin, low-cost and showed that THH had a heightened interest in improving employee wellbeing.

The approach

The plan was to introduce a single, online platform where employee benefits were presented coherently in one accessible place for the first time - showcasing both pre-existing employee benefits and expanded wellbeing benefits as well. Creating excitement was top of mind, and the team realised they needed to present something out of the ordinary to employees, which was away from the existing traditional, corporate tone and inherited local authority language.

This led THH to focus on the employer brand, using corporate yellow and black colours while blending in photography of its homes and cartoon imagery in order to bring the site to life. This would help engage both property and community-oriented staff groups. This new blended approach was complemented through the brand name, "THH-buzz" - mixing the corporate "THH" with the less formal "buzz". On top of that, the new slogan became "get more for your bees and honey," - bees and honey being Cockney rhyming slang for money - and anchors THH to take pride in the heritage of its East End of London location.

THH created a teaser campaign with branded emails to send out to staff along with posters inviting people to "find out what the buzz is about." The team identified staff champions and gave them pre-access to the site so they could help colleagues post-launch.

The team took a two-phased approach, with phase one delivering wellbeing and benefits (including employee discounts), and wider recognition in phase two - ensuring buzz was created throughout both phases.

The company also introduced SmartTech™, which allowed employees to buy whitegoods or technology and pay for it through their net salary, to enhance the organisation's focus on the financial wellbeing of its employees. Since SmartTech™ is not a salary sacrifice scheme, it has no National Minimum Wage implications.

The team created a range of merchandise which aligned to the employer brand that both offline and online teams could use. A lot of the merchandise reflected a "honey" theme - including honey clippers, honey-filled sweets and honeycomb chocolates. The team boosted awareness even more by sending postcards home to all staff, reaching out particularly to those not based in offices.



The results

The launch events were attended by 102 of THH's 486 staff. Through using the analytics tool available on the Reward Gateway platform, THH discovered that 30% of its workforce registered on THH-buzz within 12 days of the initial launch. By day 22, this increased to 40%, with over £8,000 spent on the platform and a high proportion of users active on the site. In the two years since launching, employees have spent more than £314,000 with nearly 90% registered, proving the widespread takeup of the programme across the business.

The launch of SmartTech™ increased engagement with the benefits platform as a whole, with the average transaction from employees being nearly £500, proving that it brings a much-needed financial relief on larger purchases.

Here's a quote from an employee that used SmartTech:

"The launch of SmartTech came at a perfect timing for me as I needed a new laptop urgently. Rather than waiting for payday, I was able to use the SmartTech scheme to instantly purchase the laptop I wanted without having to fork out hundreds of pounds out of my savings. What better way to purchase the gadgets I love using an interest free loan!"

Excitement and buzz were generated in the office, with open and honest conversations happening and face-to-face feedback occurring after the sessions. Post-launch, there was a real sense that employees appreciated the new benefits offer as well as feeling valued and listened to.

Further feedback is still being gathered from employees through the survey tool about the wider benefits offer. Although the team is still in an early stage following implementation, they're anticipating a positive impact of THH-buzz on the staff sickness rate, employee conflict index, and the proportion of staff who say they're proud to work for THH - turning higher employee engagement into higher customer satisfaction and fewer customer complaints.

£314k

employee spend on platform (and counting!)

83%

of workforce registered on platform