

Helping to put NVQs on the menu

The Cuan Licensed Guest Inn and Restaurant



The Business Benefits

The Cuan are convinced of the contribution that training their employees has made to the successful development of their business. They attribute the following benefits to the commitment and competence levels of their employees:

liP recognition

Increased staff retention

Increase of sales by 21% attributed to greater focus on customer care due to the improved competence level of employees

Continuity of their business due to all staff being aware of the Cuan's facilities and ability to effectively serve the customer at all times

Ability to recruit high level staff due to the existing training and development ethos within the organisation

Improved menu options due to input from all team members

The full story inside



Peter & Caroline McErlean

The Cuan

The Cuan, established in 1990, is a family owned business situated in the County Down village of Strangford. The proprietor, Peter McErlean is a co-director with his wife Caroline. Both directors play an active role in the day to day running of the business. The Cuan was first recognised as an Investor in People organisation in December 1998 and achieved re-recognition in September 2000. During this period the business has continued to grow and the training of the staff has become an integral part of this growth.

Over the past 3 years major renovations and extensions have been undertaken, following the acquisition of adjoining property. The final stage of this development is alterations to the kitchen to enable it to cope with the increase in business and the introduction of a management information system to enable a more accurate analysis of the business. The permanent staff complement has increased from 10 to 19 over the intervening period to cover the expansion of the business which now includes:-

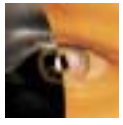
- Traditional fish & chip shop
- Lounge and public bars
- 9 ensuite bedrooms
- Take away restaurant

Although the Cuan is a small family owned business its proprietors are proactive in ensuring that it will have a future in this ever changing environment. The Cuan has now expanded its market to cover corporate business, sailing clubs and speciality breaks. This has been accomplished through presence at trade shows in Dublin, sales presentations to corporate accounts and the launch of a website. To facilitate the growth and expansion of the business, Caroline McErlean has given up her teaching career to work in the business full time. The Cuan has been selected by the British Hospitality Association as a best practice employer and is the only small restaurant/hotel in Northern Ireland to be listed in their Directory of Best Employers.

The Cuan is very keen to support its local community by sponsoring the local football club. They also ensure that their staff are adequately trained in receiving people with disabilities to ensure effective customer service to patrons with special needs.

“The interest shown in each employee’s development during appraisals is a key factor in encouraging a feeling of self worth.”

The NVQ Programme



In 1996 the proprietors of the Cuan decided to put

into place a more effective communication framework to assist in the growth of the business. At this stage they were already involved in NVQs through the Jobskills programme and because of this they were able to see the potential of competence based systems within their organisation.



In 1997 they worked closely with Hospitality 2000 to

look in detail at establishing an all inclusive staff development/communication framework within the Cuan.

At this early stage they devised staff profiles and considered the implementation of the format and benefits of using an appraisal system within a small business. Investors in People was chosen as a quality standard against which the Cuan could invest in their people to achieve their business goals. The IIP standards provided them with a structured format for planning, actioning and evaluating the progress.



Both directors showed their commitment to

people development by enrolling on a business development programme run by Down District Council one day per week. Through this management development the directors drew up a business plan specific to the growth of their business. They then spent the next 2 years implementing a new framework within their organisation and preparing an Investors in People action plan for the Cuan.



Monthly management meetings and bi-annual staff

appraisals support the development of the Cuan's employees. Managers now provide ongoing mentoring support to staff from induction through to the delivery of sector specific in-house training. Two chefs undertook a transnational exchange programme via a twinning arrangement between Downpatrick and the French town, Besson. Although the absence of the chefs put an extra burden on the Cuan, the benefits gained from their introduction to a range of menu options and food preparation techniques outweighed any staffing

employer
case
studies

problems. The Cuan was also able to benefit from a return exchange when they were able to avail of the expertise of a French chef within their kitchen.



The NVQ process was implemented through a local training provider, although Peter McErlean continued to be the driving

force behind the process. All practical assessments were carried out in-house and managers became used to providing witness statements for the employees against the national standards. Implementing the competence based system has had a dramatic effect on how the Cuan has looked at all aspects of their business from the point of view of customer service. Peter and Caroline fully realise the important role all employees play in the growth of the business and that the high level of competence shown to customers can be measured by the expansion of their customer base and the accelerated referral process.

“The new communications system implemented ensures that messages get passed along and all staff are kept informed.”

Employee Benefits

Increased motivation and enthusiasm
Opportunities to all staff for personal development

All employees fully conversant with key objectives within the business plan and aware of their role in assisting the attainment of these objectives

Confidence within workforce has encouraged employee suggestions on improvements within the Cuan. These have now been adopted

Employee ownership of the success of the Cuan promotes job security

The Future

The Directors intend to use their recent training in management development to enable them to define the training and development needs for the business over the next couple of years.

The proposed implementation of the computerised management information system will offer opportunities for segmentation of performance by business area, which should introduce opportunities for target setting in each area. This may result in additional training for managers.

The Cuan is committed to the training and development of staff within their organisation as they feel it is essential to the growth of their business and they feel that the NVQ will play an integral part in this. Although the permanent staff complement has increased from 10 – 19 over the past year the strong ethos of teamwork and mutual support is still encouraged.

For further information on NVQ implementation and general NVQ information please contact:
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