

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE CASE STUDY: CIRENCESTER COLLEGE



“We are a high performing, highly successful, nationally recognised college. It’s the people who are key to all of this. And Investors in People has been extremely important in giving us the framework for our programmes of training, our communication systems and professional development.”

David Sutherland, Deputy Principal

Background

Size: 450 people
Sector: Education
Locations: Fosse Way Campus and The Castle, Cirencester - and 40 outreach venues.
Status: Regular successful reviews since first achieving Investors in People recognition in 1993



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The organisation

Opened as a tertiary college in September 1991, Cirencester College is the “sixth-form of choice” for up to 1700 16-19 year-olds from a catchment that extends across the South Cotswolds and North Wiltshire. The college also meets the education, training and leisure needs of 4,000 part-time adult students. Cirencester has become a Centre of Excellence for Financial Services and can offer Train to Gain programmes as part of the Government’s agenda to meet the needs of business.

“Much of what we offer is innovative and imaginative,” says Deputy Principal David Sutherland. “We work in partnership with key local employers to provide them with the calibre of employees they need in their workforces.

Well established at the heart of its community, the college takes particular pride in sending its outreach teams to local venues such as village halls, schoolrooms and pubs.

The expanded college campus also includes the Sundial Theatre – a professional venue for students and local and visiting productions.

The challenge

“In the early days of the college, we needed some kind of external benchmark or standard that would help us to structure our staff development, in order to equip ourselves to meet such a diverse range of educational needs,” David Sutherland says.

Training needed to be available to everyone, in order to make all staff feel valued and appreciated - and less likely to wish to leave.

As part of the process of teambuilding within a recently established workplace, the college needed to put continuously evolving systems into place to establish an abiding culture of “consultation and involvement” and “ownership and responsibility”.

Cirencester College has earned a reputation for innovation, outstanding student care and excellent teaching and results. The foundations for these successes were laid down in the early 1990s, when the college committed to the Investors in People standard.

“Investors in People has changed and developed over the years,” David Sutherland says. “But it has given us a structure and a set of criteria by which we can improve and make judgements about the quality of our provision and report and analyse accordingly. And that is really why we`ve stayed with it.”

The strategy

Assisted by an Investors in People adviser, the college knew that staff development was central to its future success.

“You start off with a development policy that is designed to bring out the best in people, “ David Sutherland says. “You have a staff review process which identifies training needs and then you introduce programmes that are designed to meet those needs. And so it goes on in an upward spiral of excellence.”

Cirencester College accepted its first Investors in People recognition, not as a one-off award, but as a process that has been ongoing. Constant and effective evaluation of the college`s investment in its staff has brought renewed strategies for managing and developing people. These include, for example, the use of NVQ Levels IV and V for developing managers and NVQ Level III for junior managers.

A review of management structures has enabled the college to devolve roles and responsibilities. All non-exempt teaching staff now work towards a formal professional teaching qualification, while newcomers benefit from an enhanced induction process.

New technology such as Intranet and G-Drive data storage gives staff instant access to a new wide range of learning opportunities, as well as taking internal communications to new levels.

The “team culture” grows stronger by the day, with staff actively encouraged to use team briefings to share information, knowledge and experience.

The college is also currently embarked on a major Customer Services initiative, with many teaching and support staff now working towards Institute of Customer Service (ICS) accreditation. “We are all in the business of customer service,” David Sutherland says. “Whether we`re teachers or reception staff, members of the finance office, enrolment team or site services, we are all each other`s customers.”

The results

“We`ve gone from strength to strength,” says David Sutherland.

“We`ve expanded to three times our original size. We`ve had a fine OFSTED report. We`ve finished top of the league table for Level Three scores. We became a Beacon College in 2004. Staff retention is very good. All our surveys indicate that through developing our people, we are able to serve our community well.

“With Investors in People, we look positively to the years ahead.”