

CASE STUDY



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE | South
West

CONNEXIONS SOMERSET LTD

“Investors in People has helped us to move forward as an organisation. Our staff are our biggest investment and greatest resource. The benefit and impact of the changes we have made as a direct result of accreditation so far, have been highlighted by both our internal staff and our external stakeholders. We are thrilled to have achieved Gold status.”

Rachel Bendall
Chief Executive

BACKGROUND

Size:	116 employees
Sector:	Education
Location:	Bridgwater, Somerset
Status:	Most recently recognised April 09. First recognised in 1994 making a total of 15 years. Now Gold status.

THE ORGANISATION

Connexions Somerset Limited first achieved Investors in People in 1994 when they were known as the Careers Service. Following Government policy changes, including changes arising from the Children’s Act, funding was given directly to local authorities along with the responsibility for Information, Advice and Guidance. A commissioning process is currently underway and Connexions Somerset Limited will have to tender for the contract in 2011. Connexions Somerset Limited is a ‘not for profit’ organisation and has appreciated the staff response to new initiatives and to securing new contracts.



Rachel Bendall, Chief Executive, Connexions Somerset

- **Feedback from external stakeholders, as well as internal staff, has shown an improvement in the quality of work.**
- **Staff are more forward thinking and appreciate the better access to opportunities available to them.**
- **Staff are more willing to be involved and the Investors in People framework guided the management on how to involve staff.**
- **Staff are more pro-active and really believe they make a difference and feel appreciated for their contribution.**

THE CHALLENGE

As a public service, Connexions Somerset Limited are very aware that nearly 80% of their resources are people and felt it would be remiss therefore not to develop their single most important investment. Significant change was necessary to refocus the organisation against a backdrop of year on year reductions in funding. They needed to further develop their framework to ensure that the two way process of communication and understanding between senior management and other staff was working effectively.

IMPACT

Feedback from external stakeholders, as well as internal staff, has shown an improvement in the quality of work. Staff are more forward thinking and appreciate the better access to opportunities available to them. Connexions Somerset Limited is a 'not for profit' organisation and has appreciated the staff response to new initiatives and to securing new contracts. Staff are more willing to be involved and the Investors in People framework guided the management on how to involve staff. Staff are more pro-active and really believe they make a difference and feel appreciated for their contribution.

The leadership & management development programme and new appraisal system, that have been developed and recently introduced, have enabled Connexions Somerset Limited to prepare a model that enables them to identify leadership qualities amongst their staff. Once a member of staff has been assigned to the leadership and management development programme, as part of raising their political awareness, they are linked to an elected member within Local Government and engage with them to promote awareness of the work of Connexions. Those staff who are new to the programme are linked with an experienced member of the existing management team to further develop them and their networking skills. Staff involved are really excited about this initiative which will improve public awareness of what Connexions Somerset Limited does and make a difference to how the service is viewed. As well as promoting 'what Connexions Somerset Limited does' these members of staff will also be asking 'what should we do?' Another, very brave some might say, initiative introduced by senior managers is a library of case studies on mistakes that have been made, by managers, and how these situations may have been

better approached!

THE STRATEGY

Rachel Bendall took over as Chief Executive in 2008 having joined the organisation in 2004. She was concerned that staff may be 'changed out' and resent a new style of management and what they might see as training overload. Development Groups were formed and each given the task of driving forward specific aspects of the company which needed to be developed including the collation of evidence for the various areas of Investors in People. Rachel was very aware that the higher up the ladder a person goes, the less likely they are to receive constructive feedback from staff. Rachel saw Investors in People as a way of testing what she was and wasn't getting right. One particular area of concern was Corporate/Social Responsibility. The organisation had no formal strategy and was concerned that they 'had nothing'. Their Adviser, was able to provide them with constructive feedback and point out that, although they had no formal strategy they actually 'had a lot' and it just needed articulating into a more formal process.

THE RESULTS

Rachel was relieved and pleased at how comfortable staff were and how they wholly embraced Investors in People. Investors in People gave them 'everything they expected and more' and, following their Assessor's advice to 'go for Gold' Connexions Somerset Limited was one of the first organisations to achieve Gold status. Rachel commented that, at the end of the assessment, they were, in a pleasant way, very aware that they had been assessed! But, they hadn't been looking for a badge without substance!

Almost in a sub-conscious way, Investors in People has changed the way people work. They now stop and think about what they are doing at all levels, what it means to them and what it means to Connexions Somerset Limited. Staff are asked how they feel rewarded by the company and how they would like to be rewarded and find it easier to communicate this.

