



BROOKLANDS
MUSEUM

Case Study

Brooklands Museum



Brooklands Museum



Case Study

Brooklands Museum

Communication Concern

Brooklands is a very special place. The birthplace of British motorsport and aviation, home of Concorde and the site of many engineering and technological achievements throughout eight decades of the 20th century, Brooklands is now an independent museum welcoming in excess of 180,000 visitors a year. It also has one of the largest volunteer workforces of any museum in the country, with 250 front of house volunteers on top of those involved in restoration, administration and site maintenance.



The museum's visitors are not like those visiting many attractions as at least 30% of them tend to be enthusiasts about some aspect of the museum and are able and quite keen to have in-depth information and discussions. The other 70% are not necessarily as knowledgeable and the visitor services team have to balance the needs of the group or family with those of the enthusiast. Added to this, although there are some young volunteers, for instance those on the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, the average age of the volunteers is c. 65 and they too are often experts in their field, many having worked in aviation themselves prior to volunteering at Brooklands.

With so many volunteers it is important to the museum to provide excellent customer service training and they were looking for a programme that would work for everyone. As John Silver, Volunteer Resources Manager at the museum explains "We have had visitor services training before and we didn't want a traditional show and tell approach. We wanted to come to it from a different angle so it was enjoyable and fun ... less like training. It needed to be concise (the last training had been all day and it had felt repetitive at times). We wanted something that had been created for us and didn't feel like we were being lectured at. Our team are very experienced and we wanted this to be a refresher for them while still containing all the relevant customer service skills necessary for our newer stewards."

Solution



The team from Partners With You spent some time at the Museum to really see what it is like as a visitor as well as having several meetings with the senior team to understand their specific requirements. It was agreed that a half day combination of practical techniques and theatrical scenarios would fit the brief most effectively and to make sure that as many volunteers could attend as possible, the workshop was run twice a day over four different days.

The format included two scenarios written specifically for Brooklands based on the situations discussed and was designed to:

- ✔ provide an entertaining workshop that gives key techniques to engage with visitors and avoid behaviours that can upset and irritate others;
- ✔ give the team an understanding of how to deliver great customer service whatever their roles;
- ✔ show ways to deal with difficult situations and people in a way that enhances the visit
- ✔ and, provide a technique for complaint handling.

Sally Hindmarch, Managing Director and project manager for this programme, explains “It’s really important to us that the delegates believe the scenarios, otherwise they just won’t see the issues as being relevant to them. Although many visitor attractions have similar front of house issues it is essential to do the work during the project development so that the training feels totally specific to the client’s teams”.

John goes on to elaborate “Previously the training had felt like a standard package but this felt more relevant to us. Partners With You listened to the problems our team encounter and incorporated them into the workshop design. The scenarios created were close enough to recognise the opportunity to turn it right without it feeling as though anyone on site was being ‘picked on”.

Results

Well over half of the front of house volunteer team attended one of the sessions, John continues "Partners With You delivered the same workshop eight times over four days and Annie Farr and Kate Bowes Renna who delivered the programme were excellent. They were totally unfazed by any changes we made over the eight sessions and I felt very comfortable leaving them to it.

There was an enthusiasm and lightness of touch in the training"



The proof of course is in what the delegates say:

"I feel more confident with meeting the customers."

"I've had a lot of similar training before, so was somewhat sceptical, but you managed to provide a good refresher and keep the room engaged."

"Very informative - certainly makes you think about aspects of personal presentation often taken for granted."

"Completely different from a normal training course."

"Should be mandatory for all new volunteers at the museum."

"Exceeded expectations. Greater than expected engagement drawn from the delegates."



And the final word goes to John "Our volunteers are still talking about it some weeks after the event and two of our more cynical volunteers have told me how useful they thought it was and would recommend it for others to attend. It was memorable and we're talking about running another session later in the year".

And if the client and the delegates are happy then so is Partners With You!



www.partnerswithyou.co.uk

(P) +01494 453 910 | (E) info@partnerswithyou.co.uk

If you would like to find out how Partners With You can help your staff communicate more effectively then please email Sally on sally@partnerswithyou.co.uk.