



CHISWICK
HOUSE & GARDENS

Case Study

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Communication Concern

When Dan Feeny joined the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust in early 2021 as Head of Visitor Experience, he was tasked with building an entirely new experience from the ground up while also being in the middle of the pandemic. There was to be a new route around the House, new interpretations and for the first time the Kitchen Gardens were being opened to visitors.



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Dan had come from a different visitor attraction where Partners With You had worked with him. He explained "Partners With You were top of my list of people to help make sure I had a wonderful team. I knew we would recruit brilliant people but I wanted to make sure that we gave them the tools and techniques that would mean that they could deal with any situation that was thrown at them."

"We were still in the pandemic as we were preparing to open and had no sense of how people were going to act, how they were going to react or how difficult people were going to be. And one of the things that I've always admired about the training that Partners With You offer is the tools they cover for dealing with difficult situations with the public".

Solution

At the time of the first training, we were still constrained by government lockdowns and limits to the number of people allowed in any space. As there were potentially 100 -150 volunteers and staff to train, it was agreed that the training would be run on-line.

Partners With You devised a one-day course to be delivered 4 times so that everyone could attend in groups of no more than 40. The workshops were delivered via Zoom and everyone connected from home via their own devices.



The day provided all visitor facing staff and volunteers, techniques to help them feel comfortable talking to visitors, telling them about the area they were in and pointing them to paid elements that would benefit both Chiswick House and Gardens and the visitor. The aim was for the team to be comfortable greeting, directing, upselling, identifying and handling minor problems or complaints at the point of contact.

There were naturally some discussions about how and if, front of house training could work when delivered online. Dan said "I think we all had concerns about doing the training online, because we didn't know what that looked like. But those concerns evaporated as soon as we started. I was impressed by how the Partners With You team coped with the unique challenges that come with dealing with an online room where you can't snap people back into attention in the same way you can in person. The Partners With You team did a wonderful job."

In 2022 Partners With You were able to run the training in-house. This year, in addition to providing a great welcome and handling minor complaints, Dan planned for the team to deliver 5 - 10 minute "spotlight talks". Those staff that wished to, were able to create their own talks so we adapted the training to spend more time on delivering spotlight talks while still keeping to the one-day format.

Partners With You were also asked to provide the volunteer tour guides with a half day of presentation training to help them deliver their tours. They had never had any presentation training and Dan wanted to help them to project their voice in the garden (considering wind direction etc), keep to time and adapt their presentation styles for their audience.



Results

And how effective was the training across the two years?

Dan said "There was definite evidence of the techniques being used and being revisited as the season progressed. We used our briefing meetings in the morning to work on some of the things that we talked about through the training. Some of the voice projection techniques were worked on throughout by the team.

"Having resources and techniques to fall back on, that the team and the management team understood and knew how to use, was hugely useful in keeping that level of service up.

"And we saw this through our visitor comments. The best comments inevitably are always the ones that mention someone by name. And we were getting a lot of comments that personally recognized the great service visitors were offered by the visitor experience team.

"That's not an accident. That comes from having a team that is properly prepared. And that's what this training with Partners With You gave us.

"There are multiple great things about working with the Partners With You team. The key one is that their training delivers. Both years they've run their training at Chiswick House and Gardens, we have come out of it with teams who are in a better place than when they started.

"And I would like to think that they were pretty high performing teams before we met; so, to improve, to put the polish on or the cherry on top, I think that's the key success and the great thing we got from this.

"I didn't even think about talking to anyone else when I moved roles to a different size organization with a different level of preparedness for the challenges ahead, I didn't skip a heartbeat that Partners With You were the first people to call".





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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.