



THE QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE.

Exploring managers' wellbeing, motivation and productivity.

CASE STUDY

Flamingo



EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT IS KEY

Diane Foster – HR Director, Flamingo

“Our commitment has always been to empower talent and to keep our employees inspired, engaged and challenged. This attitude has everything to do with ensuring employees are healthy and happy. One of our main strategies is to give employees a rich and rewarding work life, and we firmly believe that both personal and professional development are the way to do that.”

Flamingo is a multiple award-winning¹ global insight and strategy consultancy. It was founded in 1997 and now has around 300 employees spread over seven offices around the world. The company is growing consistently both financially and in people terms.

The reason Flamingo keeps growing and winning awards is not only down to the work that they do – but also the caring and nurturing culture that they do it in.

Empowerment

From the very beginning, when founders Maggie Collier and Kirsty Fuller (now co-CEOs) started the company, Flamingo has been a non-political, non-prescriptive and collaborative company. The power is not in one place; the culture is very inclusive.

As Diane says: “Our annual Expo event brings everyone together from all levels in the company to an overseas location to develop team spirit,

share ideas and provide a common sense of purpose, community and inspiration.”

The culture and environment are also very flexible. There are many flexible working arrangements in place, and Flamingo won a Mumsnet Gold Award in 2014 after the company culture was rated by an external survey as 97% supportive of those with families. As an example of how this policy operates in practice, one of the Directors recently enjoyed seven months extended paternity leave.

The result is a culture of empowerment where people enjoy the autonomy and ownership of work and are being given free rein to share ideas and use their creativity to its full potential.

The focus is very much on sharing and connecting with colleagues around the world – and with the world itself. “Culture is part of our DNA. I’m very proud of our company spirit, progressiveness and entrepreneurialism”, says Diane.

She believes that Flamingo’s culture has a very positive impact on how its employees feel and behave – and how productive, happy and satisfied they are in their jobs. It is seen as one of the most important factors contributing to employee health and wellbeing.

¹ Sunday Times Training and Development Awards: 2014, 2013, 2012
MRS Awards Best Agency: 2015, 2014, 2009, 2006, 2003
MRS Awards Best Place to Work: 2014, 2012 (2013 – Highly Commended)
Mumsnet Family Friendly Gold Award: 2014

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Developing managers and leaders

Part of Flamingo's inquisitive culture is to offer plenty of opportunities for training and development, which includes management and leadership training. One example is the Training and Inspiration programme, which is focused on junior staff members and consists of 20 sessions on core skills.

The programme is run by their colleagues from all parts of the business. Another is the Global Connect Initiative, which brings employees from across all offices together to tackle tasks as a team and learn new techniques and approaches. And then there's the upcoming Leadership School, bringing current and future leaders from across Flamingo offices together for four days in London in April 2016.

Training and development initiatives involve people in different teams and across different levels, ensuring constant collaboration and learning opportunities. Again, this is seen as a very important way of keeping employees inspired and engaged.

Health and wellbeing are fully integrated

There's no such thing as 'health and wellbeing' training, because it is an integrated part of everyone's job description. "By giving something a specific name there's the risk it becomes separated from everything else, or 'just an HR thing'. It isn't. Taking care of yourself

and others, and talking about things that are bothering you, should be part of everyday working life." Employees know they can speak up at any time to anyone in the organisation.

HR have overarching strategies and procedures in place as any other big company does, but it's the individuals and the teams that make them work. Often potential issues can be solved without HR ever being involved. "Giving employees autonomy in this area too is very empowering – and makes HR's job easier too."

Flamingo is proud of how they do things – and confident it's the only way to run a successful business: "People are how we deliver business. If you train, nurture and take good care of them they become the business talent of the future – and help build our culture both within and outside the company."



Health and wellbeing isn't 'just an HR thing'. Taking care of yourself and others should be part of everyday working life.