

Act those values!

Ci: Creative intelligence

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Actors have been used as role players in training courses and assessment centres for years. But, perhaps not surprisingly, it took a TV company, ITV, to use actors in another, highly successful way – so successful that ITV and its partner training provider, Ci: Creative intelligence have won two National Training Awards for their staff development programme.



ITV, the largest commercial broadcaster in Europe, has grown through the merger of previously-competing TV stations, each with their own culture and ways of doing things. To help integrate these diverse companies, ITV developed new corporate values. But how to broadcast these internally? How could the company get buy-in from cynical news journalists and cliquey sales staff?

“I could have gone round the country giving PowerPoint presentations about the values,” says Emma Clifford, Training and Development Consultant with the ITV News Group, “but it would have been pointless. We needed to find a radically different approach to counteract the anticipated negativity; we had to show that values are not abstract concepts but are rooted in everyday behaviour.”

So two departments within ITV, News and Sales, commissioned Ci: Creative intelligence to develop Forum Theatre workshops to make the values come alive.

Ci researched what was happening in both departments and wrote two short plays about where things were going wrong. Each play featured credible characters and real examples of inappropriate behaviour – i.e., when the values were not being lived.

These plays were then performed to relevant staff. At the end of the scenes, Tim Stockil of Ci, acting as the facilitator, stopped the action and asked the audience to comment on the action and correct the characters’ behaviour. The three actors – highly skilled professionals – then re-played the scenes, often many times, according to the suggestions of the audience, until the audience was happy that the behaviour was right. The key themes from each scene were then explored and linked directly to the values.

For Emma Clifford, these workshops overcame any possible negativity by being real, memorable, interactive and amusing. “Audiences were fully engaged and positive – and when we undertook some evaluative research several months later, it was clear that there had been significant improvements in

both behaviour and culture in the two departments.” As the judges of the National Training Awards obviously recognised.

Tim Stockil suggests that Forum Theatre is growing fast as a powerful training tool. “We’ve used it to look at customer care, leadership and teamwork, change and change-management, dealing with new technology, diversity and creativity as well as bringing values to life. Provided you get the research right, you hold a mirror up to people that allows them to see where they are going wrong and correct it themselves – and the behavioural changes are far more likely to last than if you or I tell them what to do.”

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