

Communicating Effectively with Local Communities



Background

Following Royal Assent of the Crossrail Bill in July 2008, Crossrail Ltd was keen to continue its objective to raise awareness of the project and its benefits, and ensure that the local communities had the opportunity to discuss in detail how this project would affect them. The multicultural nature of London meant that Crossrail staff would be in contact with a diverse population. As an equal opportunities employer that embraces diversity, Crossrail Ltd commissioned Communicaid to develop the cross-cultural skills of its staff involved on this project. Crossrail Ltd understands the importance of its employees being able to manage sensitive situations and questions from individuals from local communities more effectively in order to present a positive public image of the planned construction. They were particularly concerned about the opinions of residents of the Spitalfields area in East London.

Training Objectives

- To raise staff awareness of how cultural differences can impact communication with the culturally diverse communities of central London
- To enable staff to present clear information about Crossrail to diverse local communities in a culturally appropriate way
- To help delegates minimise the barriers that the general public may face in getting information from Crossrail

Challenges

The main challenges were seen as:

- Designing training that would equip delegates with the skills to communicate more effectively with a very wide range of diverse communities
- Delivering a short training programme that would have a real impact on delegates' behaviours
- Providing delegates with tangible skills to enable them to build rapport quickly with people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds
- Engaging with delegates with a wide range of functions from technical to administrative roles

Training Approach

The training focused on developing Crossrail employees' understanding of the role that culture plays in communication. The programme was designed in order to provide delegates with the skills to engage with members of any community as opposed to focusing on just one or two groups. The skilled trainer also provided examples of specific groups and practice activities based on interaction with target communities such as the Sylheti or Traveller communities. Delegates were provided with detailed information packs on each of the local groups.



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Proposed Solutions

- Small group programmes were designed to maximise delegate participation and interaction
- Delegates were encouraged to evaluate their own attitudes and behaviours and the impact of these on local communities
- Training was highly interactive to encourage delegates to challenge their cultural assumptions and experience the impact of different communication styles and cultural behaviours

Results

Feedback from each session was extremely positive. Delegates welcomed the opportunity to share experiences encountered to-date with colleagues and learn how culture plays a vital role in cross-cultural communication. After completing the training delegates were more confident and better equipped to carry out their role of engaging with local communities and communicating the benefits of the Crossrail project.

Client Feedback

“Really enjoyed learning about different cultures and gaining an understanding of them.”

“Really enjoyed the nature of the session – interaction was very good. Discussion character of the session was very impressive.”

“Very thorough approach to communicating and demonstrating the power of effective communication.”

Contact Details

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