

Engaging teams in strategy and priorities at Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

The need

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs is the government department responsible for collecting the bulk of tax revenue, as well as paying Tax Credits and Child Benefits, and strengthening the UK's frontiers. HMRC was formed by a merger of the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and came into formal existence in April 2005.

As part of the merger, a series of customer units were created. When the new Units' Director Jane Frost joined, one of her first challenges was to bring the team together to review priorities and agree a clear way forward.

Our role was to design a two-day event that would provide a clear sense of direction, identify the team's short and long term priorities and build team member confidence and commitment. The team at the time lacked confidence and direction, especially when interacting with its key stakeholders.

Our approach

We worked with the unit's senior team to create an event that:

- Helped everyone to recognise what they had already achieved and celebrate success
- Clarified the forward strategy for the unit and what this would mean in practice
- Identified the key priorities for the next 12 to 18 months
- Worked through key issues that stood in the way of the unit's future success
- Enabled people to have some fun and get to know each other better.

The event featured a flexible agenda that allowed plenty of time for discussion, debate and input. Participants also took part in a series of creative and fun activities to help them look at what they do in new ways. Here is a flavour of some of the event content:

- Energiser: building marshmallow and spaghetti towers
- Future forward (vision and success): team activities including storytelling
- Learning from past experience: using inspiration cards
- Team communication: shapes and shades exercise
- From talk into action: red and green thinking hats
- Pulling it all together: Big Picture visuals

The results

100% of those attending felt the event's objectives were met. 97% found it extremely or very useful and 97% enjoyed themselves. Comments included "the energisers and end sessions were brilliant" and "we've never had such opportunity to input to management decision-making".