

Vadis – driving change and increasing business by 40% at ULCC



Established in 1968, the University of London Computer Centre (ULCC) has evolved into a highly respected and innovative IT brand within the academic and not-for-profit sector. From its roots providing 'super-computing' services to the Higher Education institutions in the south east of the UK, the organisation's reputation has grown beyond academia locally, nationally and internationally as a high performance technology service provider in fields as diverse as data storage, web development and e-learning.

A new Director but an old challenge for the Vadis team

When David Rippon joined ULCC as Director in 2004 ULCC was dangerously reliant on only three single customer contracts. There was a clear need to widen the customer base and expand the range of services offered to turn the unit into a commercially viable and financially self reliant not-for-profit organisation.

As is often the case in such situations, there was considerable internal resistance to David's change agenda. Many senior managers and staff had been in post for years and were understandably ill at ease with such a radical transformation of the status quo.

To provide the support David needed to successfully drive the necessary changes, he turned to Hampshire based recruitment and organisational development specialists, Vadis People.

Change for the better

The Vadis team has a long and proven track record in empowering enterprises to embrace change through people development.

As Vadis director Adam Davis puts it, 'there is no faster, easier or more cost effective way for a client to improve the performance of their organisation than by improving the performance of the individuals within it. In the case of ULCC, however, we first had to help David change the culture and align everyone - from the senior management team down - to the organisation's new commercially orientated role and objectives.

Back in 2004 that process started with ULCC's first ever senior management team 'away day' forum, organised and delivered by Vadis. Their involvement that year included one to one management coaching and support, plus expert assistance in recruiting key individuals. Through 2005 Vadis developed the capabilities of the senior management team, helping them draw up ULCC's very first business plan with balance score card objectives. In 2007, Vadis played a pivotal role in assisting David Rippon to restructure the organisation. Despite significant opposition, the restructuring has proved highly successful and is now well established.

A widening of the Vadis brief

2008 saw Vadis's work with the reporting management team evolve via cascaded commercial skills training, development workshops, business review activities and the implementation of Belbin questionnaires to profile the entire management population. Subsequently, 'modelled' teams were formed to take forward the projects for each business plan's balance score, with each team given full responsibility for reporting and delivery.

In 2009, Vadis delivered another first for ULCC and the UK: the inaugural Situational Selling programmes to be run under license in the country, further developing applied commercial skills to the total management team. The last ULCC management away day involved the innovative use of actors to help drive home the acquisition of key skills, from those in sales and marketing to customer services and relationship building.

Tim Bush, Marketing Manager, comments: "In the 4 years that I have been with the business, I have noticed a palpable difference in both the culture and attitude of the organisation. The hard work of everyone at ULCC, combined with the support of Vadis, has installed a real 'can do' mentality. I can't wait to see where ULCC will be in the next 4 years!"

Winning business, winning accolades

'The results of the remarkable partnership between ULCC and Vadis since 2004 have manifested themselves in a quantum leap in our organisation and culture. Despite early opposition to our change, we are now confident and comfortable in our new entrepreneurial skin.' says David Rippon.

'Moreover' he continued 'over 50% of our business now comes from a wide range of customers in the education and other sectors. Our customer base has expanded from 3 to over 200 and the range of services provided covers fields as diverse as virtual learning environments, digitisation and archival services, co-location and managed hosting services, infrastructure management services, web development and hosting services, digital media services and more. I am confident that our current growth rate of over 10% p.a. will continue to increase going forward. ULCC successfully promotes and enhances the strategic aims of the University of London through the services provided externally and also generates a financial contribution.

'The Vadis team have played a pivotal role in our successes, both in terms of driving our change and meeting our commercial objectives. I would have no hesitation in awarding Vadis 'ULCC's No 1 Business Partner.' David concluded.

If you would like to know more about Vadis People please visit www.vadispeople.com, call Adam Davis on 08708 555025 or e-mail info@vadispeople.com