

CASE STUDY



Background

Size: 46 employees

Sector: Retail

Location: Gillingham, Kent

Status: Recognised since 2008

The Organisation

Hempstead Valley shopping centre is an out of town shopping centre near Gillingham, Kent. The shopping centre is run by the Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre Trust and managed by Centre Manager, Mark Rumfitt.

Hempstead was recognised in January 2008 and has found that Investors in People has really helped them to raise their levels of customer service and productivity, maintain the low levels of staff turnover and sickness and generally improve the Centre for both employees and customers.



Satisfied Shoppers at Hempstead Valley

Running a 425,000 sq ft shopping centre is no easy task but at Hempstead Valley, near Gillingham, Kent, Centre Manager Mark Rumfitt has a team of dedicated staff that make his job a lot simpler.

Mark joined Hempstead Valley in 2006, having previously worked at a shopping centre in Exeter where he had found gaining the national Investors in People Standard an extremely worthwhile experience.

Investors in People is a business improvement tool designed to advance an organisation's performance through its people. It

provides a flexible framework that any company can adapt for its own requirements.

Hempstead Valley was the second out of town shopping centre to be built in the country. Now in its 30th year, the centre is home to the largest Sainsbury's in Kent, a huge M&S as well as a range of high street stores including fashion,



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MARK RUMFITT
HEMPSTEAD VALLEY SHOPPING CENTRE



beauty products, music and games, toys, home ware and accessories.

Addressing the issues

Mark Ruffitt heads 46 members of staff. He said: "When I joined Hempstead Valley I realised that the culture behind Investors in People was in place but the processes were not there. As with all organisations, we had issues that needed to be addressed and I felt Investors in People was a good way to tackle them."

As part of preparing for the Centre's Investors in People assessment, Mark looked at ways that staff training could be improved, particularly in relation to customer service.

He continued: "Customer satisfaction is hard to measure in a shopping centre. Generally, if people are happy with their shopping experience then we won't hear anything from them; they only make contact if they want to complain! That said, this year we have not had any negative feedback but have received two complimentary letters, which are extremely difficult to achieve.

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Encouraging teamwork

Mark continued: "We have 2,200 car parking spaces at the Centre but the outside space used to take second place after the internal, meaning that the staff that looked

after it did not feel as though they were part of the team – they even had their own staff room outside!

As part of Investors in People we have now made them much more a part of the core team and helped them to feel more valued, giving them uniforms and radios to communicate as well as smartening up our outside space through painting and decorating.

"There has always been a very positive culture at Hempstead Valley with staff supporting and looking out for each other, generally working very well together. In order to develop the teamwork that already existed, we introduced a weekly management meeting as well as regular team meetings.

"There was a very traditional hierarchal approach to employee management but now communication amongst staff has really been improved. The rivalry that existed between some departments in the past is no longer there and we are all pulling together to achieve our goals.

"I think there is a myth that Investors in People is about how much you spend on training. It is more about the culture of communication you can create within an organisation. Some of our members of staff have been here for more than 20 years and yet they are still passionate about their jobs. We have an extremely low staff turnover and going through Investors in People has helped us to raise our levels of productivity."

Praise for Staff

Hempstead Valley's assessment was managed by Quality South

East, the Investors in People Centre for the region.

Karen Chantler, an assessor for Quality South East, commented: "The principles behind Investors in People really shine through in everything that Hempstead Valley does. The managers take great interest not only in the welfare of their staff, but also their development.

"The commitment to client service is extremely high throughout the organisation. It is not often that you come across a company in which every member of staff takes such an interest in its image. The team at Hempstead Valley that have been recognised are those that are working hard in the background – the people responsible for the car park, the cleanliness and security of the centre including the toilets – all of whom make it a pleasant place for local shoppers to visit."