

CASE STUDY



Background

Size: 1,000 employees

Sector: Finance

Location: Dorking, Surrey

Status: Recognised since 1997

The Organisation

UNUM is the UK's leading provider of income protection and has a large workforce spread across offices in Dorking, Basingstoke, Birmingham, Bristol, London, Glasgow and Manchester.

UNUM have worked with Investors in People since 1997 and have used their continuous commitment to the Investors in People framework to help them create a nurturing environment for their staff.



Unum Protects Its Own

A company whose business is offering its customers' accident and illness insurance understands only too well the importance of providing a healthy working environment where staff are well looked after.

The UK's leading provider of income protection, Unum, which provided insurance cover for 1.7 million people in 2007, values its own staff and has worked with Investors in People since 1997 to achieve and retain the Standard.

Investors in People is a flexible and easy to use framework which helps organisations transform

their business performance. This practical, flexible and easy to use approach allows thousands of different employers of every sector and size to improve their organisations in a range of different ways, including improved productivity, sharpened competitive edge and increased employee engagement.



The findings from the staff interviews with our Investors in People assessors have validated our hard work in continuously working to improve training, individual development and communication.

JO MONK
UNUM



Unum employs some 1,000 people at offices in Dorking, Basingstoke, Birmingham, Bristol, London, Glasgow and Manchester. Its services include providing income protection for its customers and rehabilitation support for individuals and employers during what can be a difficult period for both parties.

The company scored a hat trick at the 2008 Health Insurance Awards, winning Best Group Income Protection Provider (for the 11th year running), Best Group Critical Illness Provider and Most Innovative new Product for Dual Benefit Group Income Protection.

Welcome to work

Vince Mewett, Human Resources Director at Unum, said: "Being sensitive to the needs of others is a core part of our business. It means that the chief executive and senior management of Unum appreciate the importance of creating a nurturing environment for its own staff.

"For example, Chief Executive Susan Ring makes it one of her tasks to have an almost photographic memory and be able to put a name to all her colleagues' faces. A 'Buddy' system has been set up for existing members of staff to be responsible for making newcomers feel welcome and this is supported by a three-week long induction programme, which was described by one participant as 'superb'."

Unum staff are each given a career folder to help them record and chart their progress within the company. Management make a point of praising people for good work and

this in return has led to staff saying that they feel valued because their efforts have been recognised.

Vince added: "Managers also say 'thank you' by rewarding their teams with meals, treats and bonuses."

Regular appraisals and one-to-one sessions have been structured so objectives are set and met and staff say they feel they have ownership and responsibility through taking part in decision-making. Care has been taken not to overburden people with their responsibility.

A good network of communication ensures people feel well supported by management and team members. In interviews with Investors in People assessor, Kevin Newman, staff reported that they welcomed the chance to take part in 'Leap frog' meetings in which they are encouraged to 'hop over' their managers and talk to their managers' manager.

Celebrating diversity

Unum offers its workers the chance to enjoy a good work/home balance. Where possible, alternative work patterns are offered, including the chance for parents and carers to work part-time, to jobshare or opt for term-time working.

All Unum employees are entitled to two days paid volunteering work within the community, there is a Give As You Earn charity scheme and a free counselling service. There are staff restaurants at Unum's main sites, a gym at the Dorking head office and gym subsidy at other sites.

Jo Monk, Training and Development

Business partner at Unum, said: "The findings from the staff interviews with our Investors in People assessors have validated our hard work in continuously working to improve training, individual development and communication. We're very proud to have won 2008 Underwriter of the Year in the British Insurance awards, and to include that achievement along with our Investors in People award on our website.

"And while we've always prided ourselves on our staff development, the latest assessment process has given us ideas for continued opportunities to improve.

Investors in People assessor Kevin Newman said: "Unum is impressive in the way it cares for and develops its people.

"I spoke to around 70 people at three sites during the company's assessment. The greatest majority spoke with pride about what they see as their company, its achievements, and perhaps most importantly, how it encourages its employees to work with it to achieve continuous improvement."

Unum's assessment was managed by Quality South East, the Investors in People Centre for the region.