

Case study

National Museums Liverpool

National Museums Liverpool is one of the world's greatest museum services, with internationally important collections and a global reputation. They came into being on 1 April 1986 and were established as a national museum because of the outstanding quality of its collections. Since then they have grown considerably and today comprise five museums: Liverpool Museum, Merseyside Maritime Museum, HM Customs & Excise National Museum and Museum of Liverpool Life, three art galleries: The Walker, Lady Lever Art Gallery and Sudley House and the Conservation Centre.



Meeting the needs of the public is their main priority, with learning at the centre of that agenda. They aim to provide every visitor with appropriate routes to discovery, awareness and learning for all, regardless of their age, identity, ability or background. They provide bright, lively and challenging exhibitions and activities for both formal and informal learning groups, ranging from school trips to family visits.

National Museums Liverpool employs around 550 people, working across seven public venues including curators, conservators, educators, professional, technical staff (e.g. HR, ICT and marketing, IT) and support staff.

The Challenge

Irene Newton, Head of HR, explained "A new director was appointed who had new ideas and wanted to take a very different approach to the marketing of and access to the museums. He inherited a structure which was not as effective as it could be and he wanted to understand what the issues were and how they could be addressed."

The senior management team undertook a Management Diagnostic to understand the key issues that faced the management team. A diagnostic is a one day workshop where teams can openly and honestly address the issues they face. Each person was profiled using the PPA to enable them to understand their own and their colleagues preferred style of behaviour in the work environment. Teams can only begin to address their problems when they have a greater level of self awareness. A diagnostic can be used to identify ideal and current team culture, deliver a clear view of the problem areas, focus and commit the team to their challenges and present a full diagnosis of strengths and limitations.

"It was invaluable to see where we were at the moment. We needed to be better risk takers, more innovative, creative and dynamic. As a team we were not close to where we wanted to be. The workshop was really a day of focus for us – where did we want to be as a management team? The day enabled people to verbalise what they were feeling in a non confrontational, supportive environment.

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We also wanted people to understand their colleagues much better. If you can understand the way a person prefers to behave at work then you can work with them more effectively. It can be as simple as understanding that some people prefer written and others verbal communication. Better understanding delivers improved communication.”



National Museums Liverpool also uses PPA for recruitment. “You cannot always tell from an application form or an interview what a person is really like. Interviews have tended to focus on the requirements of the job – does this person have the skills needed for the role? We wanted to also look at their work personality – what behavioural characteristics do they have that will be suited to the role?”

“We profile people before the interview because the profile gives us an objective place to start from. It prompts us to ask questions we might not have otherwise thought of. We get a very clear idea if they will fit into the culture of the team we have.”

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