

Case study

Virgin Trains

Virgin Trains training department use Thomas assessments to improve teamworking, management skills and identify development opportunities.

Tools used: PPA

The Customer Service Training Department acts as a consultant to Virgin Trains supporting the Company training needs, development and delivery of training. The team are responsible for all orientation training into the company for Onboard catering, Train Managers and Stations teams.

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How Virgin Trains use Thomas

Virgin Trains started using Thomas' Personal Profile Analysis within the training team initially. PPA assesses an individual's behaviour in the work environment. It can answer questions such as: what are their strengths and limitations? Are they self starters? How do they communicate? What motivates them? The PPA enables people to become more self aware, which in turn gives them the means to consolidate their working strengths and compensate for their limitations. PPA is a series of 24 questions on a forced choice "first impressions" basis, taking no longer than eight minutes to complete. The answers are charted on a graph under the four headings of Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance (DISC).

Gaynor Stewart, Training Development Manager at Virgin Trains comments, "We wanted to use a tool within the department that would help the team understand each other better as well as identify their own personal opportunities. We profiled each of the team using PPA and gave individual feedback, explaining their profile and what it meant. It is an assessment tool that is very easy to understand. Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance are all characteristics people find easy to relate to. The team also liked it because it's very visual and with no jargon or hefty terminology." "PPA is the most accurate psychometric tool I have ever used. The reports are invaluable, I keep them to re-read and focus on throughout the year with the team."

"Initially we gave one to one feedback on the PPAs to the team to ensure they were familiar and understood their analysis. At our next development team meeting each person drew a shield on a flip chart which was divided into three areas – strengths, opportunities and threats. They shared their profile with the team in a pictorial non-threatening manner. We wanted them to understand their own and their colleagues behaviour so that they could work more closely together. We also talked about profiles each time we came together as a team, as I felt it was an important point of reference to who we were collectively. At the Winter Conference each member of the training team did an overall presentation on PowerPoint about their individual Thomas profiles."

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Gaynor also used it when managing her team, “As a manager I am able to understand my team better. I know how they like to work and I try to alter my management style accordingly. Previously when holding one-to-one sessions with members of my team I would have had a standard agenda. I now try to tailor the sessions to the style of the person I am meeting with. Some people need more support and structure than others.”

“As we recruit new members to our training team we take them through the Thomas profile as well. We then introduce them to their PPA in the same way used within the team initially.”



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“We have just profiled the team again a year on and its amazing how some of the profiles have changed, some of this is through the individuals wanting to enhance and develop their profiles throughout the year which has had a big impact on team effectiveness.”