



Category: Best Event

Company: Great Western Railway

Entry title: Leadership Conference 2018: Realising the Benefits of Transformation

Brief and objectives:

The annual leadership conference is a flagship event for leaders to help them understand our transformation, and their role in leading the changes in service and culture. It's an opportunity to network, collaborate with colleagues, share ideas, challenges and opportunities.

One event in each of our three regions ensured leaders could attend whilst maintaining a 24/7 railway.

GWR is transforming our customer experience as we move from having one of the oldest fleets in the UK to the youngest. Together, we're working to revalue rail in the hearts and minds of the traveling public.

We're transforming two million journeys a week, over 100 million a year. But it isn't just our journeys that are changing. It's our people. Working as one team we're making history.

Great people is a key element and strong leadership is crucial.

Cultural change is driving the transformation from a service-focused business to one that emphasises the whole customer experience. Our challenge is to shift old habits, mind-sets and behaviours to new ways of working where great leadership is accepted as the enabler for improved performance and customer satisfaction.

The conference would:

- Promote working together to lead the transformation
- Celebrate achievements, endings and new beginnings
- Set expectations for delivery, with opportunity for questions and answers
- Sustain positive leadership messages and behaviours that showcase living our values

Desired outputs:

- Attendance of 60%
- Full Executive team attendance and engagement at each event
- Delegate overall enjoyment of 88%
- Relevance to role of 80%
- Knowledge and ideas gained of 72%

Outcomes:

After the conference, our leaders would:

- Understand scale of change, impact on their team, and know what is needed to deliver a great experience for customers.
- Be confident, comfortable and role modelling great leadership skills. Appendix 1

Rationale behind event, including research and planning:

All senior leaders have taken part in a leadership development programme and been on our Great Experience Makers training. The conferences reinforced the messages and reenergise colleagues to be great leaders. Appendix 2

Feedback from 2017 indicated:

- Smaller regional events were appreciated
- Rating of the opening speech fell 3% from previous year
- Delegates wanted to understand what the vision meant locally.

Further research:

- Guidance on speakers from Academi, the Welsh Government leadership programme
- Critical peer review by senior leaders who deliver leadership training and events in other sectors
- Collaboration with IC teams in FirstGroup (parent company) to share best practice and learning.

Audience insight:

500 leaders from offices, depots and stations all over the GWR network, from Swansea to Penzance and the London Thames Valley. With 11 years average service and average age of 44, they lead remote teams with limited access to technology. We know that they are slow adopters of change and tend to believe change when they see it.

Annual colleague engagement scores are rising, from 74% in 2012 to 79% in 2017.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

We mapped the delegate process to understand the touchpoints. Appendix 3

Set clear session objectives and messages to ensure opportunities for cultural change.
Appendix 4

Noting the decline in the scores of the opening speech last year, we wanted it to be powerful, capture attention and to feel different. We used our new narrative, photographs of colleagues delivering great customer experiences and we coached Directors so they presented with impact.

We translated the key messages from the script into short animation and previewed it at the event. It gave leaders a tool to use with teams to explain our story.

Involved senior leaders to develop regional sessions. With a clear briefing and objectives, we empowered them to deliver.

A powerful speaker with a relevant story that demonstrated results was key. The transformation of the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust from the worst to best performer in the UK had many parallels, and was made possible by great leadership.

We were on brand. Our continuity voiceover mirrored on-train announcements and our conference set used Famous Five artwork from our new GWR marketing campaign.

Representing each of GWR strategic priorities, market place stalls showcased the support available for teams to be the best they can be. Appendix 5

Implementation of tactics, including details of design, production and support teams employed:

September 2017 – consultation with senior management teams on content and delivery, research with Academi, plus site visits and briefings with external AV support team

October 2017 – developed proposal, critical peer review

November 2017 – presented plan to Executive team

January 2018 – confirmed venues, event design and set up, briefed speakers, engaged learning and development team for workshops

February 2018 – sent save the date, involved senior leaders in regional sessions

March 2018 – opened booking website, coaching with directors

April – Plymouth and Bristol events

May – Reading event, evaluation and learning

June/July – follow up conversations with senior leaders

Setting expectations was key to the success of the event. I briefed delegates to manage expectations. Appendix 6

Briefed Exec team outlining their roles, that included welcoming delegates; registration; table host and helping with refreshments. This ensured they were true Great Experience Makers and engaged through the day.

Measurement and evaluation:

The events were successful, all objectives met and evaluation was extremely positive. Full analysis in Appendix 7

Outputs:

1. Attendance was 64%
2. 100% Exec attendance, role modelling great leadership scored 82%
3. 10% rise in overall enjoyment of conference to 95%
4. Relevance to role increased by 6% to 89%
5. Knowledge and ideas gained increased 4% to 74%

Looking at the outcomes we overachieved against targets:

1. 94% agreed they were clear on GWRs purpose
2. 95% were clear on expectations for actions and behaviours
3. 98% agreed they needed to work together to overcome challenges

Budget and cost effectiveness:

To maximise cost efficiency the IC team organised the events; developed booking website, registration, wrote speeches, recorded voice over, led interactive sessions, delivered the workshops and photography.

Budget £70,000. Spend £48,390

Venues close to stations in each region negated the need for hotels, taxis and travel saving around £50,000.

Key note speakers gave time free of charge.

Conference suites in Plymouth Crown Plaza, Bristol Mercure Grand and Reading Town Hall: £22,790.

External AV team for stage, sound and vision and marketplace stall build: £22,600

External printed material: £3000.

Cost per delegate £149.