



Orientation & Service training: The Case of Strömma Turism & Sjöfart

Background

Strömma Turism & Sjöfart AB comprises a group of Swedish companies that originally included Östersjörederiet Bore Lines AB and the shipping company Ångfartygs AB Strömma Kanal. In recent years the business has expanded from its traditional core expertise in shipping services to focus more on client activities and experiences, and now operates a broad range of hospitality operations, including boating tours, resorts and hotels. The corporate motto charges employees to “create experiences, activities and trips for a leisure- and activity-oriented audience.”

Strömma employs more than 2,000 workers from the Riksgränsen ski resort in the north to Gothenburg’s Paddanboats in the south.

Challenge

Strömma leadership wanted to expand the influence of the company brand among its employees, who have tended to retain identification with the brands of their original companies (now Strömma divisions). Employees working for the Cinderella boats in the archipelago, the Viking museum in Birka and Börjesson boats in Gothenburg, for instance, have been reluctant to adopt the brand identity of the parent company in ways that leadership felt threatened the company’s growth goals.

By generating a greater awareness that all employees are a part of the extended Strömma family, the company could:

- strengthen the appeal of its brand to international travel agencies
- take fuller advantage of cross-selling opportunities
- implement company-wide dress and customer service policies.

Customer service is a critical component of the Strömma brand. Since a significant portion of Strömma’s business is seasonal, employees tend to be young and the turnover rate high, making it difficult to provide an effective means for adequately training employees on the customer service imperative.

Solution

Strömma’s employees are geographically dispersed and typically only work for the company for a couple of months. With these logistical factors in mind, the company decided to implement an Internet-based introductory training program to teach customer service skills and socialize the Strömma brand. After a careful review process, Strömma selected the Gronstedt Group to develop this e-learning program.

Strömma & Service, the application developed by the Gronstedt Group, helps trainees experience the Strömma brand as it works in real life, and also teaches employees about the many different parts of Strömma's business so that he or she can answer any questions from customers, friends or family.

For the customer service component of the training, the Gronstedt Group worked with Strömma to develop a uniform service policy consisting of ten items that every employee is expected to live up to while dealing with customers. This policy incorporates everything from standards on cleanliness to treating each customer as an individual even if he or she is part of a larger group.

To ensure a high level of motivation for trainees the company decided to award each employee successfully completing the training a free pass to all Strömma's activities, an incentive that also served to foster the employee's knowledge of other Strömma operations.

Conclusion

Strömma conducted a highly successful pilot training of the application with new hires at one of its ski resorts, subsequently launching *Strömma & Service* to the entire company in December of 2001. The training is now mandatory for all new employees (approx. 800 per year). Strömma management is very happy with the results so far, attributing the success of the program to a combination of its interactivity, compelling content and the incentives for completion.

The company's next step is to find ways of rolling out its service commitment and training to its independent contractors, who are responsible for conducting a number of operations under the Strömma banner (for example, running the restaurants on board the company's boats). recommends boat trips.