

“We care deeply about every single one of our employees at all of our venues, and our priority is to invest in their development”



AT YOUR SERVICE
Bar staff on-hand to take your drinks order at Abbey Hill

Burhill creating a Workplace Buzz

Employers who engage with and look after their workforce, are, more likely than not, going to reap the long-term benefits as Neil Gray reports from Burhill Golf & Leisure.



GOOD GUY
Guy Riggott (main picture) operations director at Burhill Golf & Leisure, and above, Abbey Hill Golf Centre welcomes visitors

In a difficult market, golf course operators are having to become ever more creative in finding ways to re-energise their venues, and keep staff and customers engaged so as to attract new blood to an old game.

It's sink or swim for a lot of courses in these uncertain financial times, but Burhill Golf and Leisure (BGL), one of the biggest golf course operators in the UK, have chosen to swim by partnering with WorkplaceBuzz to help unlock what really makes their staff tick in delivering growing customer expectations.

Workplace surveys have been an annual feature at BGL venues for several years, however the company decided to bring in WorkplaceBuzz in 2014. Both organisations share a driving philosophy of if you look after your employees, they

will look after your business, and BGL were keen to re-energise and gain a new perspective on staff surveying process.

BGL operate 22 golf courses across ten venues, and the results of the 2016 BGL staff survey show that on average, workplace engagement has risen across all of their venues, causing a positive knock-on effect on the company's nett promoter score and placing BGL higher than other organisations in the UK benchmark.

“We care deeply about every single one of our employees at all of our venues, and our priority is to invest in their development to ensure a switched on and engaged workforce,” commented Guy Riggott, operations director at Burhill Golf and Leisure.

“By partnering with WorkplaceBuzz, we're able to give voice to our teams

of employees and listen to what they think we could be doing to help them to become more engaged with their working environment,” continued Riggott.

The company-wide staff survey run by BGL's partner is optional – with an impressive 80 per cent of the workforce completing it over the summer months – an increase of five per cent on the participation rate from the previous year.

Teams were able to voice their opinions on topics such as engagement, level of satisfaction and communication in the workplace, and availability of day-to-day resources in an easy, online, confidential manner; the anonymous results of which were then collated and presented to BGL's directors.

“The survey measures both the psychological and practical aspects of BGL's venues as a workplace and the culture from the point of view of its employees,” commented Dr Mark Slaski, senior psychologist and founder of WorkplaceBuzz.

“BGL partnered with us so that they could better understand how their employees think and feel about the jobs

that they do, the people that they work with, and the company that they work for.

“The results we've given to BGL in order to encourage provocative thoughts and critical conversations within the company, providing a roadmap from which Guy and his team can direct positive changes in company culture,” continued Dr Slaski.

On the back of the 2015 results, WorkplaceBuzz delivered a Business Development workshop for general managers within BGL to assess the survey results and lay the foundations for a culture change programme throughout the company.

Two strategic projects were developed to address areas needing improvement across the company; team clarity, and engagement. In the following 12 months, the general managers have managed to improve clarity and engagement scores at almost all venues and departments, with only a minority remaining static in comparison with the 2016 results.

“The aim wasn't to implement any immediate overhauls, but to focus on marginal gain,” explained Riggott.

“Lots of little changes make a big difference, and this is a long term project that we're only just beginning. We want to invest in our people now to ensure the future success of the company and all who work within it,” he continued.

A prime example of how BGL have absorbed these results and established a successful framework and language of engagement to implement at each of the venues can be seen at Abbey Hill Golf Centre, a BGL venue in Milton Keynes.

Andrew Scholey, the general manager at Abbey Hill, has spent the last 12 months spending time with all of his employees and implementing a simple framework of positive engagement techniques to motivate his staff and make them feel more connected with the business and the venue.

Scholey's team at Abbey Hill were middle of the table in the 2015 results, but after attending the Business Development workshop, 12 months later Abbey Hill is now top of the table with overall engagement, and leadership and management effectiveness rates having soared since 2015.



DR BEHAVIOUR
Dr Mark Slaski, senior psychologist
and founder of WorkplaceBuzz

"The market is now very much pulled by the consumer therefore success rests upon consumer experience and customer loyalty," explained Dr Slaski.

"Abbey Hill is a perfect example of how a centre can increase the customer experience by ensuring that their workforce is engaged, agile, and innovative," he continued.

BGL has no plans to rest on their laurels after such a positive result from this latest survey, with the company now driving forward with exploring different ways to engage staff at the venues that showed static results, and continuing management and staff training across all venues.

"Golf is a difficult market, and some believe that there should be a reduction in supply to increase demand," commented Riggott. "Here at BGL, we believe that you don't need to decrease supply, you just need to become much better."

"High levels of engagement among the staff push a passive customer to a positive customer, and those are the customers who come back time and time again, and recommend our venues to their friends and family."

BGL is ensuring that they are at the forefront of the market, actively finding solutions to problems before they present an issue, and repeating and building upon the process to become innovative and agile in the field.

Their collaboration with WorkplaceBuzz will continue into the foreseeable future, and with established

staff training programmes being implemented throughout all levels of the business, focus continues to be held upon the workforce and maintaining a reputation as an advanced employer and an employer of choice.

For Dr Slaski, the key is in behaviour, as it is the bottom line of WorkplaceBuzz's surveys and their work with BGL.

"Behaviour can't and shouldn't be changed overnight, and by actively encouraging the general managers to feed the frameworks down through the chain at their own venues, we're implementing small, progressive changes over a longer period that will become second nature to those benefitting from them," he said.

"BGL want their employees to talk to them, they want to listen to their opinions and use them to make the company an even better employer, and therefore further increase customer satisfaction."

Riggott admits that this is a step into the unknown for BGL, and the company are still not sure where the journey with WorkplaceBuzz will take them, but they're excited to find out.

"It's incredibly rewarding to see that our employees are feeling more engaged with their work and the company, and that this is having a positive effect upon our customers and therefore driving the business forward."

"There are a lot of exciting plans in the pipeline for BGL, and we want to be doing all that we can to encourage our talented and dedicated employees to grow with us," concluded Riggott. **GM6**

