

Impact Development Training Group

Impact Development Training Group has developed an innovative staff incentive scheme – mainly non-monetary – as well as a strong commitment to ethical working practices and corporate responsibility.

Impact Development Training Group is a global people development company, employing some 250 staff in 50 worldwide locations, including Australia, Japan, Scandinavia and America. Its UK office is located on the shores of Lake Windermere, a world away from the pressured pace of the city. This unusual choice of location provides a strong indicator of the philosophy that defines the Impact brand values; its people are more likely to get their adrenaline rush from kayaking on the lake or climbing a rock face than they are from working late to reach unrealistic targets. It is Impact's belief that organisations thrive only when staff potential is allowed to develop, and that risk taking and experiencing 'adventures' while at work is vital if employees are to get a sense of meaning from their jobs.

Impact's approach to reward is that employees should be 'rewarded' even before they do anything; that by providing a good working environment and culture it will motivate people to do their job well from the start. Furthermore, the idea that 'work' and 'life' are wholly separate pursuits, which must never converge, is alien to the Impact culture. Instead the company encourages staff to become involved in outside interests that will enhance their personal development. These might include taking advantage of Impact's breathtaking location to learn a new skill, such as abseiling or rowing, or balancing time in the office with following alternative career paths (one staff member works as a TV presenter alongside their responsibilities at Impact).

Freedom and flexibility are at the heart of Impact's incentive policy, as is the understanding that different people are motivated by different things, and that it is important to identify incentives that are appropriate to specific driving factors. If an individual's motivations lie outside the four walls of the office, Impact will support them where they can. This accommodating philosophy certainly seems to engender a positive response from staff, who were recently polled for the Sunday Times' Best Companies to Work For Survey. They were asked 70 questions covering eight areas of their working lives, including leadership (how staff feel about company heads and the values of the organisation), wellbeing (relating to stress at work and work-life balance) and personal growth (examining whether people feel challenged by their job and see the potential for personal advancement). Employees were also asked for feedback on how they feel their pay and benefits size up to similar organisations.

“Impact's rejection of a 'one size fits all' approach to staff”

The survey results provide concrete evidence that Impact's staff feel supported by their managers and team members. Just over 85% said they believe the organisation is run on strong principles and values, and 87.9% said they feel proud to work for Impact. Respondents cited the fact that managers trust their judgment as a huge positive in terms of their sense of pride in their work, and that they feel they are treated as individuals, with their own vision and ambition. The findings also support Impact's rejection of a 'one size fits all' approach to staff, setting it apart from competitors and creating a workforce that is happy, productive and loyal.

Furthermore, the company's willingness to facilitate schemes which benefit the community, both locally and further a field, have earned Impact a number one ranking on the Times' survey in response to the question 'my efforts to help good causes outside our business are supported'.

On a more practical level, Impact staff can take advantage of flexible working hours and subsidised meals at the office restaurant, alongside other more standard incentives such as regular team lunches and extra holiday or pay for staff who have been at the company for ten years. However, traditional targets and appraisals do feature in the Impact HR policy, and staff are rewarded financially when their performance at work adds tangible value to the business – individuals who deliver over target can earn a bonus of up to 10% of their salary, for example. Appraisals are carried out every six months and allow staff to get 360-degree feedback, but much more frequent updates between staff and managers are the norm across the company.

Andy Dickson, Head of Impact UK, sums up: "There is very much a culture of democracy within the organisation, where non pay-related rewards and incentives are available to all and opportunities to travel and take part in socially responsible projects are open to anyone who expresses a keenness to be involved. Indeed the expectation is very much that every employee, across all areas of the Impact business, will take part in an 'adventure' of some sort during their employment."