

c2c

TRAIN OPERATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD HIGHLY COMMENDED

c2c – PUTTING COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMERS AT THE HEART OF THE RAILWAY

c2c aims to be the UK's best commuter railway – a goal that the whole company is committed to achieving, and one that now feels well within its reach. This follows the introduction of its new commitment2customers programme, a scheme that puts customer service firmly at the centre of everything.

In the past five years the route has been transformed from the old London, Tilbury and Southend (LTS) railway, formerly referred to as the 'Misery Line', to a truly customer-focused service fit for the 21st century.

Following its relaunch in 2000, c2c has faced tough challenges including strike actions, serious teething problems with introducing an entirely new fleet, and poor performance levels leading to low customer confidence.

With £350 million spent on the new Electrostar fleet, and £50 million committed to station and facility upgrades, the new management team set about transforming the internal culture to put service to the customer at the forefront throughout the organisation, not just for customer-facing staff.

It developed its commitment2customers programme to breed a culture of continuous improvement, using the expertise of c2c group station managers in conjunction with external training consultants. The programme combines the 'best practice' standards expected from frontline retail staff and the feedback received from mystery shoppers, customer satisfaction surveys and local retail managers, with individual and team action plans to produce a set of best practice standards.

Mystery shoppers are a vital feature of the programme and provide feedback following monthly visits to stations. They monitor the business as a whole by viewing c2c from a customer perspective, allowing c2c to evaluate the impact of marketing campaigns, the appearance and cleanliness of stations, operational issues covering gatelines and ticket office staff, plus, and most importantly,



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the quality of interaction between staff and customers.

To reward staff for customer service excellence and to encourage healthy competition, mystery shopper results are published and reviewed every month. Each quarter, staff with the top 10 results attend an award ceremony, where excellence is celebrated and rewarded with recognition from the Route Director and an individual cash reward. In addition, all results are closely monitored for further team rewards throughout the year.

Route Director Leila Frances believes that focusing on customer service excellence is a necessary complement to the company's investment in fleets, stations and technical improvements. She says, 'To transform c2c we knew we needed to improve service delivery across the board, but simply providing new trains and improving stations was not enough. We needed to change the culture of the company from the inside out, not an easy task when staff have been working for one of the worst performing routes in the country.'

'Commitment2customers has allowed staff to be actively involved in forming the new c2c,

and we believe that customer service programmes of this detail and intensity, though not unknown in the retail and service sectors, are unique in the rail sector. I firmly believe that further raising the standards of customer service will ensure we improve customer retention and generate new business by encouraging new customers from other train companies, or other transport modes.

'The high commendation in this category for the c2c scheme is proof enough for me that our team is setting the pace for the rest of the industry; I just hope they can keep up. Our next challenge is to drive these standards throughout all parts of the company. The radical approach to fleet maintenance that has evolved at our East Ham depot shows that this can be done.'



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The customer service development programme