



## Training programs benefit Rolls-Royce

By Christopher Hosford

Although Rolls-Royce is most well-known for its luxury automobiles, the company is also a civil aircraft engine maker. In fact, Rolls-Royce is second only to General Electric Aviation in the aviation engine business.

In a highly competitive field, Rolls-Royce executives felt that strong employee engagement could give it incremental advantages. To measure employee satisfaction, in 2004 the company completed an internal global survey that showed Rolls-Royce still had its work cut out for it in its various divisions.

Rolls-Royce Engine Services—Oakland is an aircraft engine overhaul and repair division that employs about 500 people. After the survey results were released, Raj Sharma, president of the division, realized employee engagement could be improved. "We were a little bit better than some others in the survey, but we were still not pleased with it."

Acknowledging longstanding employee cynicism about previous efforts, Sharma enlisted the help of employee engagement consultancy L.M. Dulye & Co. Volunteer employee action teams were formed and tasked with producing recommendations for change.

Every recommendation was implemented, Sharma said. They included weekly management walk-arounds to get to know workers, employee-driven communications teams to produce company newsletters and weekly employee "huddles" held every Monday. Training programs in business effectiveness and an employee leadership development program were added, as was a voice-of-the customer program. Here, at the recommendation of employees, Rolls-Royce clients regularly visit the plant to explain to workers how their aviation engines were being used.

"Voice of the customer isn't just a nicety," said Sloane Whelan, the division's VP-customer relations. "It gives employees with relatively repetitive jobs the sense that they're not just working on a part but rather are key in keeping people safe. It gives them a sense of belonging."

The company's quarterly town hall meetings, previously led and developed by management, were radically restructured by employees. The meeting length was halved, a heavy emphasis on financial reports was reduced and discussions on how the company could improve were added.

Sharma said since the initiative began in January 2006, his division has seen a 19% improvement in annual operating profit; a 400% reduction in the error rate; and an 18% improvement in productivity in two areas of the facility. The Oakland plant currently is maintaining an employee satisfaction rating of more than 85%, with some initiatives topping 92%.

"It's been like a tidal wave," Sharma said. "Employees couldn't believe that we'd listen to their suggestions, that decisions would involve them." Sharma emphasized the marketing and business improvement rationale behind the effort.

"Business performance is the only motivation to do this," he said. "The employee engagement process increases workers' knowledge about the customer, the market and competition, and as such it is a key marketing initiative here at Rolls-Royce."

*Source: BtoB Magazine. July 2007. Section: Marketing Metrics Case Studies.*

**About L.M. Dulye & Co.**

L.M. Dulye & Co. is a leading change management and communications consultancy that specializes in high-impact, 2-way communications, helping business leaders deepen their knowledge and understanding of the value of successful internal communications, engage and inspire the workforce and, ultimately, achieve better results.

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