

Changing Rooms in Iceland

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Earlier this year, Resourcing Matters partnered with Allen International, an integrated strategic design consultancy. With clients all over the world, they have recently been working with a leading retail Bank in Iceland.

Allen International were excited to have the opportunity to develop a radical new retail interior design strategy to revolutionise the role of the branch for the bank's customers. A fundamental goal of the project was to entice existing customers back to the branch whilst attracting new customers to the brand.

The new style of the interior encourages Bank staff to be more proactive, visible and approachable with customers. The design is open plan with no screens or partitions; it has a central hub area to be used for transactions and a network area with meeting rooms available for local businesses. All offices for staff have been kept to a minimum, encouraging all to mix freely with customers. There is also a specialist crèche area and a place where customers can get coffee and talk to staff and other customers.

Resourcing Matters worked with Allen to evaluate the impact of the interior design on the employee's role and what skills and behaviours they would need to adopt to be effective within it. The new design allowed staff to be much more proactive and interactive with their customers. For some, however, this required a shift in mindset and development of new skills.

As a result, Resourcing Matters designed a workshop which enabled employees to experience the new environment and to try out some techniques in building rapport and recognising and using body language. The workshop majored on relationship building skills; focusing on the customer and helping staff to put themselves in the customers' shoes - and it also supported them to sell the benefits of the new strategy.

The plan for the Bank is that the workshops will be rolled out across the organisation so that all staff are equipped to operate in the new branches. The feedback from the participants was extremely positive about what they had learned about their own and customer behaviour. They felt more confident to operate from day one and were clear about the benefits of the new design to the customer. The feedback was also positive about how the new layout would help increase business in their branches.

Allen International is very keen to support the introduction of their new interior retail designs with skills training because they believe that it is ultimately the people who work in them that will make them successful.

Our next project with Allen International is in Qatar and we are looking forward to finding out what impact the design has on Banks in the Middle East - compared to Iceland.