

**Client: South West Water**

## H-I Network

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### H-I Network

30 Haymarket  
London  
SW1Y 4EX  
Tel: +44 (0)20 3326 2945

### Learn more

[www.h-i.com](http://www.h-i.com)

### Corven Consulting London

Tel: +44 (0)20 3326 2946

### Boston

Tel: +1 617 236 0033

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## Operational Excellence Network Case Study

# Driving higher performance and making external connections

### SITUATION

South West Water (SWW) is a water supply and sewerage utility company serving most of south west England. With its headquarters in Exeter, it is responsible for the region's drinking, waste and bathing water and its environment. Since privatisation in 1989, SWW's 1,300+ employees have worked to stringent UK and European Union standards ensuring that its customers have reliable, round-the-clock access to high quality drinking water and waste water facilities. SWW's Operational Excellence initiatives were designed to realise its aspiration to be one of the top three UK water companies for service provided to customers.

When SWW joined the H-I Network, it was looking forward to improving operational excellence initiatives by applying ideas and approaches collected through event attendance and our research. Whilst these components did deliver the expected value, the H-I team delivered further added-value.

### OBJECTIVE

To deliver this added value the H-I Network:

- Connected SWW more strongly with 'sister ships'
- Enabled SWW to test its ideas and practices against those of other members of the H-I Network.

### APPROACH

H-I Network used its extensive network of contacts to identify 'sister ships' for SWW. In particular they were introduced to the Operational Excellence team at EDF Major Business. Not only was EDF in the same sector, it was also in the same location – Exeter. However, it was not a competitor. SWW and EDF exchanged ideas on performance measurement initiatives. SWW had recently introduced a new set of performance measures aimed at improving customer-orientated service in its service centre. EDF had recently completed a major overhaul of the mechanisms used to communicate performance measures and was interested in learning about the efficient and effective operation of call centres. SWW and EDF have continued to meet regularly.

As SWW introduced its Service+ initiatives, it also realised that its approach to staff recruitment, development and retention needed an overhaul. To investigate other ideas for improvement, and as part of the validation of its plans, SWW presented a case study of its investigations and proposed approach at an H-I forum. Attendees from Abbey, Aesica Pharmaceuticals, Anglo American, Lloyds TSB, National Grid, Shell and Virgin Media

compared and contrasted their approaches with that of SWW to enable SWW to finalise the changes it would implement.

### RESULT

SWW summarised the H-I achievement as follows:

*"With its extensive network, the H-I team was perfectly placed to recognise the value of us sharing experiences with EDF. The discussions have been very beneficial to both organisations. In addition, we have used the various research reports provided by the H-I team to help explore innovative approaches to business improvements. These have provided a base upon which we have facilitated organisational changes to achieve our strategic objectives."*

Simon Buckingham, Service & Control Centre Manager, SWW

*"I was delighted by the open and honest way in which attendees at the H-I forum commented on our approach and contributed ideas from their own experiences. At other conferences, it is rare to get below the gloss and into the realities that enable everyone to learn from what has worked well and what did not."*

Jo Ecroyd, Service Centre Manager, SWW

