

# The Guardian



## BAM Nuttall peer-led training unlock wealth of hidden talents

**Workshop programme turns traditional approach on its head - and looks set to become a role model for employee engagement**

When BAM Nuttall actively engaging its employees in the journey to Beyond Zero, the company really means it. Its Beyond Zero training programme is delivered to employees by their peers - and the approach has proved so successful it is now inspiring new ways to engage employees across the business.

Initially launched as a company-wide vision to improve health and safety, Beyond Zero has since developed into BAM Nuttall's sustainability plan for the business.

In 2012 the focus turned to employee engagement, in a bid to make Beyond Zero relevant and important to everyone.

Rather than follow the conventional route of separating out health and safety training, environmental training and employee engagement initiatives, the company decided to integrate all three. The result was the biggest, most innovative programme BAM Nuttall has ever run.

Sweeping aside traditional training methods - department-led, cascade or consultancy-led - BAM Nuttall implemented a bottom-up training approach that got frontline employees, such as operatives and post-room staff, involved in training their peers.

Leadership of the programme is just as innovative. Instead of being delivered by the HR or training department, the initiative is led by just two people, who report directly to the board of directors.

### **Leaders at all levels**

The company started by inviting employees to a Beyond Zero Commitment Workshop. The aim was to create leaders at all levels, each having a far greater understanding of what it will take to achieve Beyond Zero.

These workshops were followed by a three-day, Beyond Zero Workshop training programme where frontline employees were taught how to deliver workshops to their peers.

So far, 569 people have gone through the commitment workshops, and 166 people have been trained to be trainers. Over 5,000 employees have attended workshops run by their peers.

The results took BAM Nuttall by surprise. The workshops unlocked a wealth of hidden talent among the company's employees and the initial workshops were so popular BAM Nuttall decided to continue running them.

Crucially, the training programme is having a positive effect on engaging employees. Since its launch, BAM Nuttall's staff turnover rate has fallen.

Simultaneously, the percentage of employees who feel they're engaged in really great work and that potential difficulties are identified before they turn into problems has risen.

On the environmental front, 84% of the company's waste is diverted from landfill, 24% more than in 2010, and the company has generated 41% less construction waste since 2009.

Energy efficiency at its fixed premises has improved. A significant increase in near-miss reporting for safety and environmental issues shows greater awareness among staff.

In a close-run category the judges were impressed by the thorough approach of BAM Nuttall's Beyond Zero initiative.

"The programme appears to have been set up to leave a real legacy," said the judges. They were especially pleased at the leadership the company showed by investing in the initiative, given that the construction sector faces particularly challenging economic times.

### **Cultural change**

For BAM Nuttall, Beyond Zero is more than just an initiative - now recognised as the culture of the company it is helping all employees to aspire to a more sustainable and responsible way of life.

The training programme plays a big part by helping the firm reach a critical mass of employees and achieve change far quicker than they could have imagined.

Now, its approach and philosophy is being emulated throughout BAM Academy, and all other training programmes are designed to support Beyond Zero.

To date, the company has invested nearly £1.3m and 50,017 man-hours in the programme. As it goes on the programme becomes more sustainable, with a 48% reduction in external costs and a 21% increase in man-hours.

BAM Nuttall believes it is the first business of its kind to introduce peer-led training. What's more, the training programme has been so successful the company's clients have starting asking for information about it and joint venture partners have started adopting the approach.

*Lorna Thorpe is part of the wordworks network*

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