

Developing a 'green' training programme for the retail sector in Serbia, Montenegro & Macedonia



People 1st International has worked in partnership with Hystead and EBRD to promote economic regeneration in Skopje, Podgorica and Belgrade by developing skills training programmes and job opportunities for young people, with a focus on supporting environmental sustainability within a shopping mall/retail context.

Background

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank, approved a loan to Hystead totalling \$164 million to support the retail sector in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia.

Hystead, whose parent company is based in South Africa, own three shopping malls in the Western Balkans - Skopje City Mall, Delta City Podgorica and Delta City Mall, Belgrade. As some of the largest of their kind in the region, each shopping mall is an integral part of the community whilst also being a major tourist destination for visitors.

Funding was used to aid the expansion and modernisation of the three shopping malls, and provide technical assistance to develop and implement tailored, work based skills training programmes for young people aimed specifically at sustainability management.

Our solutions

We carried out a detail skills gap assessment in each of the three malls and supported individual mall management teams to partner with local universities and training providers.

As a result of the skills gap assessment and the partnerships forged, we developed a series of training programmes which included:

- A green building training module
- A customer service ambassador workshop
- A schools programme
- An internship programme

To ensure capacity building, we designed a Train-the-Trainer programme for each of the four developed programmes. We then delivered the Train-the-Trainer programme to mall management staff, who will, in turn, be delivering the programmes to their teams going forward.

Green building training module

The green building training module has been developed in partnership with a Serbia based organisation who are now leading on the delivery of the programme. The interactive classroom-based training provides delegates with guidelines to help raise awareness of the concept of sustainable and environmentally conscious behaviours. Delivery of the module is supported by written learning materials, including manuals for trainers and for learners.

The programme has been contextualised for delivery in all three countries where there are different arrangements for the recycling of waste. The training programme is seen as a starting point for the creation of future group and individual activities, fostering good habits, and instilling the ethos of individuals taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Western Balkans

“Implementing the developed training modules has inspired us to raise the standard of community engagement and customer service to the next level.”

Dragan Perišić, Marketing Director, Delta City Podgorica

“Whilst implementing the new modules, we reached out to engage the employees to work in a more focused way, becoming better in customer service whilst achieving a mutual goal in community engagement aligned with the company's mission and vision.”

Damjan Korubin, Marketing Manager, Skopje City Mall

“The marketing intern gave us a different outlook and perspective on how the business should be run. I would definitely recommend any organisation to hire an intern.”

Dijana Hrubik, Marketing Director, Delta City Belgrade

The content of the module has been developed at a basic level which can be adapted for use by the different groups of users within the shopping malls - from employees within the retail stores to maintenance, cleaning and security teams. The module can also be embedded within the schools programme and delivered to interns during their internship placement.

Customer services ambassador workshop

A challenge identified during the skills gap assessment was that positive customer experience was hindered due to lack of orientation knowledge and customer service skills of tenants and service providers. As a result, we developed a customer services ambassador workshop which Hystead now deliver to new recruits both within mall management teams and to subcontracted cleaning, security and maintenance staff. Hystead plan to deliver this workshop to tenant retailers.

Schools programme

A one-day schools programme, supporting trainer guide and slide deck have been developed as part of this initiative. The schools programme is suitable for delivery in the mall or within the school environment and consists of a site visit, a green building interactive session, group exercises and a session on career opportunities within the retail sector and mall environment. The aim of the programme is to allow school children a behind the scenes look at mall operations and to entice future young talent into a career in mall management. An annual site visit programme for school children has now been scheduled for each mall.

Internship programme

Following detailed analysis, three alternative internship models were proposed and adopted by Hystead with the project-based internship and traditional internship being the most popular. We developed handbooks to support interns and management teams which included writing job and project descriptions. So far, marketing students have completed successful internships in both Podgorica and Belgrade and a project-based internship re-designed the food court in Skopje City Mall.

Outcomes & impact

The programme is delivering multiple benefits for a range of stakeholders:

- ✓ EBRD are able to meet sustainability goals attached to the funding of the retail sector in the Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro
- ✓ Hystead are able to comply with the environmental regulations of the host governments for the three shopping malls, enabling them to develop their business and increase employment opportunities for local people
- ✓ Individuals working within the malls learn about how they can optimise waste management, reduce emissions and pollution which in turn influences local government
- ✓ Local residents potentially benefit from the reduced impact of the waste generated from the shopping malls
- ✓ Customer service and mall orientation has improved amongst mall staff and sub-contracting teams who now offer an improved customer experience to shoppers
- ✓ University students now have the opportunity to secure a placement within a mall management environment and learn about retail operations
- ✓ School children gain an insight into mall operations and get the opportunity of having a behind the scenes tour
- ✓ Employees of Hystead benefit from the opportunities created by the success of the business, as a result of meeting its environmental obligations, as well as the ability to improve their understanding of environmental issues, with learning that they can take forward into future employment and share with other people.

To further increase the reach of the initiative, Hystead is working with local schools to help engage children in the sustainability agenda at an early age, supporting them in learning and embedding positive behaviours that will also help influence the people around them to take personal responsibility for helping to protect the environment and the

About People 1st International

People 1st International is an employer-led skills and quality assurance expert. We develop and quality assure industry relevant skills solutions in the UK and internationally across apprenticeships, work-based learning and technical vocational education, as well as providing a consultancy service internationally to support countries in developing sustainable skills models.

Our employer-led approach gives us an unparalleled insight into the skills priorities now and in the future, with critical industry partnership collaborations that bridge the gap between employers and government.

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