



## INFORMATION

Date: 24 June 2005

### Customer service training is for logistics people too: Rhema Group creates programme for BOC delivery drivers

The logistics which connect companies to their suppliers and their customers and move goods between the three are seldom regarded as "customer service" in the usual sense. Yet a good, informed customer service attitude at the logistics end can hugely improve cost-effectiveness, efficiency and customer relations.

BOC firmly believes this, and is currently turning that belief into practice with increasing success through a specially-created training programme for delivery drivers handling potentially hazardous loads.

The UK-based global HR development specialist Rhema Group was asked to work with the company on this unusual and imaginative training project. Together they have built and are now successfully running a *Creating Excellence in Customer Service* programme - for drivers who tanker propellant gases from refineries to the wide variety of manufacturers who buy this product from BOC. This training emphasises that the logistics of safe and legal supply of such a product must be in the hands of people who are prepared to do more than just drive; to exercise customer skills as well as technical ones.

"Training involves everyone who works for the company understanding that they have customers - people for whom they provide goods, products or services," says Rhema Associate Director William Burton, who created the programme for the BOC delivery drivers. "Internal or external, in the office or on the delivery ramp - there can be a good, bad or indifferent working relationship."

That relationship is not 'invisible' in the logistics side of the operation, Burton stresses. "There, like everywhere else in the supply chain, satisfied customers cause less stress and take up less time per transaction - and finding a new customer costs four or five times more than retaining an existing customer." Bob Girvan, Project Manager for BOC Special Products, strongly agrees: "I'm completely convinced that this training is time and money well spent. I have heard nothing but favourable reports, and I believe we have laid the foundations of an excellent customer service offering."

Rhema has worked with BOC for a number of years, creating customised training and development. The drivers' customer service training was built firmly on an understanding of the drivers' logistical role. With the full co-operation of TDG (the major supply chain management provider ) which contracts drivers out to do this particular job in BOC vehicles and livery, Burton spent time doing best practice interviews with drivers and their control centre colleagues - even being allowed to get the feel of being in a tanker cab, though only while it was safely parked up. He conducted the same interviews with BOC's best directly-employed drivers and controllers.

The result is a fairly intensive two-day course covering procedures, hygiene standards, demonstrating expertise and building relationships, interpersonal skills and dealing with safety issues. The workshops include a very important role-play element, some particularly focused on how drivers can best deal with situations where customers must understand legal and safety requirements which may restrict a drivers' ability to do precisely what the customer wants (while actually doing precisely what the customer *needs*).

Girvan illustrates how the customer service-orientated driver will "go the extra mile". In one case a hydraulic hose to the tanker's pump failed towards the end of a delivery. With customer satisfaction as the priority, the driver called out a TDG fitter to fix the problem and clean up spilt hydraulic fluid. He kept the busy customer informed throughout the process and then completed his delivery. Needless to say, the customer was delighted.

In another incident the objective of complete customer satisfaction prompted the driver stay with a customer while he fixed a difficult-to-get-at air valve problem. He succeeded and completed his job- rather than abandoning the delivery to take his tanker back to the depot for engineers to fix it.

As takes the BOC drivers' programme forward Rhema's Burton is convinced that "this far-sighted and innovative approach from BOC is an example to all logistics operations". He believes that it increases BOC's competitive edge, by upskilling drivers and recognising that "they are the face of the company as far as the delivery customer is concerned".

**For further information and interviews contact Terri Anderson**

**T: + 44 1494 565864**

**M: + 44 7802 872346**

**E: [hq@rhemagroup.com](mailto:hq@rhemagroup.com)**

---

Notes to Editors...

**The Rhema Group** [www.rhemagroup.com](http://www.rhemagroup.com) is a highly respected and well-established UK human resource development company which also operates globally. Founded in 1985 by MD Jeremy Francis, and with a company name derived from the Greek word Rhema meaning "Inspired Word," Rhema has a solid reputation for quality and reliability of

delivery of programmes for a range of rapidly growing and changing UK companies, and for multinationals, on a 24/7 basis.

Focusing on Talent Development, Management Development, Performance Management, Sales Training and Skills Development, Rhema provides customised and blended solutions involving business consultancy, training, coaching, software and E-learning (via internet and client intranets). It provides an expert resource in support of learning and development functions- all on a 24/7 basis.

It is also known for innovation in product and services which include programmes on Leading Change, Insight Selling and Managing Remote Teams, and Talent Management Software.

The Rhema team of Directors, based at the company's Rochester, Kent HQ, and led by Jeremy Francis are MD Jeremy Francis; William Burton (focus on person-to-person training and coaching); Sue Gilkes (focus on channel distribution and E-learning); Lorraine Gribben (marketing and finance) works out of the Rochester, Kent HQ, linked to 40 UK consultants. And through 15 international partners of best practitioner status in Europe, USA, South Africa, Australia and S.E. Asia, Rhema delivers proprietary products and services globally - in particular to multinationals looking for high quality, customised and consistent international roll-out of centrally mandated people development programmes and assessments- in 10 languages in 20 countries.

**The BOC Group** [www.boc.com](http://www.boc.com) serves two million customers in more than 50 countries, and is one of the largest and certainly the most global of the world's leading gases companies. The Group employs around 43,500 people, had annual sales of nearly £4.6 billion in 2004, and for more than a century BOC's gases and expertise have contributed to advances in many industries and aspects of everyday life, including steel-making, refining, chemical processing, environmental protection, wastewater treatment, glass production, electronics and health care.

**TDG** [www.tdg.eu.com](http://www.tdg.eu.com) is a leading Pan-European supply chain solutions provider, with operations in seven countries across Europe, employing almost 8,000 people. The company works in partnership with many major blue chip companies, primarily in the Chemical, Consumer Goods, Industrial and Retail sectors.