

Arcadia

How TCM helped Arcadia Group

“I’ve had people tell me, ‘I came here to resign today but now I don’t want to.’”

The Arcadia Group began looking at mediation several years ago as a way of handling conflict within the organisation. Too often, it seemed, issues that could have been dealt with relatively easily were snowballing into more serious disagreements. As Helga Jones, Employee Relations Manager at Arcadia Group explains, there was a sense that the existing grievance system wasn’t always working:

“We asked ourselves, is there not something we can do to address these issues in a more positive way before they get blown out of proportion? We were finding that most of the issues being dealt with by grievances related to miscommunication. And we calculated that each grievance was taking 9 days to resolve.”

TCM helped develop an in-house mediation system that was piloted at Top Shop/Top Man in 2009. Internal mediators were trained and those experiencing difficult work relationships were encouraged to use the system to resolve their problems. The scheme was so successful it was rolled out throughout the group two years later.

Helga Jones says the key to the success of the scheme has been a shift in mindset with people encouraged to address problems as early as possible:

“We found that often a short conversation right at the outset could resolve the issue. In all our mediation cases I’d say about 95% them are around communication problems. Often people have said to me, ‘If we’d sat down and talked about this it wouldn’t even have taken a day to sort it out.’ The feedback has been very good.”

Helga Jones is the in-house mediation scheme manager and a trained mediator at the Arcadia Group and has facilitated many sessions. She says the experience has been exceedingly positive:

“Every mediation I have done has been successful. In fact, over the years, throughout the company, we’ve probably only had 3 or 4 that weren’t successful.”

Now the Arcadia Group is focusing on fostering even earlier communication when problems arise. The organisation is encouraging leaders within the organisation to see if informal discussions can resolve the situation before the mediation process is initiated.

Helga Jones says her experience with mediation has been overwhelmingly positive and believes the development of a mediation system would be a positive move for any organisation,

“I just think it’s an excellent tool to help resolve conflict at an early stage.”