



## 2 SISTERS FOOD GROUP

### PROGRAMME RECOGNITION CASE STUDY

2 Sisters Food Group is a privately owned Birmingham-based food manufacturing company. Established in 1993 by entrepreneur and chief executive, Ranjit Singh Boparan, as an own label and branded food operation, it has grown rapidly through acquisition and expanded to cover 42 manufacturing sites in the UK, six in the Netherlands, four in Ireland and one in Poland.

Primarily a private label manufacturer for retail and food service markets, the acquisition of Northern Foods in 2011 gave the Group ownership of brands including Fox's Biscuits, Goodfella's Pizza and Holland's Pies. It is now the largest food company in the UK by turnover and employs approximately 23,000 people across 42 different sites.

As a significant employer within the food industry and with such diversity of operations, locations, customers and products there are clear benefits for individuals wishing to progress a career within the food group, in line with the businesses goals to 'Find, Grow, Keep' the best people within the food industry.

To enable that to happen it was clear that shared ways of working and some consistency of approach was required in terms of learning, training and development across the business.

In essence, the diversity of the business meant a wide range of differing approaches to learning and development and an array of legacy training materials.

Jenni Chambers, Head of Talent at 2SFG, said: "Because of the rapid expansion of the business and the number of manufacturing facilities we have, learning and development approaches varied widely across the group due to its decentralised nature. We wanted to move to a place where our different divisions had more similarities than differences by establishing consistent standards across the business."

The starting point for this was to get the existing learning and development team together who were based across a range of divisions and locations.

The team began by setting clear objectives, ranging from short-term improvements - such as the development of a standardised bank of resources and the creation of line management standards - to long-term objectives such as improved productivity and the progression of line managers into management roles.

The team pooled their existing material and agreed a list of core topics relating to line manager development under the umbrella theme of 'Improve You'.

Feedback was also sought from site general managers to understand what they felt the needs of their teams were in this area and their recommendations on how this should be delivered.



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All of this then formed the basis for the development of new training materials for 16 modules in total, with five core modules identified as follows:

- Effective communication skills
- Motivating and engaging teams
- Dignity at work
- Myself as a Leader
- Conflict management

Jenni Chambers: “Once we’d established this ‘top five’ our next challenges were how to implement them and how to establish consistency and standards without stifling the positive work that was being achieved locally. We needed an external sense check.”

To help 2SFG gain recognition for their new suite of courses, The National Skills Academy for Food & Drink (NSAFD) came up with a proposal to provide ‘Programme Recognition’ status to help 2SFG consolidate and refine its training offering.

This would have the benefit of working to consistent high standards, as well as giving the programme added credibility through this external recognition. In particular for those colleagues who had learnt people management skills ‘on the job’ this would be a great opportunity to formally recognise and develop their ability where they had not had this chance previously.

As part of this process, NSAFD experts would assess the structure of a company’s training courses and the quality of materials to ensure they meet the required assessment criteria. If any gaps are identified during this audit, NSAFD’s

expert consultants can advise on the materials and training required.

Successfully completing Programme Recognition assessment ensures that the training offered by participating food and drink businesses gains the credibility and exposure it requires.

12 months on this collaborative approach has resulted in a learning and development strategy that has given 2SFG some great benefits in terms of sharing best practice, greater efficiency, value for money and a more standardised approach to training and development.

The NSAFD recognised and approved content ensures that the business is confident that the training being delivered is of the highest quality and in line with industry standards. John Degg says: “the great thing about developing resources in this way is that we have consistency of content and standards, with flexibility to deliver the material in the most appropriate way for that group of learners at that time in that particular business”.

Jenni Chambers: “Thanks to our partnership with the NSAFD there is now a dedicated framework in place to support learning and development across the business. Our training can take many forms, both practical and theoretical. So, whether employees work for 2 Sisters Food Group in general management; factory production; technical or health and safety, there is the right training course for them, supported by high-quality training materials. To support the sustainable growth of the business, we need to ensure we have a well-trained, skilled workforce and our partnership with NSAFD has given the business the reassurance it needs that the development of our training programmes are truly focused on delivering this goal.”