

Lycetts Team Champion Best Practice Workbook



2018 WINNERS



Under 40 horses – Nick Alexander

Over 40 horses – Warren Greatrex



Celebrating and promoting the racehorse training yards that have developed a strong team ethos through the highest standards of staff management and safe working practices

The Lycetts Team Champion Award has been created to celebrate the training yards that have a strong team ethos.

One of the key challenges facing trainers and British racing is the attraction and retention of skilled riders and grooms. Trainers are competing with many other industries for an increasingly demanding workforce. In today's world, fewer people favour the type of work offered in a racing yard so trainers need to manage their staff in a way that attracts and retains them. A study by the Racing Foundation showed up a mismatch between trainers' understanding of the needs of their staff and those employees' expectations of the way they are managed. To resolve this mismatch, the National Trainers Federation has created an Industry Standard for the best ways to engage and motivate staff. Research shows that, if implemented, this standard can maximise retention.

The Lycetts Team Champion mission is to:

- 1** Deliver praise and a sense of achievement for the best managed yards
- 2** Showcase the positive results of developing a team that works well together.
- 3** Spread the message about safe working practices
- 4** Improve recruitment and retention rates by promoting the most successful ways in which racehorse trainers manage their staff and encouraging wider adoption of those practices.
- 5** Demonstrate to the world outside racing that for anyone who wants to work with horses, British racehorse trainers provide the best supported jobs anywhere in the equine sector.

Why would my yard compete in Lycetts Team Champion?

Taking part in Lycetts Team Champion Award will

- Support your recruitment and retention strategy by ensuring you have the best staff management practices in place
- Support your marketing strategy by showing your business is well managed

Lycetts is providing the prize money to be used in a way that benefits and supports the team.

The nomination form asks how the yard would envisage using the prize money so the team knows what winning will mean to them. Examples might include an equiciser, a TV for the staff room, laptop computers or yard branded riding-out clothing.



How does my yard participate?

Access the Nomination Form and The Winning Approach on the NTF website at www.racehorsetrainers.org/industry/awards.asp

Study the assessment criteria. Decide whether the yard already meets the assessment criteria or if new ways of working need to be put in place to compete for the award. Trainer and staff agree how they will work together on the nomination and completion of the nomination form. The team should be imaginative in the way they collaborate and collect and provide evidence.

This could include video, photo and testimonial evidence and involve the wider team, e.g. farrier, vet, owners.

The Winning Approach and first nomination form were developed by Sport and Beyond, they did a fantastic job creating what we now have to help with this award and highlight or improve working practices across the industry.

What are the judging criteria?

The criteria and method of assessment have been designed to be as easy as possible for trainers and their staff to meet. The criteria are clear and transparent. They are taken from The Winning Approach a bespoke standard for managing staff in racing yards.

Team Champion emphasises the actions that are most closely aligned with strengthening the team ethos. The categories are:

- 1 Using effective recruitment and induction systems
- 2 Ensuring a safe environment
- 3 Creating a positive working environment
- 4 Development and Training
- 5 Reward and Recognition

The nomination form contains a series of questions prompting teams to describe the action they have taken to achieve the listed outcomes. For example Creating a positive working environment How do you operate in a way that encourages effective communication and collaboration between management and staff and amongst staff? The Actions are examples of how you might do this but feel free to tell us of other ways you achieve this.

Entries will be divided into two categories:

- 1** Yards with 40 horses or more
- 2** Yards with fewer than 40 horses

(using figures registered on the BHA Racing Admin system for a rolling monthly average since 1st January 2017.)

The answers will then be scored by the judging panel from 1 to 10 giving a maximum possible score of 120. The four highest scores in each category go through to the short list and the yards will be visited by the judges. However, the total scores will be graded from 1* to 3* so yards that are not shortlisted or win still receive recognition for their performance.

Star system as follows:

***1 Star** is awarded to those who gain 60 to 80 points. This status is awarded to Yards with good team ethos and showing promising signs for the future.

****2 Stars** are awarded to those who gain 81 to 100 points. This status is awarded to Yards that have shown very good levels of team ethos and staff engagement.

*****3 Stars** are awarded to those who gain more than 100 points. This status is awarded to Yards that have shown excellent levels of team ethos and staff engagement.

All yards to receive star recognition gain the right to use the special the award logo to promote their business.

Who are the judges?

The members of the judging panel in 2018 were.

Yogi Briesner; former World Class Performance Manager and Chef d'Equipe for the British Three-Day Event Team.

Laura Whyte; former head of Human Resources for John Lewis.

Olly Stephens; former Group 1 winning international trainer.

Dana Mellor; a key figure in establishing the Jockeys Employment Training Scheme.

Kevin Parsons; a highly experienced member of stable staff in some of the most successful yards in British racing.

The following pages show the questions from the first Lycetts Team Champion Award and just a few of the best answers received for each question.



A1: How appropriate induction training is provided for new starters, ensuring they can begin their role effectively and confidently.

“New starters are given an induction going through the “New Employee Checklist” this includes covering the health and safety and safe working practices and then a contract of employment.

All new staff spend their first morning with the trainer on the gallops and around the yard.”

Richard Phillips

New staff members are given excellent handbooks with all the relevant information needed about the yard including layout, staff structure, working practices, going racing, conduct, policies, pool money rules and various other things.



The applicants always come in for a trial at the yard and if pertinent to the job they are applying for, they will have a riding assessment, which is recorded, then read and signed off by the new starter as part of their joining process.

Suzy Smith

A2: How new starters are made to feel welcome into the team with existing staff being clear about the role and responsibilities of each new starter.

“We have a “New Starter Welfare Checklist for staff” that ensures we cover

Do they have enough funds for first week rent/food?

Do they have transport?

Family, are they able to visit if not local?

Accommodation if not living on site, is it suitable and safe?

Doctor/Dentist, do they need to register locally?”

Ann Duffield

“New staff are given a short debrief at the end of the first day and first week to make sure everyone is happy.”

Seamus Mullins

“When a new member of staff starts all the yard goes out for a dinner to help them settle in and get to know the other staff members away from the yard.”

Martin Keighley

“All senior staff are briefed on the new members ability/experience to be able to help them settle in best to the yard.

New staff members are paired up with a mentor/buddy to help introduce them into the yard and how it works for the first few days/weeks.”

Dan Skelton

“Five of our senior staff are Level One NCFE Qualified Mentors and any new starters are guided through their first four weeks by one of these qualified mentors.”

Richard Fahey



B1: How the trainer provides effective employment policies, procedures and practices for the staff including protection from abuse.

A staff folder/handbook with all yard policies is available and accessible in the tackroom/ feedroom for all staff to read and view whenever they want.

Suzy Smith, Tom Dascombe

The Mark Johnston Racing Staff Handbook contains company policies such as Equal opportunities, Employment of disabled people and harassment and bullying, which explains the procedure to follow should they feel they are being abused. In addition to the procedures in place for employees in the work place we also have a dedicated Welfare Officer who is able to assist with any issues going on outside the workplace too.

Mark Johnston

The handbook includes our policies on abuse, bullying and safeguarding. These are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. It is very important to Phillips Racing to provide a safe place of work.

Richard Phillips

Our HR/Health and Safety Officer ensures the yard is kept up to date with policies and procedures utilising information from the NTF, Government websites and the media, including COSHH requirements. Helpline, charity and industry notices are displayed.

Luca Cumani



B2: How an environment is created where staff feel safe, support each other to improve safety and know who to speak to about safety issues.

We pride ourselves on the fact that we provide our team with an occupational health nurse who is on hand to help with any problems that any of our team have or are going through, including mental health issues.

Tom Dascombe

Over the years we have had employees suffer anything from bereavement and serious illness to addictions, financial difficulties and domestic abuse and we have provided support and practical help for each and every one of them. We have a system in place where no-one has to suffer alone, our senior staff will tell Mr or Mrs Smart if there is a serious problem and between us we help that person get the right help. Racing Welfare have been a tremendous help in these situations and the close proximity of Jack Berry House in Malton has meant that there is a direct link close to hand.

Brian Smart

The yard has a Health and Safety Officer (Catch Bissett) who oversees the practical aspects of keeping the workplace safe. Every new employee is introduced to the Health and Safety Officer on their first day and we encourage all the staff to use this point of contact. Weekly team meetings also provide an opportunity for any safety issues to be raised and discussed.

Nick Alexander

We have regular team meetings and every member of the team is encouraged to speak up and, the more they attend, the easier they feel they can speak up. Matthew, our mentor, is very approachable too.

Martin Keighley



C1: How effective communication and collaboration amongst the staff are encouraged and systems developed

The company handbook sets out clearly the company's objectives and how we will strive to achieve them. Weekly meetings are held whereby targets are analysed and discussed at length, so everyone is clear on what we are hoping to achieve. Monthly team meetings are an excellent opportunity for employees to communicate ideas to managers. Our leaver interviews encourage employees to express honesty and offers opportunity to suggest areas of improvement.

Mark Johnston

A weekly team meeting is an excellent opportunity for the staff to take a short break from the busy schedule of a working yard just to sit down and talk through any issues they'd like to discuss. We find hosting these meetings on a Friday ensures a slightly more relaxed feel and it means we can update the staff on our plans for the forthcoming week.

Three seasons ago we started using 'Whatsapp groups' to ensure better communication amongst the staff. We use different groups to cover different areas. For example, we have different groups for discussing feed updates and what horses have left feed, racing plans, information that needs to be dispersed from the office and the rota. We also have an informal Kinneston group which does not include Nick! This is an informal way to discuss things on the yard, usually staff nights out and celebrating winners!

Nick Alexander

Many other yards have team meetings to help with communication amongst their staff whether they are weekly, monthly or every quarter.

"Whatsapp" has also been instrumental in many yards, helping to effectively communicate there and then with information live to that group.

Exit interviews are being carried out in a few yards but have been instrumental in finding out why people leave, what the issue was, if there was one, and how they can improve if needed going forward.



C2: How the trainer ensures there is a working environment that considers and respects staff well-being.

Dan Skelton Racing Staff Code of Conduct

It is our aim to provide all of our Staff Members with a safe and enjoyable working environment. We value the welfare of all of our Staff Members and it is our aim that being part of Team Skelton should be as positive an experience as is possible!

5 Things That DSR Expects From You:

- Be on time for work
- Be well-turned out, and keep your sponsored gear clean & tidy
- Respect your colleagues, the horses & property of DSR
- Work as a team and help each other
- Moderate your language, and be aware of how you behave when there are visitors on the yard

5 Things You Can Expect From DSR:

- A safe working environment, including the provision of PPE and sponsored workwear
- Assistance in confidence should you ever have a problem
- The free use of the facilities in The Lodge, the provision of lunch and breakfast free of charge to all members of staff, and access to professional development training should you so wish
- To be paid your wages, which are over and above the agreed NTF thresholds, in a timely manner
- To be treated in a respectful manner whilst in the employment of DSR

At Team Skelton we have introduced a staff Code of Conduct, which covers not only the expectations of the employer, but what employees can expect during their time at Lodge Hill. This covers everything from punctuality to staff behaviour, and in return fairness and the provision of an 'Open Door In Confidence' policy by DSR.

Furthermore, the Code of Conduct outlines our grievance policy, and also how DSR can support our members of staff should they find themselves in any kind of difficulty during their employment.

Dan Skelton

We have a clear set of values at Manor House Stables which all our staff are aware of and this is continually reinforced when it needs to be, we are lucky to have a hardworking team who put there all into everything they do so fortunately for us values and standards are kept high.

Tom Dascombe



C3: How the trainer provides a management structure with clear and effective leadership.

One of the ways in which a good management structure is developed, is by the yard being divided into key groups and then into key roles within the groups. We have people that work in the yard, gallops men and maintenance men. Each group of employees has one person who is in charge and then a clear structure below this. For example, in the yard, we have the assistant trainer and then three head lads, each who look after their own separate yards. This usually means that people know who to go to about a particular horse or problem.

It also ensures that senior staff hold appropriate responsibility, as they know what is expected of them.

Andrew Balding

The Barn System at Kinneston provides a very clear structure for the staff to work within.

The Yard is split into four barns. Each barn has a Barn Manager and an Assistant Barn Manager. These employees are responsible for the care and management of the 10-12 horses that reside in their barn. The Yard Manager Shellie Wilson is responsible for the overall management of all the horses in the yard and is the immediate supervisor of the Barn Managers and their Assistants.

Nick Alexander

The management structure at Mark Johnston racing is clear and is discussed during induction with all new employees. A company organisational chart is provided during induction.

Mark Johnston

In October this year Alan appointed two Head Lads in order to facilitate his ambition to move forward. One manages the yard and staff whilst the other is responsible for the horse welfare – although both are capable of either role. The idea was to take pressure away as traditional managerial structure within racing assumes that a Head Lad is fully qualified in both areas.

Alan King

The management structure at Manor House Stables is clear and accessible to all at any time.

Tom Dascombe



D1: How continuing staff training and development, both informal and formal is encouraged and access to it provided.

New employee forms ask for details of previous relevant experience in a different format to a CV, this helps us gather a full detailed understanding of specific on the job tasks which will help our team gain a greater clarity over training and development areas to focus on with new employees.

We continue this process by mapping our team's skills and training and development through a matrix, the office staff and Karen Owen work together to make sure we have the most up to date information about our team skills base, so we can look at implementing further training and development and look if it could be worth doing in house if we have a high demand for a certain range of skills or externally.

Tom Dascombe

On-going training is encouraged. Two of our staff recently attended a yard managers course at the BRS, aiming at improving their management and people skills. Everyone is encouraged to attend work rider courses and we have had an on-site visit with the mobile unit from Richard Perham.

Luca Cumani

At the end of every season the Trainer and Assistant Trainer have a formal appraisal with each member of staff. In this appraisal we encourage the staff to raise any issues they have with their role at the yard and how they would like to improve and develop. We try and help the staff set clear goals for the season ahead and create a path for how we can achieve these together going forward.

One of the questions we ask in these appraisals is if there are any courses or formal training the member of staff would like to have. On the back of this seasons appraisals we have 3 members of staff currently working through their Level Three Advanced Apprenticeship at the NRC. Shellie Wilson went on the Racing Secretary's Course at the BRS this summer and we had two girls who went to the Work Rider Course at the BRS also.

Nick Alexander

We recently sent Olly Kozak on the Assistant Trainer's Course at BRS, and Stacie Bromley on the Head Lads course also at BRS. These were both three-day courses which discussed their role within the yard, and how best to manage staff and keep them happy in the job. Both Olly and Stacie found these extremely useful, as within the racing industry people are often very good at managing horses, but sometimes need a bit of help on how to manage staff!

Warren Greatrex



All employees are encouraged to work through the skills included in our company skills matrix. This is in house training provided by the relevant managers. During monthly team meetings and annual appraisals employees are encouraged to discuss training and set targets on what to be trained up on.

We regularly offer all employees the opportunity to attend off site training such as work riding courses, Yard manager courses, Assistant Trainers courses and Racing secretary courses through the NRC or BRS. Whilst we also host our own Management courses with Peplow training.

Mark Johnston

Mark Johnston's excellent Skills Matrix that Staff work through in their time there

Basic Skills	Muck Out	Driving	Box Driver
	Groom		HGV
	Lead	Vet	Bandage (Veterinary)
	Trot up in Hand		Poultice
	Tack Up		Recognise Lameness
Stable and Yard	Plait (Home)		Take Temperature
	Pull Manes		Rasp Teeth
	Walker Competence	I/M Injections	
	Hold for Farrier	Treat Cracked Heels	
	Bandage (Stable)	Vet Diary	
	Swim (Assist)	Drugs Competence	
	Water Walker (Assist)	Senior Skills	Competent to Feed
	Treadmill (Assist)		Colour Chart
	Clipping		Remove Shoe
	Standing Up Horses		Swim (Manager)
Racing	Bandage (Travelling)		Water Walker (Manager)
	Horsebox - Load-Unload		Treadmill (Manager)
	Plait Manes		Lunging
	Plait Tails		Long Reining
	Turn Out Fully		Stalls (Handling)
	Lead Up (Easy)	Breaking In	
	Lead Up (Difficult)		
	Responsible at Races		
	Foreign Experience		
	Saddle Up		
	Contact Owners		
	Claying Up		



D2: How staff members are encouraged to take responsibility for their self-development and improvement.

The staff appraisal is the forum for this discussion - staff members are asked to look ahead and see how they see their career progressing. If that is by moving to a different yard for work experience or doing a first aid course. All staff members are actively encouraged to do courses, ride out at other yards, go pointing and the trainer helps get them rides, fill in forms etc, whatever it may be to help their development

Susan Corbett

We have arranged lectures in The Lodge from our vet Paolo Guasco, with a leg dissection a particular highlight. These lectures are open to all members of staff, and it was a great way for the members of Team Skelton to obtain a greater understanding of the stresses, strains and types of injuries that the racehorse goes through

Dan Skelton

We conduct an appraisal round at the end of each year. They are known as 'Job Chats'. The Trainer will discuss with each member of staff:

Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities to progress, aspirations and training requirements.

This is an opportunity for staff to have a positive discussion with the Trainer about their career progression and is welcomed by staff. For example, it highlighted one staff member's wish to ride as an apprentice. After a rather public battle with the BHA we were able to offer her this opportunity.

Rae Guest

We use continuous appraisal and formal and informal training to encourage the staff to take responsibility for their self-development and improvements.

The staff are all encouraged to use their holidays to gain experience working for another Trainer and we set this up according to each member of staff's personal ambitions. Recently we have sent staff for experience to Sir Mark Prescott and Ralph Beckett. Though we help the staff arrange these placements, once they are there we encourage them to make the most of it for themselves and they are effectively in the employment of these trainers for the arranged period of time.

Nick Alexander

The yards that perform Staff Appraisal meetings are the ones that gain most from their staff in this self-development and training area.





E1: Where incentive schemes are used, how they encourage and reward staff for going above and beyond.

Team Skelton has had an Employee of the Month scheme in place for approximately 18 months, which is voted for by the Senior Management Team. Taken in to account are those members of staff who have either achieved something out of the ordinary during the month or have gone above and beyond their usual duties for the good of the team. We have found that this has worked really well as an incentive scheme and is always shared via our social media platforms.

Dan Skelton

In September we implemented a £50 Monthly Team Bonus paid at the end of each month to every member of the team. We have run it for three months so far as a trial to ease them into it but from December onwards it will be a zero-tolerance bonus.

How: Martin, Belinda and Jamie have 3 key ways of working each making 9 practices. They change every month and are to reinforce right behavior. We want them to self manage themselves, prompt each other and the whole team to encourage rather than Jamie & Martin having to manage them. They aren't extra tasks but they are for self motivation and team working together - the team bonus reinforces the team approach.

Martin Keighley

Staff are lucky to receive a number of performance related rewards through the year. Further to pool money that is paid quarterly, staff receive a Christmas bonus and throughout the year are awarded a winner's bonus when a horse they look after is successful on the racecourse.

Ralph Beckett

Recently we have been given a horse which is returning to training from injury. The horse has been given to the staff as a project and he will race in the trainer's colours and any prize money will be divided up equally between the staff.

The horse has shown potential, has an excellent pedigree and should have every chance of success, giving the staff not only financial reward but also pride in their achievements.

Richard Phillips

Mark Johnston racing operates a "winners bonus" scheme in addition to pool money and owner's tips money schemes. The winners bonus is a form of rewarding the entire team for the success of the yard and also rewards loyalty on length of service. The scheme pays employees between £5 and £20 per winner that the yard achieves in a calendar year.

Mark Johnston



Warren Greatrex horses are fuelled by Spillers Horse Feeds, who are kind enough to sponsor Spillers Employee of the Month. This award is given to a member of staff who has gone above and beyond what is expected of them in their everyday job. Not only do the staff get a certificate, they get a Spillers cap, a bottle of Prosecco and a £50 voucher to our local tack shop.

Warren Greatrex

E2: How staff members are made to feel valued and are rewarded through mechanisms other than direct pay.

Alan refuses to compromise a team member's love for their horses by fulfilling a business model. Whilst not economically gaining for the business Alan operates by the ethos of always sending a team member with their horse along with the travelling head person when it runs. Many yards have deviated from this practice as it becomes an expensive philosophy, but Alan believes the team members should be rewarded for their dedication, not punished for the sake of logistics or economics.

Alan King

Weekend work currently consists of four hours on a Saturday morning and then the staff work one in every four weekends with an evening off for each staff member once a week.

All riding staff have had a chance to ride as an amateur or in a charity race. In 2016 we won the Clock Tower Cup at Doncaster with Tanawar ridden by former team member Tory Todd.

Ruth Carr

Every staff member gets one and a half days off every week.

Nick Alexander

We are keen to provide free days out/events for the team and these have recently included Paintballing, Go Karting, Pizza Night, Inflatable Assault Course in the yard and a day at Chester races for all in a box.

Tom Dascombe

A significant pay rise of 10% and a change to working one weekend in four (from one in three) was also announced at the end of the season, a significant reward for their hard work throughout the year.

Ralph Beckett



F1: Please set out how your team has collaborated to complete answers in this nomination and provide evidence.

Videos filmed around the yard with interviews of various staff members answering questions from the nomination form and evidencing the good team ethos in the yard.

Warren Greatrex, Nick Alexander, Suzy Smith

In depth answers and excellent application to the nomination form showing time and effort put in including good photo evidence and information attached was provided by many.



The inaugural year of the award has highlighted some of the excellent work going on in various yards across the country.

From the Nomination forms, to the yard visits and seeing the work in practice it has been a fantastic initiative to help highlight and improve standards across the industry. A few highlights across the award and things that are consistently helping many yards hit these high standards are the following.

- A professional and in-depth induction
- A Yard/Staff handbook
- Assigning a senior member of staff to mentor new staff
- All yard rules, codes of conduct, pool money rules and help available on display for staff
- Accessible book/folder containing all policies that should be in place
- An appointed Health and Safety Officer that all staff can report to with any issue
- Regular Team Meetings for staff to interact and offer opinions
- “WhatsApp” groups for staff to communicate information to them directly to their phones
- Exit Interviews conducted with leavers to explore any issues trainers may be unaware of
- Management structure displayed and in place to promote staff progression
- Staff Appraisals conducted to help understand their goals, discuss issues and training they may require
- Staff training on offer, encouraging staff to go on industry courses to help develop their skills.
- A Skills Matrix, to assist staff progression and training (similar to the example in here)
- Employee of the month bonus/schemes
- Staff bonus given when a horse they look after/or from the yard wins
- Additional time off/flexible work patterns for staff to help with work/life balance (childcare)
- Staff days out or events socialising together as a “team”

This guide has been created and designed by Kevin Parsons from the National Association of Racing Staff who was one of the judges for the Lycetts Team Champion Award.

NARS have also generously funded the production of the guide.

“Reading the nomination forms originally I was delighted to see so much good work going on and then with the yard visits highlighting that even more was fantastic. I felt this work should be highlighted, to help the industry use others’ great work and initiatives, whilst showing how good it actually is.”





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National Association of Racing Staff