

## **THE WINNING APPROACH**

### **SETTING HIGH STANDARDS FOR RETAINING VALUED STAFF IN TRAINERS' YARDS IN THE RACING INDUSTRY**

#### **Why we have created The Winning Approach**

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 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 to support trainers to help engage and motivate their staff. Research shows that, if implemented, this standard can maximise retention. We have called this standard **THE WINNING APPROACH**.

#### **How it will help trainers**

The Winning Approach is drawn from proven staff management best practice in other industries. By adopting the standard and entering the Lycetts Team Champion Award, trainers have a real opportunity to showcase and provide evidence to prospective employees that British racehorse trainers provide the most rewarding jobs and best supported jobs anywhere in the equine sector.

#### **Underlying principles**

The Winning Approach is:

- Voluntary rather than mandatory – but we urge all trainers to follow the standard to enhance the reputation of employers in racing.
- Intended to help and guide trainers to get the best out of their staff.

Many trainers are already operating in a way that reflects this standard. For many trainers, we expect that rather than having to develop new ways of going about things, The Winning Approach will give them confidence that many of their informal practices, regimes and routines are already in line with the guidance.

## **CORE VALUES**

We believe strongly that however you choose to adopt The Winning Approach it should be underpinned by some core values. These are

1. Act with integrity;
2. Comply with your legal and regulatory obligations;
3. Exhibit respect and care for those in your employment;
4. Act in a way that ensures the long term sustainability of your organisation;
5. Run your business in a way that encourages equality of opportunity and respect for diversity; and
6. Behave in a way that maintains the trust that the public places in the racing industry

## **OVERVIEW – HOW THE STANDARD WORKS**

With racing yards differing so significantly in size and resource, we recognise that the standard must be flexible: focusing on Outcomes ensures that trainers are able to comply with the standard irrespective of the size of the organisation.

The standard is set out in sections. Each begins with positive Outcome to aim for; these are followed by Actions, which are examples that may help you achieve the Outcomes. The Actions include methods that we already see in racing yards.

We recognise that there may be other ways of achieving the Outcomes and know there are many great things yards are already doing. We hope that this standard provides a prompt for you to recognise and record these practices, helping to showcase your yard and attract and retain new staff.

**Appendix 1** comprises a list of organisations and current industry requirements which are relevant to, and will help you meet the Outcomes.

## OUTCOMES

### 1. Effective Recruitment and Induction Systems

You should aim to achieve these **Outcomes**:

- 1.1 Follow recruitment practices that are up to date, compliant with the law, and that encourage applicants from a diverse pool.**
- 1.2 Provide appropriate induction training for new starters, ensuring they can begin their role effectively and confidently.**
- 1.3 Ensure new starters feel welcomed into the team, with existing staff being clear on the role and responsibilities of each new starter.**

### ACTIONS

Set out below are some suggested actions to help you achieve the Outcomes. These suggestions are intended as a guide only. Not all examples will be relevant depending on the size and set up of each Yard.

- A1.1 Advertise the job in appropriate places such as the Careers in Racing Job Board, Racing Post, the Racing Colleges, social media, and JETS.
- A1.2 As per the Rules of Racing, take job and character references and follow up on them.
- A1.3 Demonstrate that you have followed advice set out in the NTF Employment Manual.
- A1.4 Demonstrate that you have followed any recognised racing industry induction process.
- A1.5 Provide an opportunity for potential new recruits to spend time in the yard.
- A1.6 Provide a legally compliant employment contract for all staff members.
- A1.7 Provide each new starter with a named person who has responsibility for helping them to settle in quickly and effectively. Explain the management structure of the yard and lines of responsibility and communication.
- A1.8 Introduce new starters to the rest of the staff at an appropriate time, with existing staff being given enough information on the new starter to ensure that they know and understand how to support the new starter.
- A1.9 Communicate effectively to the existing staff the new starter's role and responsibilities.
- A1.10 Provide the opportunity for regular reviews during the first 6 months, for each new starter with their direct line manager and, where requested, with another senior staff member at the Yard.

A1.11 Recognise new members of the team in some distinctive way. For example, holding a team meeting in which they are officially welcomed, putting their photo up in the tack room, or a news item on their social media site.

## **2. Ensuring a Safe Environment**

You should aim to achieve these **Outcomes**:

- 2.1 Provide effective employment policies, procedures and practices that promote staff wellbeing, including safeguarding and protection from abuse.**
- 2.2 Provide an environment where staff feel safe, support each other to improve safety and know who to speak to about safety issues.**

### **ACTIONS**

The following actions would suggest that you are achieving these Outcomes.

- A2.1 Ensure that staff members are helped and supported in their personal needs and know where they can go for specialist support. This could include signposting the relevant phone numbers/website addresses in the tack room, such as Racing Welfare.
- A2.2 Have an employee handbook which is always accessible to all members of staff, and which is reviewed and updated each year
- A2.3 Comply with the BHA Health and Safety Red Book and implement a risk mitigation plan such as the Lycetts Tool Kit.
- A2.4 Maintain a record of accidents, which includes details of action taken, and the outcome.
- A2.5 Ensure that there is a named individual responsible for Health and Safety, and that this individual regularly undertakes appropriate training and keeps on top of developments within the Red Book, to ensure the Yard keeps up to date in this area.
- A2.6 Have policies and procedures in place regarding safeguarding and protection from abuse. As a minimum, have the new BHA Safeguarding Policy and Code accessible to all and ensure there is a named person with responsibility for safeguarding and protection. This individual should keep up to date with changes, receive training when required and keep all the staff members informed.

### **3. Creating a positive working environment**

You should aim to achieve these **Outcomes**:

- 3.1 Provide clear and effective leadership.**
- 3.2 Operate in a way which encourages effective communication and collaboration amongst the staff.**
- 3.3 Provide a working environment in which all members of the team are treated with respect.**

#### **ACTIONS**

The following actions would suggest that you are achieving these Outcomes.

- A3.1 Create a management structure which is clear and accessible to all, in which lines of responsibility, and communication, are expressly set out.
- A3.2 Articulate clearly the yard's aims and objectives, for each season and for the longer term.
- A3.3 Have a clear set of yard values and standards that apply to everything that happens at the yard and in the yard's name. The team could develop these together, so everyone takes ownership.
- A3.4 Behave in line with the Yard's values and standards and ensure that they are continuously reinforced.
- A3.5 Trainer and all staff maintain a commitment to continuous improvement and development. (See section 4.)
- A3.6 Ensure that staff can get their voices heard and listened to, such as having an ideas box in the tack room.
- A3.7 Have in place a system for any employee with a problem to seek help and appropriate support (e.g. access to the local Racing Welfare Officer or through the Racing Industry Support Line.)
- A3.8 Strive to develop fair and balanced working patterns for the staff. Provide a system for staff representation, recognising different priorities and concerns amongst staff, and ensure clarity in decision-making and reasoning.
- A3.9 Conduct exit interviews when a member of staff leaves employment to understand their reason for leaving and whether any practices need to be changed as a result.

## 4. Development and Training

You should aim to achieve these **Outcomes**:

- 4.1 Ensure effective appraisal systems are in place for all staff.**
- 4.2 Ensure a focus on, and provide access to, continued training and development both informal and formal.**
- 4.3 Provide an environment where staff members are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for their self-development and improvement.**

### **ACTIONS**

The following actions would suggest that you are achieving these Outcomes.

- A4.1 Ensure the appraisal process for each staff member is:
  - clearly defined and communicated to them;
  - sets out the purpose, regularity and expected outcomes from the process;
  - includes a face to face meeting.
- A4.2 Provide an environment where knowledge and expertise is passed on from senior staff members to more junior staff members in an informal and helpful way. Enable lessons from training to be shared with all staff.
- A4.3 Provide a mentoring scheme, separate from any line management arrangements, and which values and utilises the expertise and experience within the Yard.
- A4.4 Demonstrate a clear understanding of each staff member's skills, abilities and development needs. This could include:
  - recording and understanding your new employee's background, relevant experience and knowledge (this could be based on interview and assessments you may have carried out during the recruitment process);
  - maintaining an updated record of their skills, experience and training (as individuals); and
  - maintaining a matrix for the whole team, capturing information on skills, suggested development needs, and courses attended.
- A4.5 Help staff members to recognise their transferable skills, and consider how they could best put them to use.
- A4.6 Provide internet access to enable staff members to search for, and access, online courses.
- A4.7 Provide in-house training courses where appropriate even if just informal tack room talks (See Appendix 1 for suggested and recommended training providers).

- A4.8 Provide staff with paid time off to go on external courses where necessary, such as Level 3 training, Racing Secretaries Training, and Management Training.
- A4.9 Provide a mechanism through which staff can suggest their own external training needs, and present their case for why the yard should pay for this.
- A4.10 Proactively seek external funding sources such as NTF Charitable Trust, CATS and JETS for training needs within the yard. (See Appendix 1)

## **5. Reward and Recognition**

You should aim to achieve these **Outcomes**:

- 5.1 Provide a pay structure which accurately reflects the time, dedication and skillset provided by your staff members, and which allows for increases as appropriate.**
- 5.2 Ensure that any performance bonuses or incentive schemes are transparent, fair and clearly communicated. They should encourage and reward staff for 'going the extra mile'.**
- 5.3 Ensure that all staff members can feel valued and rewarded through mechanisms other than direct pay.**

### **ACTIONS**

The following actions would suggest that you are achieving these Outcomes.

- A5.1 Ensure that each staff member's employment contract sets out the hours they are expected to work and rates at which they will be paid. These are all set out in the NTF Standard Terms of Employment and Memorandum of Agreement on minimum pay and conditions.
- A5.2 Have in place an annual review system for salaries/wages.
- A5.3 Ensure that where a staff member is appointed to mentor a new or inexperienced staff member, this is reflected in their payment structure or other reward/incentive scheme.
- A5.4 Involve staff members in the creation or adaptation of any incentive schemes and performance bonus mechanisms. Ensure the schemes can be seen by all and keep an open record of how these have been paid out.
- A5.5 Ensure staff members have agreed "Pool Money" criteria and that these are not legally discriminatory.
- A5.7 Recognise staff contributions in ways other than purely financial. For example: yard parties or outings; public acknowledgement of roles played by staff members in successes; yard 'prizes' at the end of year celebration etc.

## Appendix 1

### Sources of support and existing racing industry guidance

#### National Trainers Federation

**Employment Manual:** provided free to members as a hard copy and in the Members area of the NTF website.

**NTF online guidance on Health and Safety:** provided free to members in the Members area of the NTF website.

**NTF Executive Team:** all NTF members can contact the team based in Lambourn for advice and support on the main phone line Telephone 01488 71719.

**BHA Red Book** (Health and Safety Manual for the Racing Industry): available from the British Horseracing Authority.

**Lycetts Tool Kit:** a risk mitigation system available to all clients of Lycetts' insurance brokers. Contact Piers Plunket on Telephone 01672 512512

**National Association of Racing Staff** (NAORS): Union representing stable employees. The Racing Centre, Fred Archer Way, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 8NT Telephone 01638 663411 Email [admin@naors.co.uk](mailto:admin@naors.co.uk)

#### Racing Welfare

Provides welfare support for racing's workforce. <http://www.racingwelfare.co.uk/>

**Careers Advice and Training Service:** CATS, which is managed by Racing Welfare, is a facility to support people who wish to develop their careers in racing and is funded by The Racing Foundation. Go to [www.racingwelfare.co.uk/](http://www.racingwelfare.co.uk/) and click on Getting Support and Careers Advice.

**NTF Charitable Trust:** the NTFCT offers small grants towards career development and training for people with an employment record in racing. It also offers and funds the annual Toby Balding Award. The NTFCT is managed by Racing Welfare.

#### Training providers

British Racing School:  
Snailwell Road, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 7NU. Telephone 01638 665103.  
[www.brs.org.uk](http://www.brs.org.uk)

Northern Racing College:  
The Stables, Rossington Hall, Great North Road, Doncaster DN11 0HN.  
Telephone 01302 861000. [www.northernracingcollege.com](http://www.northernracingcollege.com)

The BRS and NRC operate mobile training units which they will bring to trainers' yards as part of a fully instructed training day.

Haddon Training  
3 Pelhams Court, London Road, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 2AG.  
Telephone 01672 519977. [www.haddontraining.co.uk](http://www.haddontraining.co.uk)

National Association of Racing Staff: Union Learn Skills Course  
<https://www.naors.co.uk/training/>

Jockeys Education and Training Scheme  
39B Kingfisher Court, Hambridge Road, Newbury, RG14 5SJ  
Telephone 01635 230 410 Email: [info@jets-uk.org](mailto:info@jets-uk.org)

Sport and Beyond  
Developer of The Winning Approach. Contact Catherine Baker or Nicola Woolmer,  
Forge House, York, YO23 3RQ Telephone 01904 737007  
See The Huddle on S&B's website <https://www.sportandbeyond.co.uk/blog/>

The Peplow Group <http://peplow.org.uk/>  
Developed and delivered the management training modules linked to the Lycetts  
Team Champion Award. Contact Peter Burnet at [peter@peplow.org.uk](mailto:peter@peplow.org.uk)