

BCS independent expertise guides Allianz in raising IT professionalism and enhancing skills development



As one of the UK's leading financial services providers, Allianz Insurance Plc is concerned with maintaining high standards of professionalism and governance. They have achieved BCS accreditation for their IT professional development scheme for the last five years. With guidance from BCS the scheme has become a robust and highly effective tool which meets the needs of both organisation and individual through coordinated skills development and increased staff motivation.

'We want our people to fulfil their potential in Allianz. Our partnership with BCS brings us closer to our aim.'

John Knowles, Director of IT & Off Shore Operations, Allianz Insurance Plc

THE SITUATION

Over the last few years, with the assimilation of several companies into the group, the creation of a consistent, professional culture has become a priority for Allianz.

In the UK, the IT professional development scheme has been a central plank in creating a consistent, professional culture for its IT staff. Allianz has achieved BCS accreditation for its scheme for the last five years. During this time the scheme – supported by BCS membership and the Chartered IT Professional (CITP) standard – has matured into one of the most effective staff development programmes BCS has seen, in terms of the way it is managed, the level of staff participation and its impact on the business.

The scheme is underpinned by five skills frameworks, developed in-house. Each framework defines a series of career levels and contains an overview, career path and specific skills. Supporting the frameworks, Allianz offers BCS membership to all participating staff, as part of a group membership scheme. BCS membership places employees on the path to CITP status. Participants are actively encouraged to achieve CITP status and receive a bonus payment when they do.

As a company, Allianz is highly focused on professionalism and the importance of Chartered status.

'The CITP standard complements our internal development frameworks well,' explains Fiona Salmon, Allianz Professional Development Programme Coordinator. 'It gives our employees an external industry benchmark to aim for – an ultimate goal.'

Allianz UK currently has 12 Chartered IT Professionals and another 5 working towards the status.

THE EXPERTISE

Assessment of Allianz's professional development scheme takes place annually. A BCS consultant visits to assess the scheme against 12 critical success factors (CSF) such as organisational procedures and training and development plan. Each CSF is rated against four grades, Good being the highest grade; awarded when, in addition to meeting all KPIs, there is clear and consistent evidence of good practice. An *observation* is noted if the assessor identifies a minor issue that may have a negative impact on the achievement of a CSF. An *exception* is noted for more significant issues.

'In our last assessment we were delighted to be rated Good (the highest standard) in 9 of the 12 critical success factors,' Fiona tells us, 'but crucially we received two *observations* – valuable opportunities to improve our processes. From the feedback we receive from BCS, we compile a detailed action plan to ensure these improvements are quickly addressed, along with our own continued development and expansion of the framework.'

Participants in the scheme include 127 employees from Systems Development and 68 from Allianz Managed Operations Service, representing 75% of all UK based personnel. The remaining gaps in the frameworks are gradually being identified and addressed. 135 employees hold Professional (MBCS) membership, 18 are Associate (AMBCS) members and the head of Managed Operations is a Fellow.

'With BCS's guidance and our own in house expertise we have continued to refine and improve our development programme to the extent that we have now rolled out to 450 IT colleagues based in India, giving us a common framework for calibration of skills and guidance for career development'

THE TRANSFORMATION

'Our working relationship with BCS has been invaluable over the last few years,' explains Fiona. 'An increased focus on learning and development has truly helped us raise the bar. We've established more clearly defined career paths, enhanced resource planning and deployment, and a more unified work ethos.'

'By raising skills and experience, the department as a whole is able to facilitate more effective delivery to the business.'

'As a financial services provider, we are heavily regulated and impartiality holds a great deal of weight. Independent validation of our scheme from BCS, across the UK and now India, reassures us that we are meeting industry best practice and provides our professional development scheme with greater standing.'

'We are proud of our BCS collaboration. Working closely with our professional body shows how committed we are to developing the professionalism of our people. It differentiates us from the competition and it's helping us recruit and retain the best candidates.'