

My trip to london essay

Literature, Russian Literature



1. Introduction The academic requirement of my Master's degree in Human Resource Strategies needed our class to participate in an extended visit to London.

The visit aimed at increasing the awareness of the students and extending their knowledge base with regard to the latest international developments in education, economics, human resource management, business, city management and social development. I had already heard about London from other travellers from Russia and had taken the opportunity of reading about the city from newspapers and magazines. Once our college authorities confirmed the decision of going to London, I decided to conduct some research on my own and pick up as much information as possible about the city. An internet search led me to a number of websites dedicated to London and I was able to obtain a significant amount of information on the city.

As such, when we arrived in London early one morning I already had a good amount of knowledge about the city. The city traces its origins to the first century AD, when the occupying Romans first constructed the city. Since then, the city has witnessed two thousand years of historical happenings and suffered many invasions from mainland Europe. Apart from the English the Danes, the Vikings and the French have also contributed to the history of the city. The city is important for a number of other reasons. It is the capital of the UK, one of the most affluent countries of the world and is famous for its political system. The Westminster model of democracy started from London and is now the accepted political structure in many countries all over the globe.

It is also one of the busiest financial capitals of the world, possibly second only to New York in commercial importance. The city of London functions as the largest business and financial center of Europe and houses a number of international companies, banks and financial institutions. The city has developed into a sophisticated supplier of financial services. I hoped to be able to visit a number of good companies during my stay in London. The college had already arranged for us to go to a number of commercial enterprises and I was sure that I would be able to go to a few more on my own. Apart from its political and commercial importance the city is known to be very efficiently run and considered to be a world capital of fashion and design.

. It is one of the most important tourist centres of the world and attracts millions of visitors every year. It has five international airports and the world's oldest underground metropolitan rail system. Apart from air travel, London also has long distance train services, which travel, not just in England but also all the way to Brussels and other cities in Europe. The city is one of the foremost educational centres of the world and its many universities are home to more than 300, 000 students.

I looked forward to visits to the University of London and famous institutes like the London School of Economics. The city itself has a population of nearly 8 million, multicultural and multiethnic in nature. The white English make up only seventy percent of the population of the city; the balance consist of Asians, Africans and other races. While I had obtained a good deal of information on the city, I still did not really know what to expect and was

quite excited about my first visit and looked forward with a mixture of apprehension and excitement to my first experience of London. I knew that it would be enormously educative and that I would carry back huge mental inputs, which would help me not just in my academics but also in my personal development. 2. My Impressions of London We landed at Heathrow airport at 6 in the morning and even at that early hour, the airport was bustling with life.

The size of the airport was enormous and the excitement of one of the busiest airports in the world could be felt everywhere. Thousands of embarking and disembarking passengers created an atmosphere of business and purpose. The London tube serves Heathrow airport and takes travellers directly to central London, either by the Heathrow Express or the Piccadilly line. As I stayed on in London, the efficiency of the London tube continued to amaze me day after day. The tube is like a huge city that exists under the ground where thousands of men and women scurry along at all hours of the day. It operates at various levels and you are apt to hear the screech of a train braking above you or growling along the track two levels below you. Its layout is like that of a huge maze and it criss-crosses the city with numerous lines that can take you from one end of the city to the other within an hour.

Changes are easy to make and large and efficient customer directions guide you to the appropriate platform through passages, stairs and escalators. Now and then, you are likely to come across talented performers, called “bussers” who sing and play a number of instruments for the entertainment of the users of the underground, The Underground currently serves 274

stations and runs over 408 km (253 miles) of lines[1]. There are also a number of former stations and tunnels that are now closed. In 2004-2005, total passenger journeys reached a record level of 976 million, an average of 2.67 million per day.(London Underground, 2006)The commercial organisation of the London tube is amazing. The official website of the underground has a provision called "Journey Planner:" which enables the user to obtain a number of options to go from one place to another just by keying in the details of the place of origin and destination.

In addition each and every station is carefully monitored by Closed Circuit Television and the fares are structured in such a way that if off times are used for travel and tickets purchased through the Oyster ticketing system for a minimum of a week, costs of travel become cheap and affordableAnother fascinating aspect of London was its tourism industry. London is one of the foremost tourist cities of the world and visited by more than 27 million tourists, who stay overnight, every year. While London is famous for its parks, theatres, museums and historical palaces, the conception and execution of the city's tourism policy is nothing short of brilliant.

The city has marketed tourism with persistent refinement over the years. London pampers its tourists out of their wits. There are hundreds of hotels and youth hostels in London to suit every pocket, with a number of discount schemes, which can be booked over the net. Transport is plentiful, easy to use, extremely efficient and economic. Mapping of roads is comprehensive and getting from one place to another is very easy. Air connections are excellent and the London airports are amongst the busiest in the world.

Internally, a number of airlines and trains with many discount offers make travel cheap and convenient. The UK's historical attractions, multicultural society and cultural exuberance are continuously advertised in a number of ways and London has a number of historical and modern tourist attractions, some undoubtedly grand and some less so. Even a motley collection of wax statues of historical figures and modern day pop icons is marketed very successfully as part of the London experience; witness the queues at Madame Tussaud's. Practically every tourist attraction, every hotel and every activity, be it a trip to Stratford-upon-Avon or a ride on the Thames, everything is available on the net and easy to use. The whole country is full of souvenir shops and the status of the city as a leading cuisine and fashion destination makes it a favourite spot on the itinerary of most tourists. The London Eye is a standing example of how an organisation can develop a network of relationships with other players in the tourism industry to provide customers a combined platform to maximize its own revenues.

The London Eye is a huge observation wheel and has rapidly become a premier tourist organisation, attracting tourists and other people from all occupations. The Eye has a comprehensive website, extremely informative not just about itself but also other attractions in London. It uses this policy to provide its customers with a range of value additions like discounted tickets, dinner and drink vouchers, and theatre tickets, only available on the net.

London comes into its own in the evenings, especially during weekends. The streets are full of people and areas like Leicester Square, Covent Garden, and Piccadilly throb with excitement and life. Covent Garden on a Sunday

morning is a lovely experience with clowns, jugglers, balladeers and violinists delighting the crowd with their performances. I also found the concept of the Big Bus delightful. The Big Buses are double-decker buses with open tops and they carry tourists all over Central London. The guides are very well informed and humorous and a day on a Big Bus is an enchanting and lovely experience. I have many more experiences of London and found the city a lovely place to work and stay. Apart from the hundreds of delightful things that mesmerize the visitor, London is also one of the most important commercial cities of the world.

Our academic work used to give us some time to spend on our own and it gave me the opportunity to find out more about its business and commercial aspects. London, along with New York and Tokyo, is one of the most important commercial centers of the global economy. The city's economy generates 30 % of the country's GDP and generated goods and services worth USD 660 billion last year. London's prominence as a global service center grew after the end of the Second World War because of a number of factors including the importance of English in the business world, its close links with the United States and other countries in Asia and Africa, its multicultural infrastructure, excellent transport structure, its central position on the world air traffic route and extremely business friendly environment. It was extremely surprising to know that officials elected not by citizens but by businesspersons run the City of London. Most Londoners, nearly 85 % work in the service sector.

The largest service industry of the city is finance. The city is home to numerous banks and financial institutions and handles more of the global currency transactions of the world than any other city, New York included. London is growing as a centre for sophisticated services in IT and Telecom and businesspersons expect these sectors to fuel the future growth of the city along with financial services and tourism.

2. Organisational and Corporate Visits

Our visit to London included trips to a number of companies and organisations to study their functioning with special reference to the strategy and management of human resources. I found these visits extremely enriching and educative and they opened a completely new dimension to my understanding of corporate working and the human resource processes followed by modern companies. They increased my awareness about the differences in human resource practices followed in Russia and were as important for the learning process as class lectures and textbooks. The visits to the CIPD, The Institute of Directors, the Probation Centre, the Metroline and Hamleys were exceptionally rewarding and provided detailed knowledge of the working of different organisations and institutes.

a) The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
The Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) is responsible for the development of the personnel and human resource function in the UK. It has approximately 127, 000 individual members and is the key institute for advancement of human resource theory and practice. Its mission statement is (a) to lead in the development and promotion of good practice in the field of the management and development of people, for application both by

professional members and by their organisational colleagues, (b) to serve the professional interests of members. and (c) to uphold the highest ideals in the management and development of people. (CIPD, 2006)The organisation has an illustrious history and was formed nearly ninety years ago as the Welfare Workers Association.

. It went through various stages of development and was renamed the Institute of Personnel Management in 1946. It received governmental charter in 2000 and is today known as one of the premier human resource institutes in the world. The institute aims to (a) advance continuously the management and development of people to the benefit of individuals, employers and the community at large. and (b) to be the professional body for those specialising in advancing the management and the development of people, recognised as the leading authority and influence in this field.

(CIPD, 2006)The Institute carries out a number of training programmes, works closely with industry, encourages discussions on matters involving human resources, encourages research and conducts seminars and various other industry interfaces. b) The Institute of DirectorsThe Institute of Directors (IOD) is situated at 116, Pall Mall, in the heart of London's West End. It is an extremely impressive organisation and housed in very opulent and luxurious premises.

The IOD is always busy and full of very senior executives who use it as a meeting place and for holding various seminars and meetings. The IOD is a worldwide association of professional executives and business persons and provides a network that is extensive and reaches thousands of

businesspersons. Members receive many benefits including advice, and conference and training sessions to improve their professional capabilities. The IOD represents the problems of the members to the government and has, on many occasions been able to help business persons significantly.

In fact its primary function is to utilise its influence with government to help the furtherance of business and commerce. Members of the IOD in London continuously use the facilities and use it as a forum for business interaction and networking. The efficiency with which the Institute is operated, as well as the continuous benefits it is able to provide to its members impressed me very deeply. It is essential that institutes like the IOD and CIPD come up in Russia. The benefits that Russian industry, especially the human resource sector can obtain from the successful establishment and operation of such institutes will be enormous. c) London Probation London probation is a unique organisation. It is a law enforcement agency and is part of the National Offender Management Services.

Its objective is to work with law offenders and protect the public by reducing chances of repeat offences. They work with other agencies like the Prison Service, the Crown protection Service and government agencies in areas of reducing repeat offences and protection of the public. The agency works both with offenders and victims and tries to reduce the chances of offences through direct contact with offenders. The agency works with the Prison Service, the Crown Protection Service, governmental agencies involved in health, employment and education as well as with local authorities, voluntary organisations, victims and communities. London Probation has a

number of programmes that are administered through specially trained staff and involve group discussions where particular class offenders, for example people who have been associated with alcohol intolerance, child abuse, domestic violence, or rash driving meet and jointly discuss their problems and try to come to solution. On many occasions, actual victims attend these sessions to highlight the effects of these offences to other people and work with the offenders to mitigate the problem.

At present the organisation has a number of programmes in place. Some of these are called Think First, , Aggression Replacement Training, Addressing Substance Related Offending, Basic Skills, Drink Impaired Drivers and Cognitive Skills Booster. The Think First Programme, for example, is a uniquely designed programme for offenders with established behavioural patterns. It encourages offenders to think very carefully about their reasons for offensive behaviour and works with them to reduce the chances of recurrence of such episodes. The other programmes are also uniquely designed and deal with specific issues sympathetically and with compassion. The agency works through full time and part time probation officers who are specially trained to deal effectively with offending behaviour. London probation is a truly unique governmental agency and handles thousands of cases with very high effectiveness rates. Agencies like these are truly signs of evolved and compassionate societies.

d) Metrolinel have already discussed in detail about the London tube and the wonderful efficiency with which its services are run. The London bus service is another eye opener. All across the city you find red buses running with

great efficiency. Most of these are built to accommodate handicapped and disadvantaged people and allow passengers with wheel chairs to come on board through electronically operated retractable platforms. The Metroline is one such bus company and operates practically fifteen percent of the buses that run on the roads of London.

It is owned by a Singapore based company but the efficiency with which it is run is absolutely British in nature. The company employs approximately 3700 people and its efficiency depends upon the treatment and motivation of its staff. As it is a service industry personnel management and human resource management play a crucial role in the successful operations of the company. The company provides continuous training and retraining to its employees and places great emphasis on safe and careful driving. A very recent instance of the importance Metroline managers place upon the opinions of their staff came up in the choice of uniforms. The company allowed the drivers to choose and design the uniforms and by involving them in this decision raised their motivation levels very significantly. Metroline has unveiled a new uniform, chosen by their drivers.

Through a company wide survey, Metroline asked their 2,500 drivers to choose their new uniform from two designs. The uniform was updated, not only to correspond to job requirements, but also to allow employees the freedom to choose what they would prefer to wear. As a modern London Bus company that is changing with the times and for the better; Metroline's new smart/casual uniform is designed for comfort and image. The new uniform incorporates a variety of components so drivers can mix separates to meet

their individual needs, and for the warmer months a seasonal range will be offered. Metroline Managing Director Steve McAleavy said: “ We have worked extremely hard to create a better working environment for everyone at Metroline.

Getting our staff involved and engaged in the business has been key to this, including where possible being involved in making choices. The Uniform has been very well received by staff - which was to be expected since they chose it.” (About Metroline, 2006)The visit to Metroline and subsequent interaction with their managers and other employees, as well as a tour of their maintenance facilities, showed the extent of improvement and sophistication that efficient handling of human resource can bring about in the most elementary services like public transportation. The visit confirmed my opinion about the all round effort that is needed for a city to grow and surpass others in attracting talent, money and business. e) HamleysThe visit to Hamleys was one of the high points of our visit to London. While all of us had heard about the huge toy shop on Regent Street we were not really prepared for the hugeness of the store and the enormous range and variety of toys that was available. The shop is situated on one of London’s busiest streets and occupies six floors packed with toys and games. The shop is now a huge tourist attraction and attracts nearly five million tourists every year, practically 20 % of the total tourists who visit LondonHamleys was founded in 1760 and is nearly 250 years old.

The shop in Regent Street was established in 1881 and has remained in the same premises ever since. Apart from being a toyshop Hamleys was also an

example of sophisticated segment retailing and the various promotions and in-shop activities that were continuously going on gave a good idea of the complexity involved in running the business. The in-house magicians, try before you buy schemes and the Sega Mega Park proved to be sources of endless delight and all of us were kept busy for hours looking at the products and taking notes about the operations of the shop. 4. Conclusion The visit to London has possibly been the most enriching experience of my life. It gave me substantial exposure to the history of the English people and the growth of the city through the ages.

The loveliness of the city, the huge parks, football matches, restaurants and theatres kept me engrossed with their excellence, sophistication and variety. Visits to various business establishments and a review of their Human Resource practices gave me an idea about the significant advancements they had made in the theory and practice human relations. In Russia our industry has a great deal to learn from the experiences and achievements of the English in the development of service industries. Any visit to a large London departmental store is an experience. Courteous and friendly employees rush to help customers with their purchases and make visitors very comfortable. In all these activities, whether they be in the running of the tube, the bus services or departmental stores, efficient management of human resources plays an immense role.

I do hope that I will be able to put these lessons to good use in the exercise of my profession. Bibliography London Underground, 2006, Wikipedia, Retrieved November 3, 2006 from en. wikipedia.

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