

Vodafone transforms customer service



Dramatically different rules of engagement

In 2006, Vodafone found itself embarking on a turnaround strategy, after experiencing years of phenomenal growth and attracting 186 million customers worldwide.

Tom Devine, head of retail, Vodafone UK explains, "We suddenly found ourselves operating in a saturated market. Competition for customers intensified and the rules had all changed."

Vodafone commenced a three-year strategy to strengthen preference for its brand by differentiating itself through exceptional products and outstanding customer service. Significant investment went into redesigning all its 348 UK stores, to introduce new areas dedicated to supporting existing customers.

"The store redesign was only a part of the solution," says Devine, "We had to develop

employees to help them understand selling handsets is no longer the objective. Instead the focus needed to shift to helping customers get the most out of the increasingly complex functionality on their phones, ranging from downloading music to mobile TV and internet to picture messaging."

An approach that would outlast its creators

Keen to develop a systematic approach for dealing with customers, Devine appointed Results International to create a Vodafone way of engaging customers within stores and develop employees to consistently deliver this. He says, "Results International had an incredibly positive impact from the outset, making them Vodafone's obvious choice."

It was also important to create a process that could stand on its own. "As with most high street retailers, we have reasonably

high employee churn. It was no good developing people if that development left the organisation as soon as they did," says Devine. "Results International's willingness to work in partnership with our internal Learning & Development team - transferring their knowledge and expertise so we could keep the process going after the initial development - was incredibly valuable."

Changing behaviour

After talking to customers about their in-store experiences, meeting regional managers and conducting mystery visits to observe employees in action, Results International devised a two-day workshop for all 2,258 employees.

"Everyone from store advisors to board members went through exactly the same development to ensure we had a common



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starting point,” says Devine.

“We deliberately sought to take people out of their comfort zone, even banning certain words, like ‘contract’ in favour of ‘agreement’, to break with the past.”

Core to the programme was the use of basic techniques and the GFPAC model, designed to equip advisors with the ability to build rapport with customers through five simple steps: greeting, fact-finding, proposing, adjusting and concluding.

Store managers had additional support with a five-day workshop to make them think like entrepreneurs and acquire high-impact, light-touch leadership techniques, such as sixty-second meetings and “team huddles”, to reinforce learning on the shop floor.

“Very few people have a natural ability to coach others; for the most part, this has to be taught. Results International was outstanding at equipping our managers with the ability and tools needed to bring out the best in their teams,” says Devine.

Improvements seen in EVERY store

According to Devine, “The programme has made a massive difference to how customers

are dealt with. There isn’t a single store that hasn’t shown an improvement. Store teams know exactly what we want them to do and how to do it.”

He continues, “We now understand what success looks like, we can properly assess it and reward teams and individuals achieving outstanding customer service in a fair and consistent way,” he adds. “For me, the best outcome is how engaged everyone is. If a team gets a low mystery shop score, they dig out the CCTV footage to see why for themselves.”

What’s next?

Results International continues to work with Vodafone, providing ongoing coaching for regional managers and visiting stores to test service and provide top-up development as needed.

Results International’s development techniques include:

1. Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP)
2. Visualisation
3. Sports Psychology

Results International PLC
www.resultsinternational.com
++ 44 (0)1926 741111



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