

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE CASE STUDY: LABELLING AND PACKAGING SERVICES

INVESTING IN PEOPLE TO DELIVER QUALITY RECRUITMENT

Size: 142 people
Sector: Food and beverage packaging
Location: Bridgwater, Somerset
Status: First recognised with the Investors in People Standard in July 2000; re-assessed in March 2006; implementing Skills for Life assessment and training



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Overall impact

"Investors in People and Skills for Life have helped the company maintain the level of permanent, committed staff we need to deliver work of a consistently high quality."

Darren Nunn, Managing Director

The organisation

Appropriately enough, perhaps, Labelling & Packaging Services does what's written on the sign outside.

"We add value to products," says Managing Director Darren Nunn, "We put together presentation packs of Easter eggs and multipack bottles of Coca Cola." It also puts together products for Cadbury's, and serves other major food and drinks companies including Nestlé and Heinz. "It's all done by a mixture of automated and hand processing. In crude terms, it is like putting together an Airfix plastic model," he says.

Having added large multinational clients to its original list of local Somerset customers since it opened for business in 1989, it has expanded its workforce by a factor of ten. In total it now despatches over 25,000 pallets a year, amounting to around 100 lorry-loads of finished products a month. "Our premises have now expanded from 17,000 square feet (1,600 square metres) to their natural limit of 40,000," Darren says.

The challenge

"The only way to guarantee quality is to have well-trained permanent staff and develop people within the business," says Darren. "Temporary staff just don't have any reason to care about the quality of the product. But people employed on a permanent basis do, because you are making an investment in them. "This is important for us because companies like Cadbury's have very high standards."

Staff retention and absenteeism were also high on the list of indicators he was hoping that working with Investors in People would improve. A further challenge would come when the company added a number of foreign nationals from Eastern Europe to the workforce, which highlighted the need to work on essential skills.

The strategy

"When we started the process in 1999 we discussed it with whole workforce, explaining to them that we all would benefit," says Darren.

It was important to create a system to ensure that whatever staff development was going on was properly recognised. "Some of the staff who had been with us for a long time had the idea that they had not been trained unless they were taken out of the building and sat down in a classroom," says Darren, "In their view, if a manager had simply showed them what to do on the shop floor they said they hadn't had any training."

To tackle this misunderstanding the company set up a 'training matrix' for everybody to make sure people were aware when they had been trained and that it was recorded. "The form is signed by the manager and then countersigned by the staff member when training has been delivered," Darren says.

In a separate move to instil greater staff cohesion, it established mentors to make sure new members of staff 'gelled better' with the more established ones. And to ensure full consultation, communication and decision-making it established a 'works council' made up of two representatives of management and two staff from each area of business.

Extra demands on the company's ability to integrate newcomers came two years ago when the company decided to take on 14 foreign nationals, 2 Lithuanians and 12 Poles.

"The human resources team highlighted the possibility of appointing foreign nationals," says Darren. "The works council said 'what about the language barrier?'" This led the company to provide, on the basis of a survey, all staff members with the option to take part in language, computer and literacy classes. "People from the local Bridgwater College are now here five days a week delivering training," says Darren.

The results

"The essential skills classes are now in their second year, and some staff have now passed GCSEs as a result," says Darren. "The foreign nationals, meanwhile, have gelled together and are all still here."

The investment in staff training also appears to have had a beneficial effect on commitment among the firm's employees.

"The level of absenteeism has fallen from six per cent to four per cent," explains Darren.

And, despite the changes that Labelling & Packaging Services has undergone in recent years, the quality of the service the company delivers has remained high says Darren.

