

TESCO PUTS ITS NEW RECRUITS IN THE PICTURE

Judith Nelson, head of stores HR at Tesco explains how the retailer took a novel approach to induction training to ensure its staff learned and understood the company values...

As a major retailer, with more than 970 stores worldwide, and pre-tax profits of more than £1bn, Tesco has an incredible success story. Supporting its success are its people - more than 40,000 individuals join the Tesco payroll annually, from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. Apart from being a mammoth induction effort on its own, Tesco also needs to ensure each new member of staff has the opportunity to understand their individual role in contributing to the Tesco core purpose and values. This requires an innovative induction programme that caters for different styles of learning and varying commitments to the job.

Tesco called on BigPicture Learning - an organisation that specialises in bespoke, visually-based communication and learning solutions to develop an induction tool for new recruits that would help them achieve just that.

Company values

Frontline staff are the ultimate reflection of Tesco to its customers, but all employees have an important role to play in turning core values and customer commitment into reality on a daily basis. A major Tesco challenge is to ensure all of its employees, wherever they work, are aware of their role and that they can clearly see how their actions impact the 'big picture' of the overall business.

Judith Nelson, head of stores HR at Tesco, says: "We have invested a lot of time and money in understanding and responding to our customers, what motivates them to shop with us and what they expect from us. It is important our staff are aware of customer expectations and that they maintain a positive, consistent attitude. We need to make sure all our employees understand their role and how valuable their contribution is to the company and its success."

Initially, BigPicture Learning worked with a Tesco development team to establish a detailed understanding of how the company operates and how each department and division supports the Tesco core purpose and values of the company. This included the strategy and customer focus behind recent Tesco ventures including Tesco.com, financial services, the different store formats developed such as

Tesco Extra, Tesco Express and Tesco Metro and the operational logistics of supplying stores. Gradually, a picture of the business emerged.

Based around a concept called a 'ChangeMap®', BigPicture Learning created a graphical journey through the history of Tesco, its core purpose, values, business goals, financial aims, operations and marketing strategy and its commitment to customers.

This was coupled with supporting learning tools, structured discussion



and dialogue that enabled the information to be presented to new recruits in an informal and engaging way. The combination of the visual imagery and discussion-driven learning ensured it would be easily understood and retained by a diverse cross-section of employees.

Mapping the future

As the Tesco journey unfolds, the dialogue focuses participants on key areas of the map for discussion. The journey begins with an illustration of founder Jack Cohen at a market stall in 1919, to tell the story of how Tesco first started. Participants are encouraged to consider what might have been the core purpose and values of the business as it was then, and compare and contrast it to what is important in Tesco's business today.

As the journey continues, participants are asked to locate and stop at milestones represented by visual images. Signposts describe the Tesco customer service values, delivery trucks contain information on market share, and flow charts show how the Tesco supply chain operates.

Important learning points on the map are complemented by various cards and tools to encourage group participation and discussion.

Store Cards describe the rationale and customer benefits of the varying store formats. Customer Focus Cards discuss and review customer development strategies and their importance in developing customer loyalty. Performance Measure Cards are used to encourage understanding of the cause and effect relationships that affect other areas of the organisation.

Other tools focus on the distribution component of the business and helping new recruits understand how each of the Tesco values are represented in everyday actions.

For ease of implementation, the ChangeMap® and supporting tools were designed so line managers or HR staff would be able to coach and facilitate learning. Having easy-to-use tools with a hands-on participative methodology ensured Tesco was able to make effective use of existing internal resources, thereby creating economies of scale.

It also had the additional benefit of forging relationships between new staff and their managers. "Because the ChangeMap® is so interactive," explains Nelson, "it has been an excellent tool for developing initial relationships between managers and new staff. It makes managers seem more approachable and gives them an insight into the new recruit's personality and commitment to the job."

Fun learning

Nick Whitelock, founder of BigPicture Learning, says the success of the ChangeMap® concept is because it addresses some of the fundamental principles that facilitate learning.

He says: "Adults learn in a very ego-centric way. They interpret information in a way that is relevant to their individual needs and so cherry-pick the information they think they need. Communicating often-complex business issues in an informal, fun and visual way allows people to 'discover' the information and assimilate it to their own life experiences, making it more relevant to themselves and therefore more likely to be retained. Likewise, encouraging the sharing of ideas within a small group promotes insight and understanding and for many people unlocks the 'ah-ah' factor where connections are

made and real learning takes place.”

Feedback from trainers and participants has been very good. Nelson says: “Our managers find the format very easy to work with and have a tremendous amount of fun each time they run an induction session.

“The new recruits feel involved from day one, and report an early sense of ownership about Tesco and its core values. The participative element to their induction, where they have the opportunity to share their experiences and discuss elements of the ChangeMap®, means that they come away from the session feeling valued and motivated.”

The induction ChangeMap® is one of several used by Tesco to communicate messages such as procedures and people management to the organisation, including to distribution and head office staff. Because of its universal appeal, the company is planning to translate and roll out some of the ChangeMaps® across operations in Asia and Europe.