



# HE CHOSE MOTIVATION

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT UP 10%

JUSTIN KING, CEO,  
SAINSBURY'S

The retail sector is surely one of the UK's most competitive. Customers demand the broadest range of products at the best possible prices, while at the same time expecting ever-higher levels of customer service. And whatever a retailer's pricing strategy, a failure to deliver customer satisfaction in the stores can quickly undo any price-led competitive advantage. Sainsbury's has consistently sought to balance all of these attributes, offering a wide range of products at attractive prices, backed up by excellent customer service. However, in common with all leading organisations, they continually seek to further improve customer satisfaction even more effectively, to reinforce their reputation and business performance.

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Sainsbury's employs almost 150,000 people in the UK, with customer-facing team members in 785 stores backed up by a network of logistics and other support staff. 60% of people work part-time, making the task of employee engagement and motivation a particular challenge.

Sainsbury's have invested heavily in achieving a 'one team' feel to their operation, and this culture is led proactively by their Chief Executive Officer, Justin King. In considering how they might strengthen their competitive position, Justin and his senior management team recognised that customer service was critical, and set out to establish how they might increase this culture throughout the organisation. They identified a series of key objectives focussed on increasing the awareness and motivation of people in delivering excellent customer service:

- To identify best practice from within the organisation
- To exploit existing information sources to identify further areas of opportunity
- To understand areas of variability of service
- To engage and motivate the entire Sainsbury's workforce to identify and deliver increased levels of customer service
- To create metrics that would enable HR teams to track and reinforce progress

In seeking a partner to assist them in achieving these, they turned naturally to Investors in People.

Investors in People have an unrivalled authority and reputation in helping organisations manage and develop their people, and Sainsbury's have worked with them for many years. The first Sainsbury's store to be accredited by Investors in People was in 1998, and the whole organisation achieved corporate recognition in 2001. With an established, strong relationship with senior management and an in-depth understanding of the business, the Investors in People team were able to help

Sainsbury's construct a comprehensive survey to both determine people's feelings towards the organisation, and to identify potential areas for improvement.

A large sample of employees was interviewed, many of these face to face, and the findings from this research were reviewed against the extensive management information data that was available. This identified that people at all levels felt valued within the organisation – staff recognition, personal development plans and succession planning processes were strong, and people knew how they contributed to Sainsbury's success. They understood the importance of excellent customer service, and were motivated to deliver this. Nonetheless, a number of areas for improvement were flagged up, and some minor changes requested to specific areas of the organisation's operation. Investors in People helped Sainsbury's review these, to consider how examples of best practice could be shared across the organisation, and how changes might be implemented most effectively. Justin King explains the importance of acting on the review's findings:

**"One of the keys to Sainsbury's success is the sense of team accountability we have built. Here everyone has an impact on constantly improving our offer to customers. The feedback from Investors in People has helped us to build solutions that enable us to motivate our colleagues to perform."**

And the outcome? Sainsbury's continues to be an organisation that involves all its people in enhancing its customer service. Working with Investors in People they have been able to increase their employee engagement even further than before, with a 10% upturn over the last three years. And at a time of such keen competitive pressure, motivating people to deliver even greater customer service must surely be a good thing.

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