

Case study

Guilbert Office Depot



Guilbert Office Depot is the UK's leading office products company. Its customer base includes many well known UK companies operating across all market sectors as well as central and local government, utilities, educational institutions and the National Health.

With distribution and sales centres across the UK and Ireland, Guilbert deliver outstanding customer service wherever a customer is based. Their catalogue contains over 7000 products from desktop stationery to computer consumables, new technology equipment, business machines and furniture - everything for an office ready for next day delivery.

Guilbert customers also have exclusive access to the Niceday brand which consists of over 2000 products covering all the essentials that make office life easier and more efficient. Guilbert are also able to offer electronic trading – online ordering channels and purchase card ability are specifically designed to make managing office supplies even more effective.

The Challenge

Deborah Nethercoat, Head of Retail and Leisure Sales at Guilbert Office Depot outlines the issue that faced her sales team:

“Our sales team was comprised of people with varying abilities and experience. They were doing a good job but we needed to think outside the box and raise the bar. Guilbert had traditionally offered clients a comprehensive range of office products but we had developed an enhanced offering which included procurement as well as logistics. This enabled us to extend our offering beyond simply office products to carrier bags, hangers, etc. It meant that the team had to think outside the traditional stationery box to talk to a wider range of contacts.”

“We are set targets as a team, rather than individually. To exceed these targets it was essential the team dynamics were right. I wanted to understand my team: what was working, what wasn't and look for ways to motivate and encourage them. As a team I felt we had huge potential and I wanted to make the most of this.”

The sales team completed a Sales Diagnostic. This is a one day workshop where a team can address problems by talking about their profiles and the issues affecting them in an open and honest environment. As part of this process each member of the team was profiled using Thomas' Personal Profile Analysis (PPA).

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The PPA assesses an individual's behaviour in the work environment. It can answer questions such as – What are their strengths and limitations? Are they self starters? How do they communicate? What motivates them? The PPA enables people to become more self aware, which in turn gives them the means to consolidate their working strengths and compensate for their limitations.

The PPA is a series of 24 questions on a forced choice “first impressions” basis, taking no longer than seven minutes to complete. The answers are charted on a graph under the four headings of Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance (DISC).

“From this we were able to see the actual profile of the team and then identify where we wanted to be in terms of ideal culture. We looked at each individual’s skills and strengths; who had drive, who was good at seeing projects through to the finish, who communicated well at all levels?”.

The Results

The diagnostic enabled the team to identify the role each individual played within it. Some people’s strengths lay in the support and service they delivered to their clients. Others were strong “hunters”, comfortable concentrating solely on new business.

“It is a significant feat for a team of 17 people to all get on so well but everyone does. They understand and appreciate their colleagues so much better. I recently completed a series of one-to-one meetings with each person and asked them what, if anything, they would change. They all replied that there was nothing they would change, which was a real vindication of how the diagnostic had helped us re-structure the team. Each person feels valued and confidence has soared. We now have a team that works extremely well together and delivers outstanding results.”

Results following the Sales Diagnostic:

- £7 million pounds worth of business from major retailers such as Arcadia, Game Group, First Choice and Stead and Simpson
- Increased our business by 40 per cent. Year ending 2003 we completed just over £35 million worth of business compared to £25 million in 2002
- Incremental business with existing clients grew from 300,000 to £5.3 million as a result of ensuring right people were in charge of these accounts
- Doubled the number of fixed contracts awarded by clients
- Negotiated an increase in the team’s commission with the Board of Directors which has further motivated the team to succeed.

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