



## Case Study



# OUR PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE



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## Paul Stoddart, Marketing Manager, Johnsons Apparelmaster

Johnsons Apparelmaster is a leading UK provider of workwear services with nearly 40,000 customers ranging from SMEs with less than 10 employees to sites of large multi-national operations. The company clothes over 1 million people at work. Ensuring that the right garments are cleaned, maintained and delivered back to the customer in good condition is essential, so customer service is paramount.

The company began working with the Leadership Factor back in 2004 to measure customer satisfaction and identify areas to increase customer retention and service levels. As Paul Stoddart points out; *"We had always prided ourselves on being the best in customer service but had never independently measured customer satisfaction until this time. The results from the first benchmark survey although good, showed that there was certainly room for improvement"*.

### Project Pride

Like any customer service driven business Johnsons Apparelmaster realised that its people were key to delivering and enhancing customer satisfaction so using

the survey results they embarked on a major company wide training programme as well as introducing new operational procedures and IT enhancements to support it.

The training project was named **PRIDE** as this encompassed the culture the business needed to generate amongst employees and focused initially on those in customer facing roles, as one of the major priorities for improvement or (PFIs) from the survey was 'improving handling of problems & complaints'. Hence, the first stage of the **PRIDE** training programme was branded, Pride in our Customers.

Every service centre across the UK was included in the Project Pride training pro-

gramme which lasted over 6 months with over 600 employees undergoing training out of a total workforce of nearly 2,000. In addition, Project Pride resulted in the implementation of 30 operational, IT system and procedural changes which were far more than first anticipated. The key objectives of the project pride training programme were identified as;

- Changing culture & customer service by improving relationships with the customer through more open communication
- Enhancements to IT systems to enable improved customer response times



- Changes in quality procedures & processes to improve customer service

- Greater co-operation between departments reducing the barriers which delay the solution to the customer

- More accountability & regular data reports

- Greater levels of decision making for service teams to speed up customer solutions.

The first stage of project pride was completed in Spring 2005 and by the end of the year the volume of annual customer losses was down to 8.4% from 10.25%, with turnover increasing by over 5%.

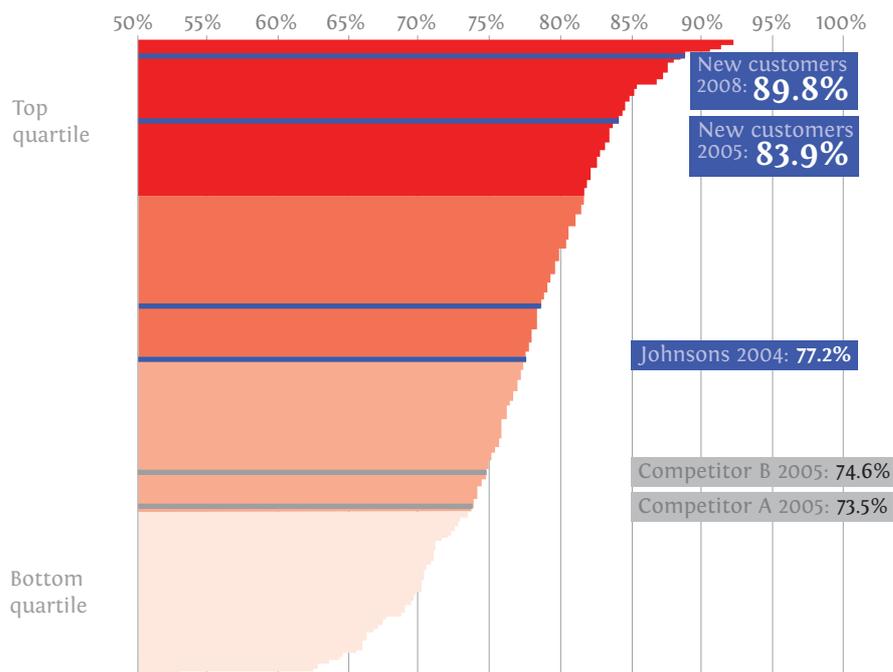
However, the real measure of the effectiveness of PRIDE was the second customer satisfaction survey undertaken by the Leadership Factor at the end of 2005. This identified a clear improvement in customer satisfaction levels.

The graph top right illustrates Johnsons' results against main competitors. This set the company on route to achieve its longer term target of an 80% plus satisfaction rating. Perhaps most significant was the score amongst new customers (less than 12 months service) where the improvement was far in excess of expectations, increasing from 72.4% in 2004 to 83.9% in 2005. In 2008, this has now risen to 89.8% amongst new customers.

### Pride in Our People

While customer satisfaction levels had increased, the real success of Project PRIDE was the cultural change that it effected, as Paul Stoddart comments;

## Satisfaction Index™ League Table Business Services



“More tellingly, customer satisfaction had improved most in the areas which had been PFIs, the results of the second 2005 Leadership Factor survey clearly demonstrated to our people that they could make a difference.”

While the success of the PRIDE training programme was reflected in a prestigious National Training Award for Johnsons Apparelmaster in 2006, the commitment to measure customer satisfaction and use the results to drive changes in working practices was now firmly established in the culture of the business.

### Evolving Project Pride

Since the first survey in 2004 Johnsons Apparelmaster has measured its customer satisfaction each year with the Leadership Factor and evolved its PRIDE training programme accordingly to embrace themes covering Pride in our Workplace, Pride in our People etc.

The chart below shows satisfaction scores for all the 'people requirements' that matter most to customers from the 2007 customer satisfaction survey. As



## Johnsons Apparelmaster vs Competition 'People Requirements'

Satisfaction Score out of 10



can be seen, Johnsons Apparelmaster out-performed its key competitors on each requirement.

Indeed, the slogan

**Our People Make the Difference**

became the theme of the company's national sales and customer service conference in 2008 and the people requirements used in the survey form the basis of new KPI measures introduced for larger customers.

### Pride in Our Marketing

Of course, using favourable results from customer surveys in marketing campaigns is nothing new but they can come across sometimes as a bit underwhelming when

just quoting topline numbers such as '90% overall satisfaction rating' leaving the customer to contemplate "so what, how does that relate to my service?"

In 2009, Johnsons Apparelmaster launched a new direct marketing campaign, Pride in our Marketing, based on the results from the latest Leadership Factor survey where the whole campaign strategy was based on comparing the customer service experience between Johnsons Apparelmaster and its key competitors. In essence the campaign highlighted the problems that users of workwear services encountered most often and how Johnsons Apparelmaster could provide the solution.

In order for Johnsons to use the customer survey results in their marketing they had to really make their marketing look different. A series of six 'postcards' were created in-house and the creative

approach sought to get across 'the problem' in a slightly humorous way but with a serious underlying message.

Admittedly, a slightly risky approach particularly if it only reminded the recipient of their feelings of frustration with their current workwear service. However, after only two postcard mailings over 1,000 new business appointments have already been generated this year and as one prospective customer put it after receiving his postcard "that's exactly how I feel".

It's fair to say that the customer satisfaction surveys have helped drive fundamental change within Johnsons Apparelmaster embracing people, processes and marketing but far more significant is that these changes have led to increased customer satisfaction, retention and turnover. **S**



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*Favourite loyalty scheme:* any retailer who always replaces or refunds something you're not happy with, no questions asked.