

Case Study – Induction

Doubling Customer Service Ratings

Saving £720,000 per year for an investment of £150,000

The Background

We were asked to investigate the induction training of a major household energy provider at one of their customer contact centres. The client asked us to comment on the current induction and then make recommendations on how to improve the approach used and the results achieved.

The driver for this project was the cost of induction. The average recruitment cost is approximately £5,000 per person to cover recruitment and induction training. Yet the client was having to run one induction every month to stand still. This was costing over £60,000 per month as they were losing 12 people per month on average.

The client had also identified that if people left it was usually during the induction or shortly afterwards. Attrition was a critical issue for the Business during the first 6 months. According to exit interviews, the reason they left was either

- The boring style of training
- The sheer quantity of information they were expected to remember
- Their desire to be productive
- The difficulties they faced when they joined their teams
- The lack of interest or support from their Team Manager

New starters were looking forward to joining the company yet quickly felt unsupported and demoralised. This meant they had little desire to perform or to learn and simply did not enjoy the induction or their job. Naturally, this translated itself to Customers and the Customer Experience ratings for new starters were very low.

The company uses a measure of Customer Experience to rate its staff and new starters were scoring about 40%. Any score of less than 60% indicated Dissatisfied Customers.

The client had therefore recognised that the poor approach of new starters was hurting their reputation and costing them Customers – Dissatisfied Customers were leaving.

Findings

We looked at induction in detail. Induction was a 12 week process which included:

- 3 weeks classroom
- 4 weeks 1:1 support, live calls
- 5 weeks graduate area, intensive support from experienced Team Manager

The reasons for the poor performance and attrition of new starters were:

- Uninspiring preparation for new starters before they joined – information provided was very functional and unwelcoming
- Screen dumps and slides – meant little to the new starters

- Lack of welcome – New starters were nervous and were treated like children starting a new school. They waited quietly in reception and then were led in single file through the contact centre, while everyone stared at them. The training room was a dirty, dark room with little space.
- No Team Manager involvement – often the new starters only met their Team Manager a day or so before they joined their team so did not feel part of the team when they joined
- Low priority – training rooms were changed in mid session as someone else commandeered the room.
- Training style – lots of lectures or Powerpoint presentations.
- Training content – emphasis on knowing the system and procedures
- Processing Customers not building relationships
- Product knowledge – new starters were overloaded with information and were expected to remember every possible aspect of the business and every possible product.
- Testing knowledge rather than application
- Graduate area – new starters were loaded with more information after the initial training during the 1:1 and graduate area periods of induction. This meant that they were often performing at a lower level at the end of their induction than when they started their 1:1 support
- Coaches in graduation encouraged processing rather than Customer Service
- When new starters joined their teams, there was little additional support from Team Managers to reflect their inexperience
- Team Managers did little coaching, handling escalated calls and doing admin for the team took up all of their time
- Staff were very happy to escalate calls as they saw this as an easy answer
- In the live environment, existing staff processed Customers, with little real interaction or relationship building

These findings came from analysis of:

- Observing induction
- Reviewing training and corporate materials
- Listening to calls through induction and beyond
- Observing Team Managers
- Focus groups with trainers, coaches and Team Managers
- Discussions with centre managers
- Meeting Customer Service Director and Senior Managers

The Change

We reduced the induction from 12 weeks to 5 weeks. This meant three weeks classroom and just 2 weeks in the graduate zone.

We dramatically reduced the quantity of information required during induction. This followed research which showed that the vast majority of calls fell into 10 types of enquiry and their variations.

This meant that the focus for individuals was simpler and it felt easier to assimilate the information. Our aim was to ensure they were able to deliver incredible service on the top 10 calls and then had the skills to successfully handle the communication and fact finding they needed to handle additional calls that came up more infrequently.

This was achieved through:

- Identifying the top 10 queries and concentrating on new starters becoming experts at those enquiries so that they could perform effectively as soon as they took live calls.
- Focus on Customer and communication
- The whole programme consists of work in context with Customer Focus and service skills in bite size chunks including sales opportunities
- Instinctive responses developed through role play and other methods
- Basing around the calls themselves
- Equipping new starters with research skills – so they can find out for themselves
- All activities work related with diverse activities
- Continuous assessment
- Life – skills, developing connections in others
- Solution focused

Induction training lasted for weeks 1-3:

- Raving Fans service provision
- Developing CSRs who are interested in people not just the transaction
- Self analysis and self development skills
- Ongoing assessments for knowledge, skills and behaviours
- Official graduation

Graduate zone covered weeks 4 and 5:

- Structured hand over from Induction – focus for development
- Assessment based on targets and behaviours
- Building CSRs own personality on the foundation of confidence
- Increased call observations and coaching
- Handover to Team Manager

The Managers role

We designed a session for Team Managers, who learned how to use a toolkit of quick hit activities they can use at work. They have also learned to organise their time so they spend the majority of it coaching those who most need support, usually new starters.

New starters are welcomed into the business on day one by their Team Manager and treated as special. Existing staff are encouraged to speak to them! Managers now get to know them through induction.

See the light!

Training is delivered in bright, airy, clean rooms and the rooms are decorated with visual learning aids. Training uses the latest brain friendly approaches, so that the learners have fun and remember what they learn.

Learning is relevant from day one. So they explore the calls they take and learn from practising and analysing calls rather than just listening and watching.

Technical skills such as systems training is built into the communications skills, so they learn both by practice.

Above all they learn by practising in context using Customer calls as they way to learn all aspects of their job.

The expert

We avoid overload by concentrating on the top ten queries. New starters become experts at taking 80% of calls so that they can contribute from the moment the start taking live calls. The remaining 20% of calls they learn once they have started. This is highly motivational as they feel valuable and of course they are valuable!

Induction is now fun and we have encouraged the spirit of fun to permeate into the call centre so that the spirit of the new starters is reflected by those who have been there for some time. Therefore we have also worked with the managers to ensure they coach and support.

Results speak for themselves

Induction has become the catalyst for a change of culture through the way that Team Managers behave and manage their people.

The results are new starters who are achieving very good service levels, much lower sickness and attrition and a big cost saving.

The Customer Experience ratings for new starters are now 80%, which means that Customers who speak to new starters have gone from being dissatisfied to being loyal.

The changes have saved the £60,000 per month in recruitment as no-one has left from the new groups.

Next the training team will be redesigning induction at the company's three other call centres. This is projected to save a further £180,000 per month with little additional investment in us because we have up skilled the internal team.