

Waitrose

Waitrose is part of The John Lewis Partnership. With over 300 branches in Britain, the supermarket is a household name in the UK. It was recognised in Verdict's Consumer Satisfaction Index 2013 as Best Food & Grocery Retailer for the eighth year in a row. It was also named Best Supermarket in the 2012 *Which?* supermarkets survey, for the fourth year running, and was awarded Best Supermarket in the Good Housekeeping Awards 2013.



Project background

As part of its renowned investment in its employees (all of whom are partners), Waitrose runs a series of development activities for staff at all levels. One of the key areas the L&D team focuses on is the Branch Manager level. These managers play a pivotal role in setting the vision, direction and culture for each branch, nurturing the company culture and providing the link to strategic levels of management.

One particular group of Branch Managers spotted a development opportunity that would help them coach their staff more effectively. They commissioned the L&D team to equip them with a series of different psychological approaches

to coaching. The aim was to help managers understand themselves and their style better using several different lenses, enabling them to really live and breathe their own development, as well as that of the staff reporting to them.

In this vein, a group of branch managers had already taken part in a 16PF® and FIRO-B® session, and wanted to build on their learning, applying the concepts to develop their leadership style. In particular, many of the branch managers in the group wanted to look at how to flex their style to manage different sorts of people more effectively.

L&D Manager Alex Woodward set about creating an interactive leadership development day, where

RETAIL SECTOR

Business needs

- Leadership development
- Enhancing communication
- Personal effectiveness

Psychometric tools used

- 16PF
- FIRO

Benefits

- More flexible leadership style
- Awareness and understanding of others' needs
- Deep self-understanding that can be revisited time and again

“More than any other psychometric, the 16PF is a genuinely holistic view of personality; and because it measures behaviours, it feels really applicable to the everyday.”

*Alex Woodward,
L&D Manager, Waitrose*



managers could learn how 16PF and FIRO applied to them and the impact their style has on their teams.

Solution

Alex, who is 16PF and FIRO qualified, designed a development day where the focus was on facilitating the group in their own learning about the 16PF and FIRO approaches. His aim was to equip the managers with the basics, and then let them discover the practical applications of FIRO and 16PF through personal self-reflection and peer-coaching. Crucially, his philosophy was to place the learning in the hands of the managers themselves.

The day was divided roughly in two, with the morning session focusing on 16PF, and the afternoon session on FIRO. “This group of managers have a great work ethic and have been working with each other for some time now,” Alex explains. “With the 16PF, I focused on the Global Factors to give them quick access to the insights it could give, and they picked up very quickly how the Primary Factors fed into them. What was great was that rather than spoon-feeding them the detail, they figured this out for themselves.” For Alex, this is all about empowering the group to make their own links – balancing push with pull.

The day involved a run-through of the basic concepts of each tool. “More than any other psychometric, the 16PF is a genuinely holistic view of personality”, says Alex. “The managers had a real lightbulb moment when they understood the idea behind traits – and that those parts of your personality outside the mid-range are most noticeable to others.” They quickly built on this learning, using their 16PF profiles to see their leadership style clearly, and realise its pitfalls.

“The 16PF measures behaviours, so it’s applicable to the everyday – how we relate to specific people, how we lead teams, how we can support each other in the future,” comments Alex. “The group really got on board with it, realising its depth as well as its practical applicability. The 16PF helped them articulate things they knew about themselves, but couldn’t express before.”

Alex used a range of tools from OPP, as well as ideas of his own, to bring the concepts to life: posters, props, collage, examples of real people – and the *Exploring Your 16PF Profile* books, which he describes as “amazing for the price – so accessible, tactile and funky to use, as well as relating to the business context”.

For the FIRO session, the focus shifted to the deeper insight the tool can give into those elements of

personality we communicate, and the corresponding elements we need from others. Alex wanted to help the group explore what was going on inside, and how it drives behaviour in the outside world – what they want to receive from others, but didn’t always reveal. This type of discussion was quite personal and therefore very impactful – but Alex made sure that the group was ready for this, with the right level of trust. The group had worked together for over two years, and carried out regular peer coaching, so the FIRO work was a good fit with their ethos.

“FIRO really enabled them to understand the journey they had come on. We used Lencioni’s model to talk about openness, trust and vulnerability, and the group were particularly interested in the idea that greater trust between them and their teams engendered greater credibility for them.” This credibility helps managers get what they want from their teams, convincing their staff of the legitimacy of their approach and getting everyone to pull together towards common goals.

Towards the end of the day, the managers started to make their own connections between the 16PF and FIRO approaches. For example, one participant was struck by how his combination of high Perfectionism (16PF) and high Expressed Control (FIRO-B) must come across to others.

Results

The participants in Alex’s session finished the day by recording what support they wanted from others in the future, with the learning informing their peer coaching programme. Feedback from the group was that the sessions had given them a more informed and conscious awareness of their leadership style and what underpins it. “People were saying ‘I know this pitfall about myself, and I can only get better at my job by stopping myself when I see it happening.’ The insights the tools gave them helped them recognise these moments, as well as giving them strategies for changing their behaviour – and getting more from their staff.”

Established in Oxford in 1989, OPP is one of Europe’s largest providers of business psychology solutions. Its products and services are used by SMEs and multi-national organisations in more than 25 countries. OPP develops the 16PF personality assessment and also distributes many of the world’s leading psychometric instruments, including the MBTI, FIRO and TKI tools.

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