

## Somerfield

### Leadership is all about cherry pies

#### Background:

In April 2003, this major UK supermarket chain carried out its first staff attitude survey. Although the results were encouraging in many areas, the new CEO set operational targets which required a more committed and engaged workforce.

Other research showed that in the stores where employees were engaged and motivated, the customers had a better shopping experience, proving that 'happy employees equal happy customers' – a prerequisite in a competitive industry where the needs of customers keep changing.

#### Objective:

A more engaged workforce to achieve better sales and business results.

#### A solution:

The proposal to use the Personal Leadership Programme (PLP) received mixed support from the retailer's executive management team, so it was decided to run the programme on a trial basis to see how it was received and if it was suitable for the company's needs.

Initial results were staggering. Senior Managers returned and volunteered feedback without being prompted. They highlighted what they had learnt and, more importantly, indicated how they intended to behave differently. A full evaluation showed that there was a real change in behaviour which strongly corresponded with the cultural changes the company was looking for.

#### Implementation:

Within 3 months, all 130 senior managers including the Board had experienced the programme. Following this initial success, an in-house Programme Leader team was formed to roll out the PLP to 2,000 managers across the company. An essential success factor was that the Programme Leaders represented the business—a buyer, an IT professional, two retail field managers, a store refit manager and two HR professionals.

#### Results:

One of the first success stories directly attributed to the Leadership Development Programme involved a particular store where the sales of cherry pies rose from 10 to 200. Thereafter every success achieved was dubbed a 'cherry pie' and it was not long before countless cherry pies were announced.

Hard evidence of the success was found in the company's 2005 staff opinion survey which showed a vast improvement in employee engagement. The company's own Brand Image Monitor also revealed that those stores that had completed the programme showed a positive shift in customer experience measures.

#### The client speaks out:

"Meetings are more productive. There is no shutting out, we involve the whole team, are appreciative of each other's contributions, being more supportive of each other, working together to achieve business goals."

"The true measure of the effectiveness of a programme is not what you come away intending to do, but what you actually do when you return to the workplace. The programme has changed the way I approach things at work and at home for the better."