



Case study

Ben & Jerry's

Ben and Jerry's was founded in 1978 in Vermont, USA by Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield. They started their business with a \$5 ice cream making correspondence course from Penn State University and a \$12,000 investment.

Over the following years, they moved from being a one shop operation to manufacturing tubs of ice cream for distribution to outlets nationwide and now world wide. However, despite their growth, they still upheld their original motto that "business has a responsibility to the community in which it operates." Their Statement of Mission, which was created in 1988, consists of three interrelated parts: product, economic and social. Ben and Jerry's works to employ its mission statement in as many day-to-day business decisions as possible so that the company is profitable and the community can profit from the way they do business.

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How Ben and Jerry's use PPA

Matt Fullbrook, Sales Director comments "Our culture is unique, we are a little different and 'anti-corporate' so we want people who will fit within this. In the UK we are a relatively small operation and we look for people who are entrepreneurial, creative and willing to go the extra mile. We take the approach of 'my baby, my business' – treating the company as if it were our own."

"Recruitment mistakes show up in a small team so we needed to minimise this risk. People in interviews will always tell you how wonderful they are. It makes it



more difficult to get a true sense of how they will perform once they are actually in the job itself. We needed a specific cultural fit – someone who would be a welcome addition to the team."

"Using a tool such as PPA gives you questions to ask and areas to probe to get a much better idea of their real strengths and limitations and the areas they might struggle with. The sales role at Ben and Jerry's is a very diverse one, with a lot of plate spinning involved. They need to be able to participate in anything from relationship building days with wholesalers and negotiating terms and conditions with them to national pricing and strategy."

Thomas' Personal Profile Analysis (PPA) is a behavioural questionnaire that 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? 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.

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



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four headings of Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance.

Ben and Jerry's use Thomas' aptitude and ability tests, Tests for Selection and Training (TST), in conjunction with PPA. TST provides a means to measure the fluid intelligence or 'mental horsepower' of an individual. Fluid intelligence is the ability to reason on the spot and solve unfamiliar problems where there is no prior experience to call upon. The tests provide a reliable, accurate and valid means of identifying if a person can quickly learn and retain new skills and procedures.

“We recently short listed two candidates and tested both with TST. Both had the profile we were looking for and we were, initially, veering towards one candidate rather than the other. However, the TST score of our preferred candidate was such that he would not have succeeded in the role. We needed someone who

was able to hit the ground running and he simply would not have been able to do this. The candidate we went with has proved to be very successful.”

Ben and Jerry's also use PPA to develop people once they are in the job:

“Our structure is very flat with few opportunities for promotion upwards. We look to develop individuals as they are so that they are well placed to go onwards in their career. We have individual work plans for our people. We use PPA as a development tool to get people to the next level. We owe it to the people who work for us to equip them with the skills they need to make them national account managers.”

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