

Case study

Unilever (Lever Faberge)



Unilever in the UK is one of the world's largest consumer goods companies. The company provides millions of people in over 100 countries with brands in foods, home and personal care. In the UK it has been serving consumers for more than a century and its brands can be found in nine out of every ten households.

Lever Faberge was formed in 2001 through the merger of Unilever sister companies Elida Faberge and Lever Brothers. Lever Faberge is now the number one home and personal care provider in the UK. Its brands include Lynx, Persil, Domestos, Dove, Persil and Comfort.

Lever Faberge employs over 2,700 people across four sites including Kingston upon Thames in Surrey, Port Sunlight on the Wirral, Seacroft in Leeds and Warrington in Cheshire.

The Challenge

The Lever Faberge factory in Warrington is the second largest Unilever powder factory in Europe. It employs approximately 250 people, with over 1000 employed across the North West in the manufacturing side of the business. The selection of people, across all levels from shop floor to managers, had traditionally been based on skills and experience alone.

Chris Williams, HR Manager at Lever Faberge comments "The focus on skills and experience meant we were not fully taking into account the behavioural requirements of a job and how well people would 'fit' within a role. As a business we need to attract and



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retain talented people and to do this we needed to look beyond competencies to preferred styles of behaviour at work.”

“Basing a decision on interview alone meant that we relied heavily on managers asking the right questions. Lever Faberge is an extremely busy and demanding working environment and managers were not spending enough time thinking about the type of person they needed in the role or the right questions to ask at interview. This led to recruitment decisions based on gut feel and emotion.”

The company had also started a Leadership Development Programme in 2002 for its first line managers. These are managers at the operations level, responsible for day to day running of the plant. They have huge people responsibilities and we had to recognise that they needed

specific development and training to help them in their roles.

The Solution

Thomas' Personal Profile Analysis (PPA) was a key part of Lever Faberge's recruitment process as well as the Leadership Programme.

The PPA 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? The 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.

Leadership Programme

“Assessment centres were used at the start of the programme, with the PPA forming part of the assessments used. PPA was used in combination with the HJA. Managers were then able to review the PPA reports and analyse the PPA profile against the HJA.”

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“The PPA provided a much better understanding of themselves and their colleagues. We wanted our people to be aware of how different profiles work in different ways – not good or bad, better or worse, just different. Our managers understand their own people so much better. For example a High D manager now understands and appreciates why a Low D manager has a different style to themselves. Previously this would have caused conflict.”

Recruitment

Lever Faberge use the PPA to recruit staff at all levels. The managers begin by completing a job specification, selecting which competencies they want to use (the competencies are unique to Lever Faberge). They then complete an HJA to focus on the behavioural requirements of the job. Once people have been short listed they are given a PPA to complete when they come in for an interview.

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“Our managers now spend more time thinking about the type of person they want in the role, the type of profile they are looking for and how that person will cope in our busy working environment. As a result they are making better recruitment decisions.

Managers invest a significant amount of time preparing for the interview. The process starts several weeks before the candidate comes in for interview when they review the HJA. The information from the PPA profile means that managers are able to structure the interviews better and ask more probing questions.”

“We have also inputted the profile information from the PPA profiles to our HR Planning software. We can view the HJA, PPA profile along with their competences, ratings and salary information. All this information is vital when it comes to success planning.”

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