



Boots Supply Chain Looks to the Future with Skills Development

Results:

Boots logistics network has seen a positive response to the training programmes throughout its distribution centres.

- Over **1,000** colleagues have **gained qualifications**, or are **currently engaged in learning**
- **Labour turnover** with the sites scheduled for closure **has remained stable**, despite employees having three years notice of the closures
- **Employee engagement** survey results have actually **improved** within the affected distribution centres, which is a highly significant and exceptional result.



Company:	Boots UK Ltd Retail Supply Chain
No of employees:	4,500
Core area of business:	Retail and Distribution
Public Qualifications:	Skills for Life (numeracy and literacy), NVQ's, European Computer Driving Licence and English for Speakers of Other Languages

The Business Challenge

The Supply Chain division of Boots UK Ltd has looked to, and prioritised, skills development to help with a series of critical business challenges.

The reasons for looking at its skills development is twofold. The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW), launched their learning campaign seven years ago against a backdrop of a rapidly changing workforce within Boots Supply Chain, identifying that when learning is made affordable and accessible employees are keen to take it up. Boots worked with the Union and organisations in the learning sector to establish its own learning centre.

The Solution

With the help of Skills for Logistics and the Learning and Skills Council, Boots was able to identify a number of programmes to help the company support its workforce. It introduced learning programmes to address a number of different needs including Skills for Life - to address numeracy and literacy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); basic computing including the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), and ITQ – a Level 2 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). In addition Boots put some staff through the logistics specific Warehousing & Distribution Level 2 NVQ.

The company/Union learning centre opened its doors in 2003 offering a wide variety of programmes.

Secondly, Boots is currently progressing with a significant restructuring of its supply chain, which has led to a multi-million pound investment in its Nottingham warehouse facility. As part of this project, a number of distribution centres around the UK will close in 2009. Through this process Boots has made a commitment to the affected colleagues to provide the guidance and support to enable them to prepare for their changing job roles, retrain and re-skill, as well as boost their future employment prospects with other organisations.

The enthusiasm of Boots' staff and the resulting uptake in qualifications has been really positive. One staff member said: **"I cannot believe how much I learned, after not doing anything since leaving school."**

Providers have been equally enthusiastic about the skills provision offered by Boots: "It is an excellent model of true workforce development which all employers should aspire to." Suzanne Ogden, Partnership Manager, Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council.

Matt Burton, Learning and Development Manager—Boots UK Supply Chain

"We are a huge advocate of public qualifications, the benefits we have seen from employees in our sites are absolutely clear. Employees who have enrolled on courses throughout our 18 learning centres have not only developed a skill in the specific chosen subject but have shown an increase in confidence and self belief in their own capability.

Across all sites affected by our supply chain restructure, we have seen a huge take-up on a variety of public qualifications. We have no doubt that this will enhance the employability of our colleagues, yet at the same time, we have seen a demonstrable positive impact on morale, and also labour turnover, which is truly remarkable given the challenging situation our employees are working in at present."