

'The Perfect Blend'

CAFFÈ
NERO

and The McQuaig System™

Helen Rust, L & D Manager at Caffè Nero, explains how employees drive demand for self-development using The McQuaig System™.

'People are crucial to our success,' says Helen, 'because they create a very specific atmosphere. This makes you want to have a leisurely talk over a cappuccino in one of our stores, rather than another.'

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*Helen Rust, L & D Manager,
Caffè Nero*

You'll recognise Caffè Nero from many British High Streets. Its brand is instantly recognisable (it won the British Design Council Award in 2000).

Founded in 1997, Caffè Nero is now the largest independent coffee retailer in the UK with 3000 employees and 380 stores. Success with its initiative in Turkey has led to more international expansion plans.

Underlying this success is a very precise vision. 'Walk into some coffee chains and you'd think you were in a fast food outlet: they're the same whether they're in a city centre or a county town, at 8am or 5pm. We adapt to where we are and reflect the time of day our customers drop in.

'Our desire is to create a genuine European coffee house feel. Our people create that, so they have to share certain attributes:

warmth; a welcoming friendly attitude; a positive outlook on life.'

Whereas managers in some organisations have to argue strongly for any spend on people development, this is not the case at Caffè Nero.

'The MD is a huge supporter of people development. Assessment was a special case as it had been used in recruitment some years ago and there were bad vibes about the whole area. We had to overcome that.'

The Issue

'We wanted to create more self-awareness among our 35 area managers. They're important in creating and ensuring we retain standards of service in our stores. They need to be aware of how they affect other people and what their personal skills are.

So, I started by looking for a development tool. The McQuaig Self Development Survey® impressed me because it communicates clearly. You need a

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PhD to understand reports from some instruments and they merely provide a description of somebody’s personality or skills. The McQuaig report gives you action points depending on the area you want to develop. I felt it would win people over.’

The process

‘We started gradually. I quickly filled in the survey and got feedback to understand the experience. Then I asked a selection of internal and external people to fill

it in. A buzz started: other people started asking if they could fill it in. They started discussing their results, swapping reports - once they’ve bought into the idea, people like these sorts of assessments.

‘The McQuaig System™ also became part of a previously task-focused appraisal interview. I fed back to the area managers when regional managers were present so more senior colleagues started getting interested in the process. As you can see, we didn’t lay down a system. We let us grow organically and people’s own enthusiasm made it a success.’

Next stages

‘To be honest, it has started to affect more areas than I imagined. We are just starting out on some research to create a store manager profile that we can use in recruitment. The McQuaig System™ is being used in development with head office staff. We can address two different goals with the same tool, the same vocabulary, concepts and models. This means we can move more quickly and have a greater effect.’

The Effects

‘This is new to us. We didn’t set out with precise targeted outcomes but it has already improved our appraisal system and started developing areas that are essential to our success in different ways.

‘Three further points are worth making. First, we employ over 66 nationalities and one of our concerns was whether McQuaig could cope with this diverse workforce. It can.

‘Second, in a recession L & D activities often get cut. Our unlimited usage licence means we can continue to use McQuaig with no additional cost during a time when other companies are cutting back. This is great because the exercise is developing and, if we cut back now, we wouldn’t see the full benefits. Keeping going means we’ll get the most out of it.

‘Finally, it’s had an effect on me. Working with and feeding back the reports has taught me huge amounts about people at work. It’s improved my skills. And, just as important, it’s very enjoyable.’

Tips

Start in a focused way

Encourage people to share their own reports

If there is some resistance to assessment, start from a non-threatening area

Try it out on key people – including yourself

The report – its quality and ability to communicate – is key to getting buy-in.

Contact us now to recruit, manage and develop your staff with The McQuaig System™

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