

# CASE STUDY: HM PASSPORT OFFICE



Her Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO) wanted to develop and embed a more customer centric culture, moving ownership away from 'the organisation' to individuals – for all staff to understand how important they are in delivering this and that they all have personal responsibility for the service customers receive, not just the Customer Service Team.

As part of our engagement with staff to deliver world class customer service, we designed the Customer Champion role and asked staff to volunteer by explaining their ideas and personal commitment to customer service. We chose a broad mix of people to reflect our diverse customer groups and to ensure coverage from all business and geographical areas, including staff dealing with both UK and international customers.

Customer Champions are genuinely customer focused staff who are motivated to look for ways to improve customers' experience at every stage of our process. They help us ensure that customers are listened to and their feedback is acted upon. Customer Champions give vital insight into our customers' needs, based upon their day to day dealings with customers, but also their understanding of our business.

Champions share best practice and success stories to benchmark excellent customer service, ensure improvements are made and inspire colleagues to exceed customers' expectations. They encourage continuous improvement - looking for opportunities for more efficient ways of working; supporting and helping drive through necessary changes for the benefit of the customer. They provide support for each other, working with a non-hierarchical approach to convert customer feedback into appropriate actions for improvement.

The Customer Champion Network consists of over 100 staff, who are Champions in addition to their 'day jobs'. They have the full support of the Board including the Director General and the Chief Operating Officer and have been empowered to find resolutions to problems and implement changes. Senior Leaders signed up to Customer Champion Charter/terms of reference to pledge support, guidance and the time to allow Customer Champions to be truly effective. The charter sets out the beliefs, core values, behaviours and principles required by our senior leaders and line managers and our Customer Champions to allow the Customer Champion Network to operate successfully.

Champions raise awareness and help bring about our customer centric culture change. One of our four Transformational Pillars is delivering 'World Class Customer Experience' and this ties in with the Customer Assurance vision statement “

*We will use the customer voice as a catalyst to inspire our colleagues to deliver a world class customer experience”*



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The Champions have been further empowered by our Operational Excellence (OpEx) initiative. Another of our Transformational Pillars being a 'Great Place to Work' and OpEx allows our organisation to drive a change in attitude and culture. It encourages people to engage and try new ideas and working practices.

Staff and managers are fully committed to both the Customer Champions and OpEx and have very much welcomed the ability to be involved in suggesting new ideas. Colleagues use the Customer Champions Network to discuss and recommend areas for improvement in customer service and are very happy to have this point of contact to raise ideas. OpEx also empowers staff to be fully engaged and suggest improvements through other channels including our staff suggestion scheme and Continuous Improvement Team. Managers are supportive of this and daily team meetings ensure that everyone is included in the discussions.

The Customer Champions were heavily involved in developing the values within the charter and communicating it to their colleagues. To articulate the values required to deliver World Class Customer Experience through the development of our Customer Charter, we invited staff to a number of workshops to hear what values, behaviours and standards they wanted to see in the Charter. We also consulted with Home Office Staff Networks and our Trade Union regarding the standards and values in order to get buy-in from everyone. To empower staff to deliver against these customer commitments, we helped everyone to understand what is required of them through promotion of the charter, using a range of targeted communications - staff newsletters, e-mails, awareness notes and team meetings – encouraging feedback from staff at every step. We linked our values to our 'brand' and we recognise and reward staff for 'living the values'.

## Challenges and Solutions

Managing and communicating with such a large, diverse and geographically dispersed group is challenging. We engage with these staff regularly in a variety of ways including quarterly face to face conferences, where Champions can network directly with each other, discuss issues and solutions and share best practice and successes. These conferences are always attended by our Chief Operating Officer and this sends a very powerful message that the business wants to engage with and trusts the Customer Champions fully. This approach from the top down and the bottom up is testament to the importance that is put on the values and behaviours and is proof that they are role modelled and integral across the organisation.

We have monthly conference calls where a variety of customer topics are discussed and the Champions are able to support and motivate each other and we share information sources to make sure everyone is included. The Champions find this support beneficial for both the job that they do and the outcome they can give to the customers.

We also make good use of Yammer (a work social media type forum) where the Champions share stories and photos and generally keep in touch with each other.



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## Benefits

Engaging with our staff and asking them to channel the 'voice of the customer' through the Customer Champion Network has had a hugely positive impact on customer experience and has been instrumental in HMPO being voted as the top performing public sector organisation for the last 3 years in the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) UK Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) report.

We also achieved accreditation through Customer Service Excellence (CSE) and were proud to receive 9 compliance plus ratings. The Customer Champions were specifically mentioned by the assessor.

We have internally seen many improvements in the quality and efficiency of services to both internal and external customers following on from the Customer Champions working together. We have seen many initiatives – some delivering small local improvements and others which have had a national impact.

The Customer Champions won the 2016 Home Office Excellence Award for Customer Service and Delivery.

## Recommendations

Engaging with our Customer Champions has shown higher levels of customer service and Champions talk about their sense of pride in their work and their empowerment and motivation to deliver. They are given the freedom to explore new ideas and the time and support to put these into practice, leading the way from the bottom up, to create a more customer focused culture.

They prove that happy staff make happy customers. They appear friendly, helpful and enthusiastic to customers and they are motivated by the opportunities they have been given to develop and deliver for the customer. We would recommend that other organisations develop a network of customer champions and benefit from the value that this highly engaged and motivated group of staff bring. Our vision is that our Champions will continue to motivate and inspire their colleagues until no one will individually identify themselves as a Customer Champion as every member of staff will identify themselves as one.

**Contact: Julia Law – [Julia.law@hmpo.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Julia.law@hmpo.gsi.gov.uk) mobile 07833893113**

