



## Client

Unilever

## Industry

Manufacturing

## Country

United Kingdom

## Challenge

Consolidate consumer handling into a single site to serve four main operating companies

## Solution

Customer Interactive Solutions (CIS)

## Unilever takes customer service to a new level with Merchants bespoke training solutions

Merchants unites, streamlines and enhances Unilever's contact centre capability to deliver better service and build brand loyalty

### Client Overview

Unilever is an instantly recognisable household brand with products found in millions of homes and store cupboards. Unilever has grown into one of the world's most successful consumer goods companies by listening to the people who buy their products. Over 160 million Unilever products are purchased every day.

Unilever is a global manufacturing giant, with annual turnover in excess of €40.5 billion (2008). It employs 174 000 people in over 100 countries around the world and invests heavily in research and development and community programs.

### Business Overview

Unilever planned to consolidate their consumer handling operations into a single site. This single facility would provide service and support for four of its main operating companies in the United Kingdom: Birds Eye Wall's, Lever Faberge, Unilever Bestfoods UK and SlimFast TM.

Merchants worked closely with Unilever to identify best practice for each of the operations, and then used this data to integrate and define processes for the new consolidated Consumer Link operation based in Milton Keynes.

### Solution Provided

Agents were recruited from established Merchants operations and underwent a rigorous recruitment process to establish the caliber of their customer service skills. Because Merchants was able to draw on a pool of agents in which it had already heavily invested in terms of skills and service training, additional training needs were greatly reduced. However, offsetting this advantage was the fact that Unilever had a huge number of product lines and brands. Agents would need to study and understand all these products to offer a confident, seamless service to consumers.

### How We Delivered

The design and content of the training were exceptionally complex and involved a wide spectrum of product and service experts. On average, agents underwent an intensive six-week training program designed to equip them with the prerequisite level of knowledge. This was complemented by a defined, measurable level of customer service training to enable them to answer customer service needs while representing the Unilever brands in a friendly, courteous and professional way.



## Results

- ▲ Unilever were positive and confident about the training and service ethic coached
- ▲ Unilever withdrew their on-site service support team, entrusting the operation fully to Merchants
- ▲ The project ran successfully at full capacity, recruiting additional agents
- ▲ Ongoing skills training was provided on product, system, and best practice
- ▲ Training and continual development created a stimulating and rewarding workplace for agents

Merchants was able to draw on a wealth of training and market experience, focusing on imparting the key skills required for the customer service environment. The training encouraged greater awareness of theory and demonstrated how to apply techniques to enhance the customer interaction.

Merchants clearly understood that the training would only benefit the audience if they understood its relevance to the quality of their work experience. To close the gap between theory and practice, we undertook a comprehensive needs analysis to ensure that the training was hitting the mark and enhancing the agents' ability to deliver a first-class service.

Training covered all forms of customer interaction, from face-to-face encounters to telephone and written correspondence. This was supplemented by communications skills training to give the agents the verbal and interactive tools needed in the often fast-paced and pressurised working environment of a busy contact centre.

Training was varied and delivered through many mediums, including presentations, dialogue and discussions, practical exercises, role play and full simulation in a 'live' environment.

The training was an exciting and unique process, custom-designed to fulfill Unilever's unique brief and elevate their customer service to a new level where every client feels that their contact with the company was positive and unique. Unilever was delighted with the process and results and was happy to remove all their on-site support representatives and fully entrust operations to Merchants. The project ran successfully at full capacity, with additional agents recruited for SlimFast TM and Unilever.com. Merchants committed to ongoing training on product, skills and best practice customer service refresher training to maintain a high level of service excellence.

***“Four disparate operating companies . . . one great contact centre delivering outstanding customer service.”***