

Expert customer care

Other retailers talk about friendly, efficient service but, for Boots, that's just a basic requirement. We aim to provide our customers with the kind of expert personal care which will form the basis of a lifelong relationship. And in 2005/06, we took important steps to enable more of our people to fulfil that aim, more of the time...

Achieved in 2005/06:

Putting our pharmacists 'out front'

Our highly trained pharmacists have a wealth of healthcare expertise to share with customers. But in our busy stores, they have always tended to be hidden away, hard at work in their dispensaries.

We began to change that in 2005/06. In our 350 busiest pharmacies, we introduced accuracy checking technicians to take care of the more mechanical aspects of dispensing, enabling pharmacists to spend more time out front, advising customers.

On a much wider scale, around 2,800 of our pharmacists have either been trained, or are currently training, to carry out Medicine Usage Reviews (MURs). Under this new government initiative, customers can book a 10-15 minute session with their pharmacist, during which he or she will carry out a review of all the medicines they are taking, make recommendations for improvements to their drug regime, and subsequently contact their doctor, if necessary.

Building our beauty expertise

It's not just our healthcare specialists who know their subject back to front, we're equally serious when it comes to providing our customers with good advice on looking beautiful. That's why, for example, when we relaunched our market-leading cosmetics range last year, we gave all our 700 N°7 consultants five days of intensive training, to ensure they knew exactly what was so special about the new products.

Trust Boots The Chemists to use chemicals safely

Of course, the care we show our customers in our stores is only part of the story, just as important is the expertise that goes into ensuring our products meet the highest safety and quality standards.

As chemists, we're particularly concerned with the chemicals that go into the products we make. We were the first UK retailer to publish a policy on this, committing ourselves to a precautionary approach and to full disclosure about chemicals which we have ceased to use on safety or environmental grounds, or which we are continuing to use while investigating further.

This is Mittra our N°7 account manager in Sedley Place. There are 700 N°7 consultants trained to ensure customers get the very best out of the market leading N°7 range.





And we've continued to play a key role in the wider debate about the safe use of chemicals. As the UK retail sector's leading experts on the subject, we've been participating fully in the consultation process leading to the EU's new REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and restriction of CHemicals) legislation, to be introduced in 2007.

In 2005/06, Boots has been arguing for a strong REACH, which will facilitate our precautionary approach by ensuring that chemical manufacturers freely disclose relevant information related to potential risks associated with any particular chemical.

Using high speed technology to buy time for our people

All our stores now have state-of-the-art electronic tills, and are also served by a powerful store management information system.

The obvious benefits of these is that it's now quicker for customers to pop into Boots to grab their lunch and a lipstick. But faster technology also takes the pressure off our people, leaving them more time to listen to customers and respond to their needs.

Making our stores a Great Place to Work

It goes without saying that only well motivated people who enjoy their work can be expected to deliver expert customer care.

We conduct regular surveys to find out how our people feel about every aspect of their working lives, and we're pleased to say that in the most recent, 82% described themselves as 'proud to work for Boots'.

Our Great Place to Work surveys focus on specific stores, and provide us with valuable information on how our managers are performing in getting the best out of their teams.



MDS: expert care beyond our stores

Under our Monitored Dosage System (MDS), our expert people supply pre-packaged drugs for easy use by care homes. Last year, we opened or expanded 31 MDS rooms, enabling us to help more care homes administer medicines to their residents safely and efficiently. As a result, our share of this valuable market continued to increase.

Measuring our performance

We are currently developing new ways of measuring performance in this area, in particular, a Customer Service Monitor for stores which have received customer care training. Targets will be introduced for 2006/07.

To do:

In recent years, we've been investing in crucial infrastructure; and in 2006/07, we'll be building on this with a renewed commitment to training and developing our people. Our plans include:

- > Investing £5m in a major customer care training programme, starting with 30 pilot stores, then rolling out nationally;
- > A new leadership training programme, and further training for pharmacists;
- > New recognition schemes to reward our people for outstanding customer care;
- > An off-the-job induction for all new recruits;
- > Integrating Great Place to Work surveys into store managers' performance appraisal.