

For more than 23 years, Trent Barton has used Thomas as part of their commitment to providing the most customer-focused approach to their service delivery.



Transport

250+ buses
13 coaches
1,000+ staff



Objectives

- Improve customer service scores
- Understand their “front-line” team through the use of assessments
- Conduct research that could lead to improvements for customer experience and front-line development



Results

- ★ Recruitment driven by profiling the type of employees needed
- ★ Thomas assessments used as part of team development and for team audits
- ★ Rating for value for money increased to 73% from 58%

THE CHALLENGE: Improve passenger numbers

In the late 80's, the bus industry in the UK was deregulated and privatised after decades of public ownership. This gave local management teams the opportunity to purchase their companies and have a real stake in the success of their own future. The industry had a poor record in terms of customer service and delivery of the routes operated, lack of investment in new buses and a stagnant trading position which had led to years of declining passenger numbers.

Jeff Counsell, Managing Director of Trent Barton explains: “here at Trent Barton, we soon came to recognise that we needed to dramatically change the face of our business if we were to maintain sustainability. So, in 1990 we embarked on a major customer research program, asking our customers what they liked and disliked about bus travel and what might get them to travel more with us. We also undertook surveys on non-bus users in the towns and cities gain an insight into what we needed to do to attract new users. This research taught us the values that customers placed on our services rather than what we had perceived them to be.”



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The results highlighted that poor customer service was a major issue from the customers' standpoint – fares were rising due to inflation but the service they received was still comparatively poor.

They also discovered that 'value for money' was far more important to the consumer than price alone. Cleanliness of the buses and poor frequency of service also rated high in the dislikes.

Based on this research, the team began to introduce improvements and significant investment in their services. From new and cleaner buses to more frequent routes, one of the biggest focus points and areas to improve on was the customer service element.

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THE SOLUTION: Develop the front-line

Trent Barton were introduced to Thomas International through a recommendation by one of their external trainers. During the discovery stage of understanding how Thomas could enhance the performance of the Trent Barton workforce, it was clear that the Personal Profile Analysis (PPA) would be the most appropriate tool to use.



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After 23 years of using Thomas tools we've found that it all starts with the right foundation in the quality of staff we recruited. We no longer looked to recruit people just with a bus driving licence and instead look for those with people skills who we can train to drive, using the PPA as our guide



The PPA provides an accurate insight into how people behave at work, shedding light on their strengths and limitations, communication style, what motivates them and how they behave under pressure.

"I look upon our front-line team as our 'get out of jail' card, when things go wrong (bus breakdown, delays through congestion/ roadworks etc.). It's the way our staff react and respond that matters and how they deal with the customers in live situations. The PPA is invaluable in giving us an indication to this."

Jeff Counsell continues: "with over 1,000 people making up the Trent Barton workforce, we use the PPA not just for recruitment, but also team development and when looking at those we would like to promote."

They use the PPA in their team audits and complete compatibility reports to give further insight into how different members of the team are going to work together, from those in the office to the drivers on the road.

"We use Thomas tools to ensure that team dynamics stay balanced – it's critical to our business to understand how our office staff interact with our drivers."

THE RESULT: Deep Profiling for Tailored Development Plans

Jeff comments that: “after 23 years of using Thomas tools we’ve found that it all starts with the right foundation in the quality of staff we recruited. We no longer looked to recruit people just with a bus driving licence and instead look for those with people skills who we can train to drive, using the PPA as our guide.”

“Our drivers are routinely noted and recognised for their superb customer service and we have been named as having the friendliest drivers in the UK in the most recent, independent, UK Transport Focus Surveys. Also, our rating for value for money increased to 73% in the same survey – up from 58% the previous year.”

As the team at Trent Barton have been using Thomas tools for some, Jeff recognises how it’s become “a part of our culture and staff largely embrace it.”

“We continue to use Thomas because it’s a fundamental part of our people formula and has revolutionised how we select the right people when recruiting and how we approach development.”



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For more information about how we can help deliver confidence for your organisation, get in touch



01628 244 024



info@thomas.co.uk



@ThomasInt_UK



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