

## Selling to the world

### World Duty Free

With hundreds of millions of passengers travelling through BAA's UK airports every year, flying to over 700 destinations worldwide, it's no exaggeration to say that World Duty Free (WDF) sells to the world. WDF, BAA's tax- and duty-free retailer, has 1,850 employees in its 65 stores, with 1,000 in 30 outlets at Heathrow alone. Its challenge is to manage a business which engages passengers and enhances their experience, while maximising the commercial opportunities available. 'Our multilingual and multicultural expertise plays a crucial role in meeting that challenge', says Jacqueline Dyer, Head of Resourcing and Development.

#### *The business case for languages*

'Speaking to customers in their own language is vital for good customer service', adds Ms Dyer. 'A little language goes a long way in establishing a rapport. It's great that we have native speakers of so many languages in our team, but customers also appreciate being addressed in their language even at a basic level.'

Using the customers' language helps to communicate their needs, and the sales message, quickly and effectively, so maximising sales. Effective communication enhances staff job satisfaction, as does the provision of language training.

#### *Making the most of language skills*

WDF at Heathrow actively recruits native and second language speakers, to ensure its staff have a wide range of languages of most relevance to its business. These include Japanese, Russian and Chinese as well as many European and Indian languages. Language training is popular and includes specially tailored Japanese and Russian lessons. Staff also provide informal language practice for each other.

Retail consultants with key language skills are moved around the terminals in order to best meet the demands of passengers travelling to or from particular destinations.

WDF has developed in-store signage and promotional 'flyers' in key foreign languages. Staff can identify a passenger's first language using a specially created chart asking for his/her boarding card in twenty languages.



*A strategy for the future*

WDF's strategy looks ahead to the completion of Terminal 5 and the forecast expansion in air travel from new high growth markets like China. Ms Dyer concludes, 'It's important that we continue to use and develop the language skills of our staff, as international communication is at the heart of our success'.

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