

The logo for TAP, featuring the letters 'TAP' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font inside a white circle with a blue border.

case study

THE Carphone Warehouse

your phone, your way

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“When you’re number one you can’t use the competition to benchmark yourself because you are the benchmark! What we needed was an industry standard for our training community that we could adopt as our own. *The Training Foundation* was the perfect fit for us.” Darren Bezani, Group Training Manager, *The Carphone Warehouse Group plc*.

Since it began trading from humble basement offices in London’s Marylebone Road, The Carphone Warehouse has achieved phenomenal growth. Employing 15,000 people across 12 countries and with 2000 stores, plus call and support centres, the Group is now a highly diverse telecommunications business that includes *Opal Telecom*, *e2save*, *onestopphonestop* and the hugely successful

consumer telephone business, *TalkTalk*.

The company’s breathtaking rise has been rewarded with two major accolades this year: Retailer of the Year (“a fantastic achievement, when you consider we were up against the like of *Marks & Spencer* and *Tesco*”) and sixth position in *The Sunday Times* Top 20 Big Companies to Work For.

Staying at the front of this dynamic, intensely competitive and fast-moving industry requires constant product and service innovation, which is encouraged at all levels within the organisation. In turn, this depends on a highly motivated, customer focused and knowledgeable workforce, which is where Group Training Manager Darren Bezani and his team of training professionals come in.

“We see training as a serious investment in maintaining



The Training Foundation

empowering everyone involved in training and developing others

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that number one position - it's one of our competitive advantages," explains Darren. "When people come into one of our stores, they expect in-depth knowledge, impartial advice and great customer service. If our people are not trained to deliver that, then our customers might as well buy off the Internet."

The Carphone Warehouse's training budget reinforces this point: the company spends more than four times the industry average on personal and professional development.

Darren and his training community are responsible for training right across the business from sales consultants and contact centre staff up to director level, having a career path mapped out for them: the ethos is that anyone can make it to the top.

The Carphone Warehouse quite rightly prides itself on the quality of its training, but in a fiercely competitive environment it knows it must be permanently innovating to deliver customer delight.

"With 140+ trainers spread across Europe, all of whom are under pressure to deliver a huge number of programmes to a very high standard, sharing all this great practice wasn't happening as much as it should," says Darren. "To be more effective and efficient and to work smarter across the group, we needed a framework and training standard to promote consistency and collaboration."

Darren embarked on a search to find a provider that could deliver a robust training, development and certification framework. The Training Foundation was one of a number of companies on his short list.

"I'd already heard of The Training Foundation's *Trainer Assessment Programme (TAP®)*, but what clinched it for

me was the speed and time required to go through their programme, compared to other providers," says Darren. "When you're operating in an environment as fast-moving as ours there simply isn't the time to go through a year's programme. I wanted a company that could deliver smartly, quickly, efficiently and not patronise our trainers, who already know their



stuff and didn't need to go through the basics again."

The TAP® *Delivery Skills Refresher* course seemed ideally suited to purpose: a course that would remind trainers of things they already know, alert them to things they may not have thought of and give them a framework in a matter of days, rather than months.

Twenty-six training managers from all over Europe were enrolled on the course. Despite some initial scepticism, the impact was immediate.

"Quality of delivery and delegate feedback improved, with a switch from a presentational style to a much more interactive and discussion-based mode of delivery. Almost straight away, we saw training materials being rewritten to a new format and we are starting to see a lot more collaboration and swapping of materials between business units."

"Having thought they knew it all, they came back so passionate and wanting to change the world with what they'd learned. While they were already confident in their skills, they emerged feeling better equipped to measure the performance of their own teams of trainers."

Christian Smith, Operations Training Manager for CPW Retail in the UK says: "It's fantastic to have a delivery standard in-place to regularly observe and measure the team of trainers by. Using the TAP standard provides us with a common language to share 'delivery materials' across the large training community we have in place at Carphone, whilst bringing this community closer together in the working environment."

Meanwhile, Darren has been testing The Training Foundation's *Facilitation Skills* course, to quantify the benefits of rolling it out to his team.

"One of the things I particularly like about the courses is that they don't attempt to override your corporate personality with a prescribed way of doing things. You can be confident that you are delivering to specific quality standards, but you do it in your own unique style."

