

# case study



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

## Taylor's Fish and Chips



### Background

Size:	13 employees
Sector:	Food retail/hospitality
Location:	Stockport
Status:	Achieved Investors in People Standard in 2004; last assessed in May 2007. Achieved Champion status in 2007.

### The organisation

Stockport-based Taylor's is a family run traditional fish and chip shop. The business was set up over forty years ago and traded originally as a fishmongers in an inner city area. A decline in local demand for fish forced the business to diversify and it widened its offering to include deliveries to retail outlets. With several thriving local fish and chip shops among its customers, the family saw an opportunity to enter the trade. In the late 60s Taylor's found premises with space for 24 diners in a precinct in Stockport and opened its doors to customers for the first time. Taylor's has been serving fish and chips to the local community ever since.

- **Doubled turnover to almost £300,000**
- **Secured funding for not for profit social enterprise project**
- **At 1% absenteeism has become almost negligible.**

*"Investors in People has turned our business around. It was never about getting the badge, we were drowning not waving, it threw us a lifeline."*

**Anne Wallace, Company Director, Taylor's Fish & Chips**



## The challenge

Anne Wallace runs the business and remembers clearly the difficulties and the stark choice that Taylor's faced prior to its work with Investors in People. "Five years ago we had reached the point where the business had become life consuming. We were all tired of working long hours and we were frustrated by the lack of commitment from our people," says Anne. "I used to dread going into work. Sometimes people didn't even turn up. I'd get calls at 11am just before we opened to be told that employees wouldn't be coming in." Anne knew that the business was failing and had reached a crossroads. Should they close the doors and leave an empty shop in an area that was already full of empty shops, or was there an alternative?

"I thought that everyone was just there for the money and that it was a bit of part time work for a few young mums and retired people," Anne continues. "So I asked them all why they hadn't shown an interest before. I am ashamed to admit that they said unanimously that no one had ever asked them. We simply hadn't been listening to them."

Reinvigorated by this feedback, Anne decided that there was something to fight for and set about doing so to transform the business. Taylor's chose Investors in People as it offered a way of re-evaluating the business from top to bottom, while harnessing the strengths of its employees.

## The strategy

With guidance from Investors in People, Anne was quick to recognise that she needed to spend more of her time working *on* the business instead of *in* it. First on the list of her priorities was to spend time away from the shop to market the business. To do this she needed to make sure that the people left in charge of the shop would maintain standards. As she puts it, "We couldn't allow people without experience to run the shop, so we needed to teach them."

The decision was therefore taken to train everyone on every aspect of the business. A 'skill share' initiative was the first step and tapped into the existing knowledge in the business. Individuals who excelled at certain tasks shared their knowledge with everyone else. Taylor's then looked at other forms of training. This led to everyone in the business gaining basic food hygiene qualifications and some completing NVQs at level 2 and 3. Apprenticeships have become part of the business and some individuals have done courses in first aid and health and safety. "The list of training goes on, as does the training itself," adds Anne, who claims that it has all added value to the business. "We even have a 74 year old lady with us who has done an introduction to computers."

In the same vein, Taylor's has taken an innovative approach to working hours, ensuring they suit each individual's circumstances. "We pride ourselves on the flexibility of the job," says Anne. "We try to give the mums weekends off with their families, while the younger staff members are happy to cover Saturdays and school holidays."

Through Investors in People, Taylor's has also improved its communication with its people. Regular meetings are now held with all employees and this has led to the introduction of new ideas that have truly benefited the business. "Our meetings have helped us to share ideas - we listen and we act on the best ones. For example as a direct result of our employee's suggestions we have introduced a salad bar and now offer jacket potatoes, which is quite a departure from our traditional offering," explains Anne.

## The results

Since achieving the Investors in People Standard, Taylor's has undergone what Anne describes as a "metamorphic transformation". Ultimately the commitment has given Anne the freedom and confidence to market the enterprise. Taylor's employees now feel more integral to the business and they have all the skills they need to run the shop on their own.

At 1%, absenteeism has become almost negligible and the phone hardly ever rings at 11am these days. What's more, Taylor's has doubled its turnover to almost £300,000. "That's a lot of chips!" says Anne.

Meanwhile, Taylor's people have embraced training and everyone in the business has a basic food and hygiene qualification. In addition to this, three employees have already completed apprenticeships. One employee has finished NVQ levels two and three, and a further employee is working towards their level three NVQ.

Taylor's has also gained national and regional recognition in the form of a number of accolades, including a training award of £25,000 which has been earmarked to start a two storey training facility at the rear of the shop.

Commenting on their achievements Anne says, people ask us "where next for the little chippy from Stockport?"

We know the answer now lies in training. We want to set up our own training school and that's what we will do with the funding. It'll be a £250,000 not for profit social enterprise project which we will use to promote healthy eating and vocational learning. We hope it will help to change the face of fish and chips in this country!"



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