





First Choice

Deutsche Post World Net has an ambitious goal: it wants to be the customers' number one choice, worldwide. And so "First Choice" is the name of the program, which also includes Porsche Consulting. For good reason: the Stuttgart consultants have customer focus throughout their lean management approach.

📄 Horst Walter, 📷 Boris Schmalenberger

Warp drive. It feels like five seconds in the environmentally-friendly elevator of Bonn's Post-Tower to get from the first to the thirty-fifth floor. The control system ensures that once you key in your destination at the elevator terminal, the elevator you are allocated will have no stops, or as few as possible, in between.

The logistics work, at the world's largest logistics corporation. But here's the problem: it's all very well for people within the company to know about it, but the customers should know about it, too. "By 2012, we want to be the worldwide leader in customer loyalty," says Holger Winklbauer, who, as managing director of First Choice at Deutsche Post World Net (DPWN), might just be responsible for one of the most ambitious corporate programs in the world. And he knows it. "It's open-heart surgery," says the former CEO of Deutsche Post World Net Business Consulting GmbH. He wants to bring together process optimization and customer focus—in one of the world's largest employers, which was still state-owned in Germany just eighteen years ago. It now has around 500,000 employees in Asia, Europe and the Americas, after buying shares in, or taking over, more than a hundred companies. The world has changed. "It used to be: we'd deliver letters in Germany. Today, instead of letters it's containers, instead of Germany it's the world, and instead of delivery it's an all-round service," says Winklbauer. ▶

“First Choice” is the name of the game for customers in more than 220 countries and territories worldwide. And Winklbauer knows exactly how to do it. “First off, we need to master our processes so completely that we can fulfill our service promises to customers. Second, we need to engage our employees emotionally, so that they’re friendly and helpful in 100% of our one million customer interactions globally per hour.” He also knows how to do that. “We use a small staff of twenty to define methods and procedures centrally. Implementation is done by employees in the field, because they know the problems best. And we provide support from our experts.”

The man in charge of customer satisfaction knew full well that he was also going to need external help for this ambitious plan. Porsche Consulting outshone three other applicants in a DPWN selection process “according to the strict procurement rules.” Today, Winklbauer says, this was good for his overall plan. “I noticed that colleagues didn’t react coolly to the mention of the name Porsche, but rather with curiosity,” he explains. Alfonso Gómez of the Finance Operations-GBS Department recalls his first lean-management workshop with Porsche Consulting. “There was more there than just flashy presentations and hot air. It was all very practical work.” Today, Gómez flies round the world himself, training his colleagues in these methods.

At DPWN, implementation is working well in all areas, for two reasons. First, management and advisors are getting company employees involved. “Instead of recipients, we make them participants,” explains Sven Seidel, a partner in Porsche Consulting. That means that concepts and improvement opportunities are developed jointly, and employees in the company are so professionally trained that they can later pass their expertise on to colleagues over the long term. Help for self-help—a concept that excites the customer. “They aren’t con-



Quick reactions: Employees in the Scanning Center in Mannheim

sultants that come and say ‘We have the competence, and here’s our concept.’ They work with us over the long term, and don’t make themselves an indispensable part of the process,” says Holger Winklbauer.

Secondly, the lean concept is primarily focused on the customer, which is the most important thing in First Choice. “The customer is the focus, and the whole business of value creation and all processes are concentrated on that,” explains Seidel. So this assignment was virtually tailor-made for Porsche Consulting: changing an organization to a spirit of service orientation. “It’s a distillation of exactly what Porsche has done for itself. We too are now Global Players, so we too have to redesign our processes,” says Winklbauer.

The managing director of “First Choice” can already look with satisfaction at the first successful results. Initially, the main goal was to deal more professionally with complaints. Porsche Consulting worked hand-in-hand with the relevant employees to create a leaner ▶



Holger Winklbauer: Friendly and helpful in 100% of one million customer interactions globally per hour



Traffic flow: Conveyor belts with tilting trays sort package deliveries to terminals

process which would permit more rapid response to complaints. “Up to now, customer queries were distributed evenly among the staff. But because colleagues were working for different lengths of time on various problems, some people were getting backlogs of queries and others had nothing to do,” explains Till Küppers, principal at Porsche Consulting. Expressed in figures, that means reducing lead time by up to 95%. And in words: “We can satisfy customers over the long term by having a positive complaints-management system which works competently and rapidly,” says Winklbauer.

Leaner processes were also introduced at other levels, for instance by cutting the number of decision-making tiers. “The trick is not in realizing that you can speed up processes by taking decision-making tiers out. The trick is in mobilizing everyone involved in a process for a common solution, within an organization that is as spread-out as this one is,” says Winklbauer. Success stories are now even coming in from Costa Rica. “We had problems there because customers wanted an offer from us within eight hours, but were only getting one after

several weeks.” Leaner processes cut the tendering time to 3.5 hours, thereby increasing the acceptance rate from 40% to 65%. “For just that small country, that means an extra sales volume of €400,000,” according to Winklbauer’s calculations.

The First Choice manager still sees all of this as being in its early stages. He’s going to continue training employees worldwide and stressing customer-friendliness. “Obviously, the goal is to get no complaints at all,” says Holger Winklbauer with a smile. “But we aren’t going to achieve that by leaving the phone off the hook.” ◀



Deutsche Post World Net

Deutsche Post 

Heart of glass: An imposing view of the new Bonn Post Tower, home of Deutsche Post World Net. Some 500,000 employees in more than 220 countries worldwide are served from here.

The enterprise: Deutsche Post World Net emerged from the state-owned Deutsche Bundespost. Today, Deutsche Post World Net consists of the four divisions: Letters, Express, Logistics, and Financial Services. With the combined logistics competence of the brands Deutsche Post, DHL, and Postbank, Deutsche Post World Net offers integrated services and tailor-made solutions for management of goods transport and information and payment flows.

The figures: Around 500,000 employees worldwide, in more than 220 countries and territories, achieve an annual sales volume exceeding €63 billion. In Germany alone, there are eighty-two letter centers and thirty-three package centers processing over 70 million deliveries per day.

The prospects: Deutsche Post World Net is already one of the world's largest employers today—and the largest logistics service provider in the world. For that reason, the executive board has initiated the First Choice program. The goal: to expand on this leading position by raising customer satisfaction. Deutsche Post World Net wants to be the first choice worldwide for logistics. The First Choice program, in which Porsche Consulting has been collaborating for a year, is headed by Holger Winklbauer. The Managing Director is directly answerable to the chairman of the executive board, Dr. Frank Appel.