

## Stronger Management at Budgens

Gary Pritchard took over the management of our local Budgens on 28 February 2005. He is a Budgens man through and through and would not criticise the state of the shop when he came in or the previous management. It is only when he told me of the changes he was already working on that I realised that he already knew of the faults that had been highlighted to me by disgruntled customers

Gary will be thirty this year and he has been with Budgens for 13 years. He started in Moreton in Marsh, Glos. as a shelf stacker and progressed to Assistant manager in the Buckingham shop before applying for the job in Flackwell Heath. He thought he would enjoy Flackwell Heath because it is so similar to Moreton where he still lives.

His management style was pioneered by Hewlett Packard, MBWA - Management By Walking About. He confesses that he is really happiest sitting on the checkout keeping his staff up to scratch and relating directly to his customers. Since his arrival he has introduced 14 new lines which were suggested to him by customers.

### **Staff training and morale**

The shop had gone down hill since the previous manager was promoted to a bigger store. Gary took in hand a complete retraining of the staff so that they were fresh and up to date with everything they needed to know and their morale was restored. Now the checkout staff are up to speed in customer service and product knowledge so that they can be more helpful to the customers and get more satisfaction from their own jobs. He also requires that staff look smart. It is no longer acceptable for male staff to slouch round with their shirts hanging outside their trousers.

His ideal is that if his customers have a problem or complaint his staff deal with it so efficiently and courteously that the customer goes away smiling.

The shop employs over 30 full and part-time staff of whom about half are under 18. New staff are on trial for their first three months and all staff have performance reviews every three months. People who are not an asset to the business are invited to leave but the good ones have the opportunity to progress up the ladder just as Gary did. Like all supermarket chains, Budgens supports internal promotions.

The shop used to be weak on organising their stock and the shelves were often short of some lines. It was particularly galling when the shop ran out of a line they were heavily promoting. The ordering and supply system has been a priority for Gary and his managers and he believes that it is improving.

### **New products**

When Gary arrived he set up an organic section for fruit and veg. He will expand the organic range if there is a demand but he believes that interest in organic food may have reached a plateau. One area which is clearly growing is Fairtrade which began with tea and coffee but is now spreading to a wider range of goods.

One of the new best selling lines in Flackwell, as in the whole Budgens organisation, is the bread and cakes baked in store. Like other store chains they sell the Delices de France range which arrive part baked and are finished off in the back of the shop as required.

Gary would be delighted to listen and talk to any clubs in the community with an interest in local shopping. He knows how important Budgens is to the other shops in the village. Once they have shopped with him, his customers become buyers of other shops' newspapers, pharmaceuticals, hair do's and perhaps even a fancy dress costume.

And what of the future? In a year's time Gary hopes to have a shop that is full of customers, clean and tidy, fully stocked and staffed by people who make customer satisfaction their first priority. As for his personal plans he expects to be here for at least two years and he is clear that he will not leave until he has got the shop running to his high standards and his replacement is fully equipped to take over.