

Cereal Probe Case Study



Crisp Malting Group

Crisp Malting Group Ltd is based in Norfolk and are producers of malt for brewing, distilling and food customers both in UK and world-wide. They took part in the Cereals PROBE benchmarking project in June and July 2005.

Why PROBE?

The PROBE process provides an opportunity to assess the company's performance and practice objectively away from routine daily operations. The identified strengths and weaknesses can then be acted upon decisively to drive business improvement.

"Other than some financial benchmarking, we as a business had found it difficult to measure our company practice and performance on issues such as customer service against the industry. When HGCA, as the industry's body, put this project

in front of us, we found it to be an ideal opportunity to get a good comparison against world best practice and that of our peers in industry."

- Euan MacPherson, MD,
Crisp Malting Group Ltd



Euan MacPherson, MD, Crisp Malting Group Ltd.

How it Worked for Crisp Malting Group

The PROBE team that Crisp Malting brought together was a multi-professional group representing the full scope of their activities. The team were given the opportunity to examine the questionnaire before they came together for the main session with the external Cereals PROBE facilitator. This is probably the single strongest element - the opportunity to get a diverse group of people together, managers and representatives from all areas of the organisation, to debate the questions - challenge the way things are done, particularly in areas such as communication, leadership, people management, and customer feedback.

Once consensus is achieved about how they rate the company's current practices and performance, the PROBE facilitator immediately analyses the data and feeds back a profile of how Crisps measures up to an holistic model of

organisational excellence. The team also learns how their practices and performance compare with those of the large numbers of other organisations who have completed the PROBE assessment process. As well as an overall analysis the feedback is also broken down into various areas of practice and performance; the leadership, the processes, the people, the results and so on.

The immediacy of the feedback gave the team a quick and effective means of identifying areas of improvement.

"Previously we have been relatively poor on induction training and in maintaining a training programme for employees that met the future needs of the company.

With new owners from 1 September 2005 and the outcomes of the benchmarking workshops, we

were in a position to tackle these issues fully. Since then we have introduced a formal programme of induction training and a full time human resources team to oversee company wide training to meet the future needs of the business."

The findings of the Cereals PROBE workshop were delivered to company management and it was subsequently decided that information contained in this report should be distributed to all staff members within Crisp Malting.

"We recognised as a company that perhaps we were not taking full advantage of the resource within our walls. Some of the ideas from the shop floor team were not flowing through to management. As a result of these recommendations from the Cereals PROBE workshop we have put into place a 'works council' that

meets regularly to ensure that we have formal mechanisms to capture and use new ideas."

Crisp Malting scored highly on managing customer contact and developing a quality mindset within the company, both key areas where strong practice drove corresponding performance.

"We were determined to continue to build on these strengths and as a result of the best practice benchmarking outlined in the workshop we have implemented a number of improvement measures. Our customer service team is now driven by a number of Key Performance Indicators rather than just limiting themselves to financial measures and we are also realigning areas of our business such as in-house transport to better manage customer contacts."

- Bob King, Commercial Director

Action Planning – Turning benchmarking theory into real improvements

The Crisp Malting action planning session was undertaken in July 2005 as a follow up to the Cereals PROBE workshop. It identified a number of key areas where simple revision of previous initiatives would lead to improvements.

As a result of the action planning session, they were able to revise our preferred supplier process, that had been in place for some time. This process was tightened in such a way that it will be possible to form stable, long term links with many suppliers and reap the benefits of these relationships over time.

Crisp Malting has kindly offered their testimony as case study participants as a consequence of the results

achieved through the Cereals PROBE benchmarking programme, Bob King concludes;

"The Cereals PROBE benchmarking exercise showed us that addressing some of the internal communication issues within the company will lead to a number of knock on benefits. Getting all team members, whether

they are production staff, or sales staff in any areas of the company, to understand and buy into the processes that they are involved in will lead to tremendous gains on a number of fronts in the company."

What is PROBE?

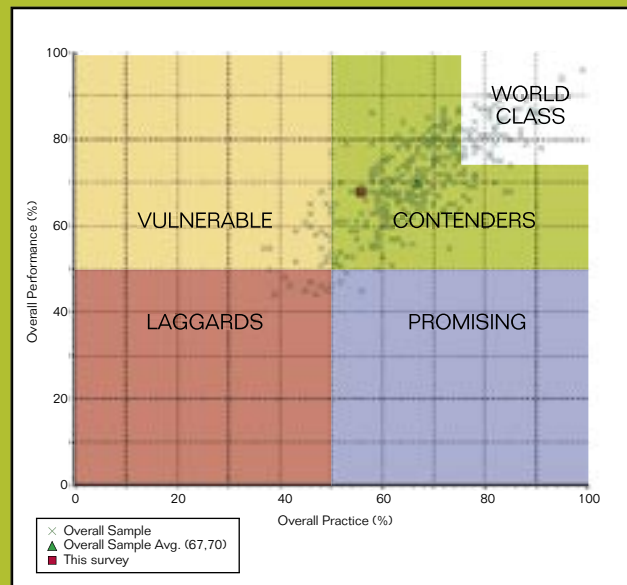
Cereals PROBE methodology has its roots in research on world-class manufacturing and service quality, led by IBM Consulting Ltd (UK) and London Business School. The PROBE database contains over 6000 individual site benchmarks from 32 countries across a wide range of sectors.

Cereals PROBE is based on a generic model of 'best practice', which is presented to the team in the form of a questionnaire. Comparison against the generic model and those companies on our database are shown in practice and performance terms. An example of the practice performance competitive positioning chart is shown here. All data is kept strictly confidential and the graph represents an anonymous example.

Strengths and opportunities for improvement are identified across a spectrum of the organisation's activities. Every aspect of the business is covered:

- from understanding the needs of service users, to measuring their satisfaction
- from service design to the operational processes of day-to-day service delivery
- from leadership styles and strategy development to people development and the measurement of staff satisfaction
- Material Processing in the Cereals Industry
- New Product Development in the Cereals Industry.

Test. UK. 14/03/2006
Overall Practice vs Overall Performance: (56,68)
(relative to overall sample)



The PROBE Partnership and Cereals Industry Forum are grateful to Bob, Euan and his colleagues for their support in writing up this case study, and for permission to publish it.

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