

## Multicultural workforce: a rich mix for Greencore Sandwiches

Greencore Sandwiches is the UK's largest sandwich manufacturer. Its round-the-clock operation in Park Royal, West London, is just one of its three sites. It alone produces approximately one million sandwiches every week and employs over 600 people. As well as supplying sandwiches to major supermarkets, petrol forecourts and convenience stores, the Group makes super-premium products for some of the world's leading airlines.

### *Diverse workforce is key to the success of the business*

The workforce speaks around thirty languages in total, with the vast majority using English as a second language. Sri Lankan Tamil is spoken by around 40% of the factory floor workforce. Other languages and cultures represented are from Africa, India, Nepal, Western, Eastern and Central Europe and South America. While recruitment procedures ensure that all colleagues speak some English, it is vital to ensure that they can interact effectively, understand instructions and follow key procedures. Rayna Kutner, Human Resources and Training Officer, explains: 'Sandwich making is a highly people-intensive business where clear communication is vital for teamwork, health and safety, and food hygiene. Of course, better communication means more effective working and better relationships with colleagues – that's why it is so important for us to get it right.'

### *Three steps for clear communication*

The first step is to ensure that the English used in the workplace is clear: for Greencore this has meant reviewing the language used in all written communications. The company has systematically revised notices and manuals, using pictures and diagrams to support a minimum of text. Martin Kirk, Safety, Health and Environmental Officer, outlines the advantages: 'With such a wide spread of languages in our workforce – and sometimes low levels of literacy – translation is not necessarily the only solution. We find that the use of images and simple English text is a highly effective way of getting information across to everyone'.

Supporting colleagues in languages other than English is the second solution adopted by the company, especially for training in crucial areas. Ms Kutner gives the background: 'Colleagues need training in food hygiene and health and safety, and we realise that the complex technical English in the study materials and tests can present a barrier. Fortunately, study manuals and key tests for the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health are available in a wide range of languages. We ensure that revision sheets and on-line resources are translated into other languages where necessary'. Greencore has also recruited a bilingual trainer to deliver training in Sri Lankan Tamil, as a response to the dual challenge of low literacy levels among colleagues speaking the language and the absence of published materials and tests available.

Thirdly, Greencore recognises the need to support colleagues to improve their English, literacy, numeracy and computing skills. A computer-based diagnostic test has been piloted with section managers and team leaders to help determine their training needs. Colleagues are directed to local Adult Learning Centres for general support, and in-house English classes have also been offered. Other in-company training revolves around a mix of classroom and computer-based activities, giving those who prefer to study individually the option of working at their own pace. Thanks to European Union funding the company has also commissioned an e-learning English language package. Ms Kutner sums up: 'Investing in training for our colleagues allows them to improve their English language skills and helps them to grow their career with us'.

*Creating a real team spirit for success*

'With such a multicultural workforce,' says Ms Kutner, 'we make a special effort to ensure that we treat one another with respect and dignity, but at the same time enjoy the work we do'. Greencore's new mission statement is to be translated into other languages to help more employees relate to the company's values. World Food Days, other food displays and demonstrations by suppliers give an opportunity to learn more about the food and culture of colleagues. Major religious festivals - such as the Hindu festival of Divali and Islamic holiday of Eid - are celebrated within the factory. 'Our training, team building and social activities ensure our colleagues work effectively together and at the same time have a real enthusiasm for, and pride in, producing good food', concludes Ms Kutner. 'In turn, that helps make our business stronger, more productive and more competitive'.

**Greencore Sandwiches**  
[www.greencore.com](http://www.greencore.com)

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