

# Delivering the end to end customer experience



How a focus on customer experience led to a new operating model for planning, and used insight to improve NPS, backlogs & efficiencies at the same time in Service & Repair, cutting broken promises 78%.

## Summary

An exceptional end-to-end customer journey is the result of hard work by the National Planning Team on a new operating model for the 443 FTE planning 'contact centre' in this established field service operation. 8,000 engineers are assigned by setting scheduled appointments at an appropriate level, lifting promise delivery 20% and improving same-day response. Based on data analysis, outbound contact actively fills quieter periods with upgrade or servicing work, to raise productivity. Planning of the work is aligned to the new business objectives and structure, now using data insight and focussing on customer experience. Each geographical area has its own planner, advanced forecasts for demand increased weather feeds and stakeholder engagement is building confidence in the plan. Net Promoter Scores (NPS) are up 11 points.

## Key initiatives

### Customer experience: the new operating model

In 2013, the Customer and Business Planning teams were brought together in a single national centre of excellence in Stockport, which includes National Planning (116 FTE) and Planning Delivery (35 FTE), teams in Customer Capacity Centre(CCC), (125 FTE) and a Engineer Services Team (33 FTE). Part of a wider re-organisation of the Service & Repair operation at British Gas, which includes three other major centres, the focus shifted from productivity to serving customers. The changed role of planning has at its heart a new glidepath operating model. If you schedule too many appointments, you drive up broken promises and have little capacity for same-day response. If you schedule too few, you have wasted capacity. The new glidepath creates the capability to proactively schedule appointments for upgrade work or annual services to fill the quieter times. This makes it possible to cost-effectively set capacity for scheduled appointments at a much more realistic level, which has cut broken appointments four-fold to just 0.6% and enabled many more same day appointments. "Constantly consider impact on customer" "It's a different conversation" "Each customer's answer, not one answer".

### Data-led decision making and customer scheduling

It is important to understand that the planning, delivery and CCC teams are all part of the wider planning team. Assignment of engineers by these 3 teams in phases follows the glidepath. Extensive inbound and outbound contact activity by the 125 FTE CCC during or just before the day of operation, uses an insight driven model. This identifies precisely whom to contact and when to contact them, based on a system of metrics, and matches customers with an appropriate engineer to ensure that engineers are assigned to the right, priority customers at the best times. Customer promise has been delivered in over 90% of cases and customers are significantly happier when the engineer visits. They now have time to speak to customers and are able to resolve many issues in the one visit. Crucially, these field planning teams are not just assigning engineers. Skill, equipment and resource are key drivers of customer experience, as otherwise problems cannot be resolved in the one visit. The business is organised into 50 'patches', 9 regions and 3 areas and the planning



*"Why did we change? Customers were telling us that we needed to change. The change in our operation can be summed up quite simply. Every team member has an input into what we do."*

Ian Noden,  
National Planning Team

*"We are now certain that the right people are in the right places at all times."*

Carol Allison,  
National Engineering Services  
Manager

*"We can now speak to the customers that we most need to speak to, and have the minimum amount of risk attached."*

Sharon Wilkinson,  
HR Business Partner

*"The patches system has led to engineers taking full ownership of their work and customers."*

Laura Morrison,  
National Planner



## Results

- A top quartile 5.07 score for employee engagement in planning.
- Complaints have halved.
- NPS is up by 11% to 64.
- Delivered customer promise in over 90% of cases YTD and broken appointments have been cut 78% to just 0.6%.
- Demand forecasting accuracy has improved from 81% to 85%.
- Average speed of answering calls has improved from 100 to 30 seconds in the CCC.



*“People at all levels of the company are singing from the same hymn sheet. Communication has been the key; it is now far better in our business than it has ever been.”*

Stacy Tear,  
Service Manager

*“The business model is now based on a central premise – be more proactive.”*

Sean Murphy,  
National Planning Delivery Manager

team has been re-structured to align planners in the national centre to each region, so they can develop strong working relationships with Engineer Services, who look after stock and parts order and the dispatch teams who are no longer part of the wider planning organisation. “Shifting mindset” “We want to change” “Trust in people” “Keep people in the loop”.

## Forecasting: advanced modelling approaches

Demand forecasting is another critical ingredient of success. At British Gas, this involves a complex meshing of technology, data and analysis, significantly evolved since 2013. A team of analysts uses SAS business intelligence software, with data from a network of 30 weather stations and their own proprietary software. ‘Big data’ is now being acquired from ‘smart meters’, helping the business learn more about customers and increasing the value of analysis. Over time, weather feeds have been increased from 9 to 30 and their placement has been analysed strategically. Forecast accuracy is currently around 87% YTD, well above the traditional target of 80%. This has played a significant role in other successes in the business and other major corporates now seek guidance in this area from British Gas. “Experts in this field” “Tight integration with planning” “Constantly learning”.

## Engagement: building confidence in the plan

Central to success has been getting people on board at every level in the whole 443 FTE planning team, restructuring relationships inside and outside the team and removing siloes or communication blockages. Stakeholder engagement is time consuming but absolutely fundamental. Training and coaching, at every level, is part of a concerted effort to inspire people to buy into the vision and get customer service right first time. A positive working culture has resulted, as reflected by an average length of service of ten years and a top-quartile employee engagement score (5.07) for the wider planning team. Crucially the work by planning is making possible a more satisfying and customer-focused engineer visit that is multi-faceted in purpose. This is now engendering a stronger bond between customers and British Gas, halving complaints and leading to many business benefits as well, not least saving £1 million in compensation payouts. British Gas deals with 4.2 million customers and 10 million visits annually so consistent delivery has required stringent organisation and a new holistic understanding of the business has emerged in which the new Glidepath operating model has a fundamentally important role. “Consistent processes & behaviours” “Realigning rewards” “Tailored to regional culture” “Building trust” “I’ve seen my people grow” “The ‘field’ now have confidence in us” “Every department interlinks”.

*“We now understand now how the business actually operates, and this has helped us build stronger team relationships.”*

Kiran Asawla,  
Dispatcher

*“Engineers are now more focussed on customer service and relations instead of merely fixing faults.”*

Karim Awadia,  
Dispatcher

*“Our forecasting is all about getting the right horse for the right course ... valuable data is out there, and we are now plugging that into our system.”*

Dean Perry,  
National Forecasting & Optimisation Manager

*“Today, we simply have a very clear notion of who is dealing with what.”*

Carl Roe,  
Heating Upgrade Advisor



Deliver great service



Transform to grow



Engage our stakeholders

Service & Repair at **British Gas** is responsible for the safety, maintenance and repair of domestic heating systems for 4 million contract customers. We employ 9.7k people across a national field base operation with over 8,000 engineers and 4 Area Service Centres, operated by 4 core functions, Customer & Business Planning, Field operations, Customer Service and Commercial. Taskforce to issue work, The Planning Tool, SAS to forecast workload.