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STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS IN PRACTICE

VOL. 2

Exploring the Strategy Belief Structures of Line-Managers Embedded in Practice

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Doctor of Philosophy

ASTON UNIVERSITY

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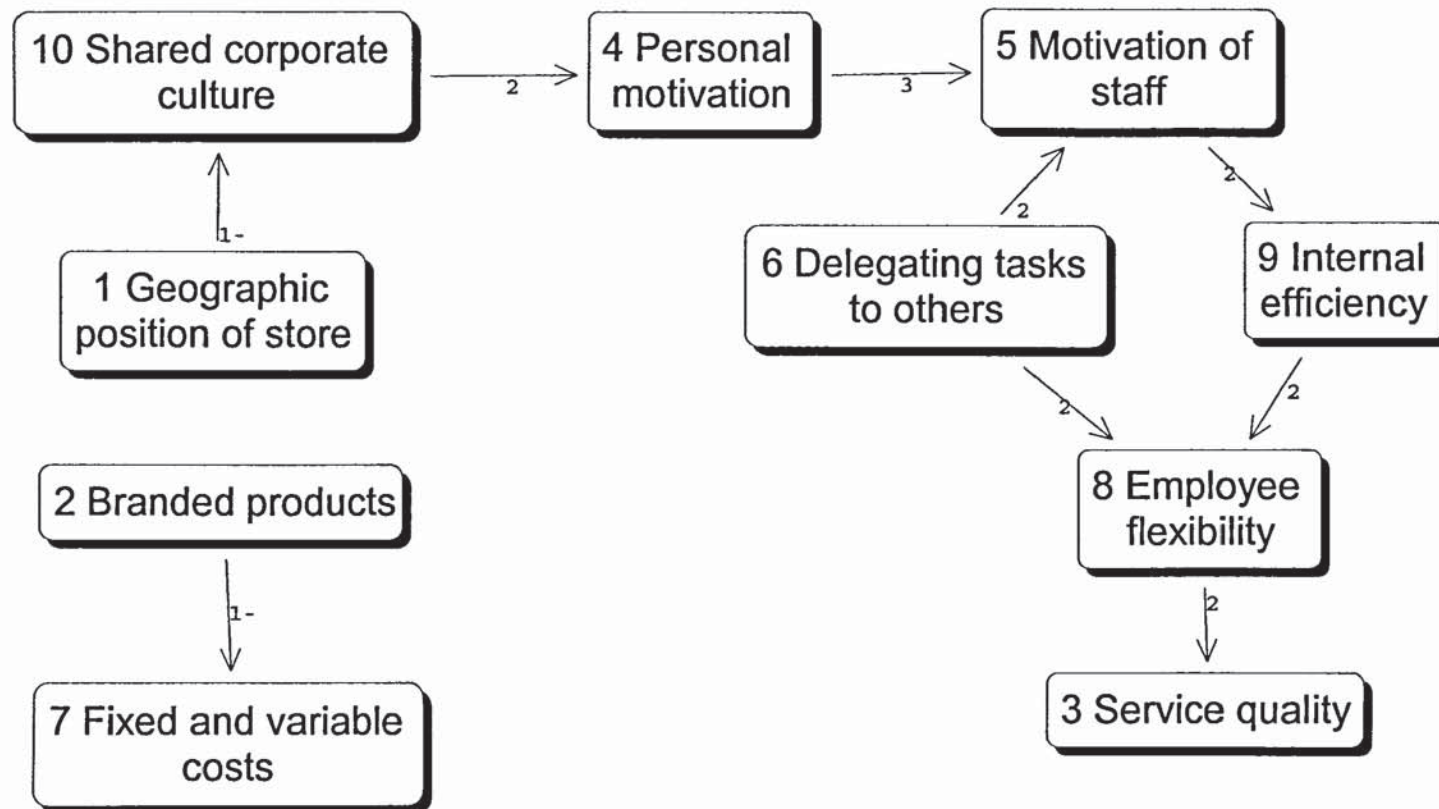
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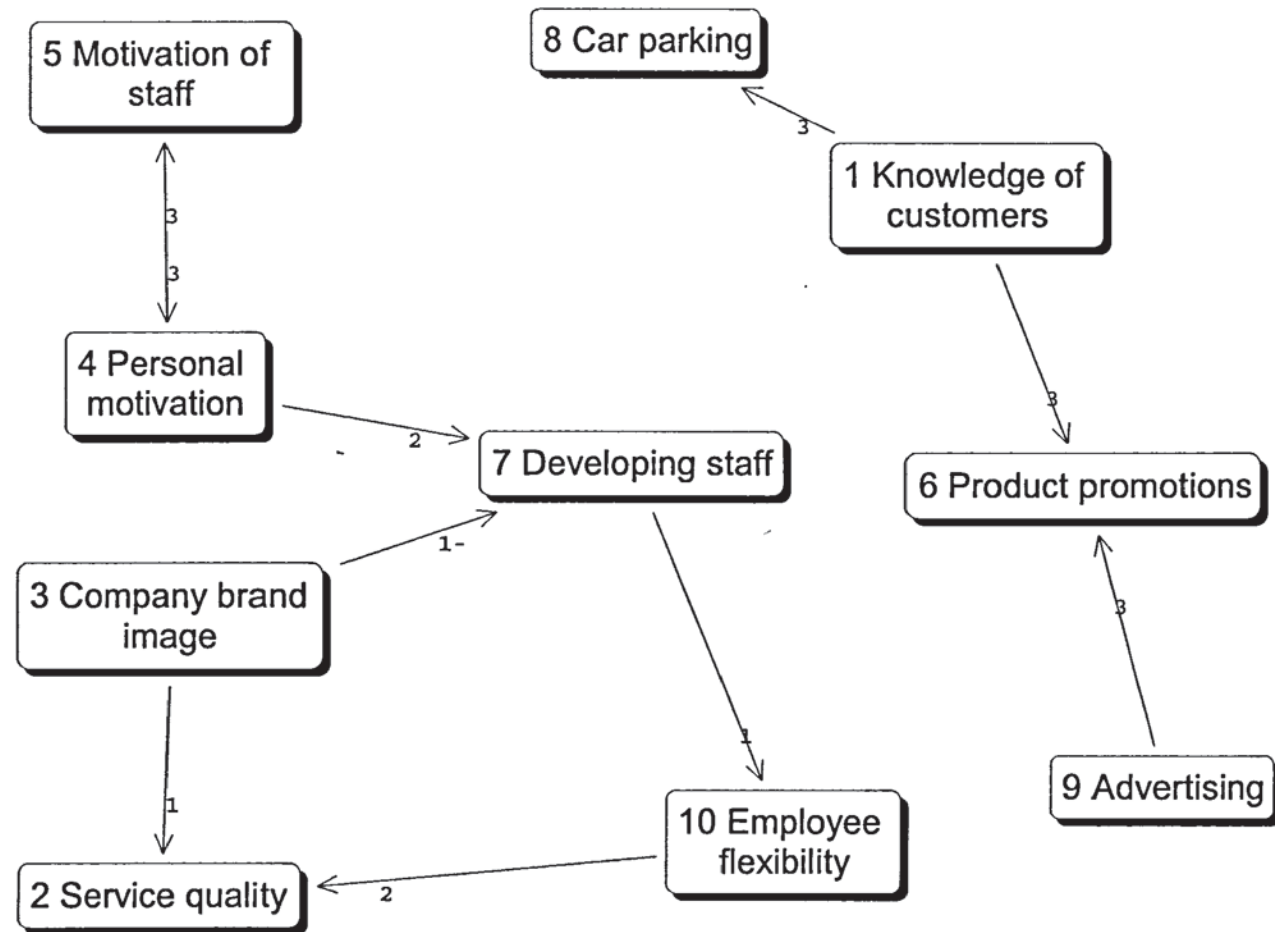
THE COGNITIVE MAPS OF ALL RESPONDENTS

Appendix 1 contains the complete cognitive maps of all respondents (N = 40). These cognitive maps were drawn by the respondents themselves using the ten most important factors for success chosen in the sorting technique. The numbers identifying the factors refer to the rank order of importance for success. Rank order 1 is most important for success and rank order 10 is least important.

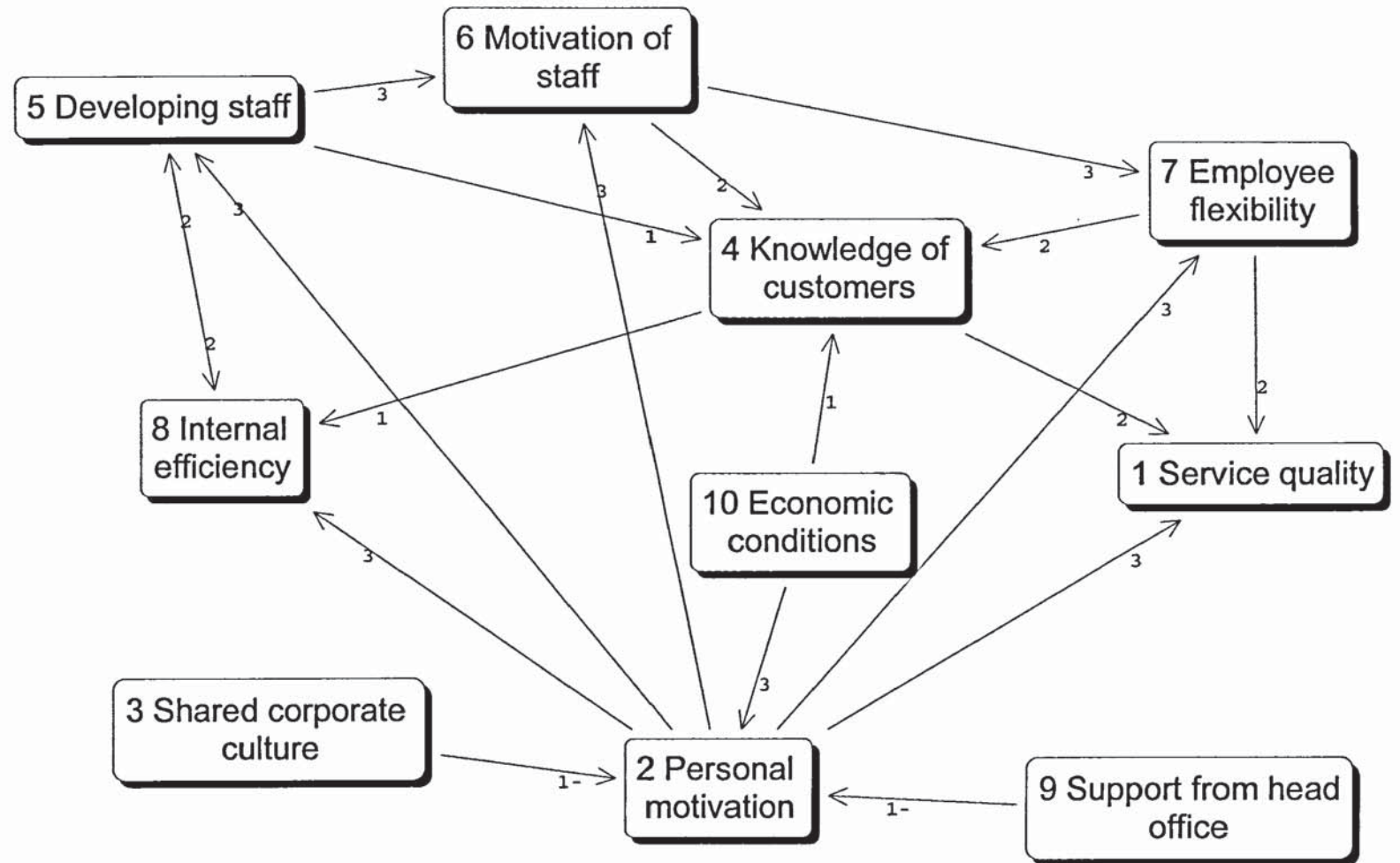
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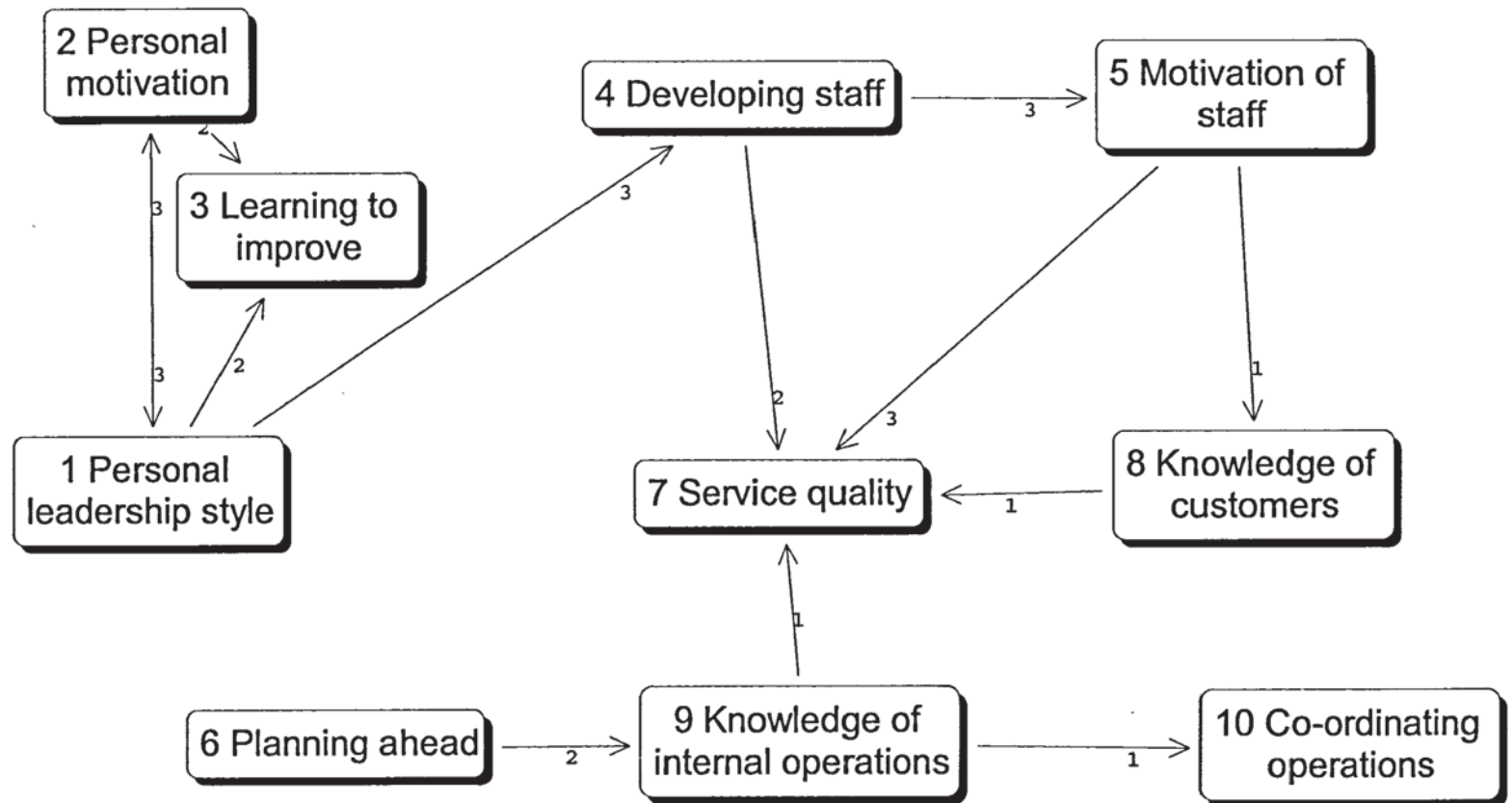
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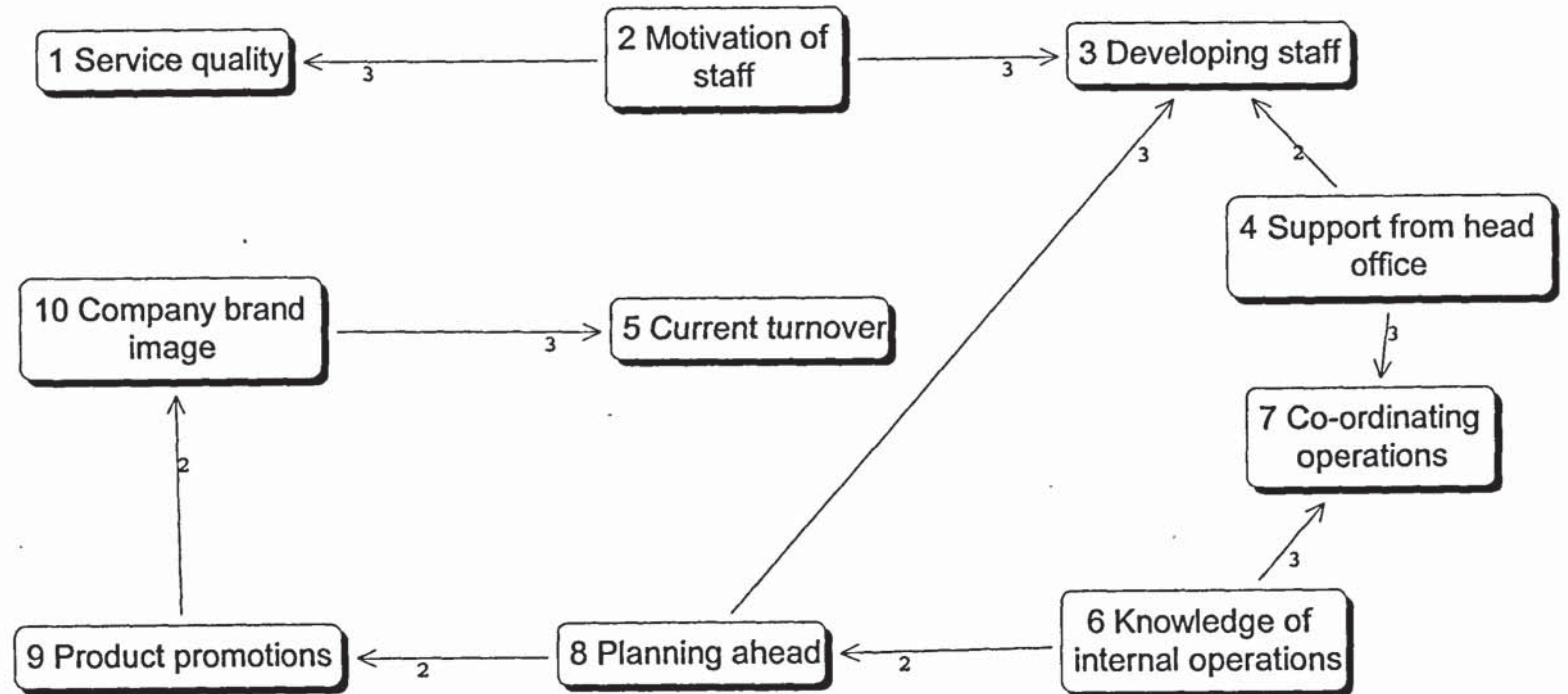
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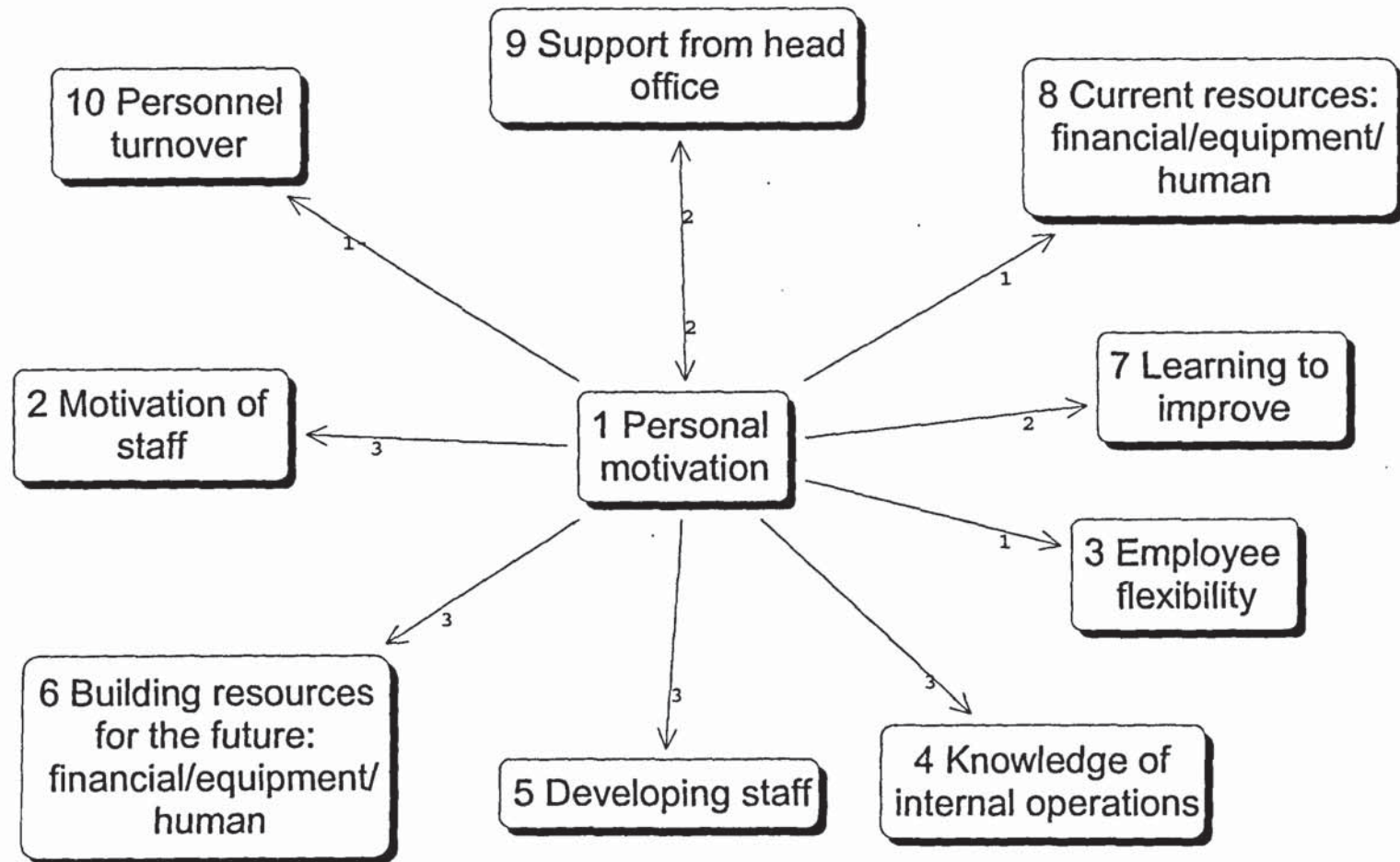
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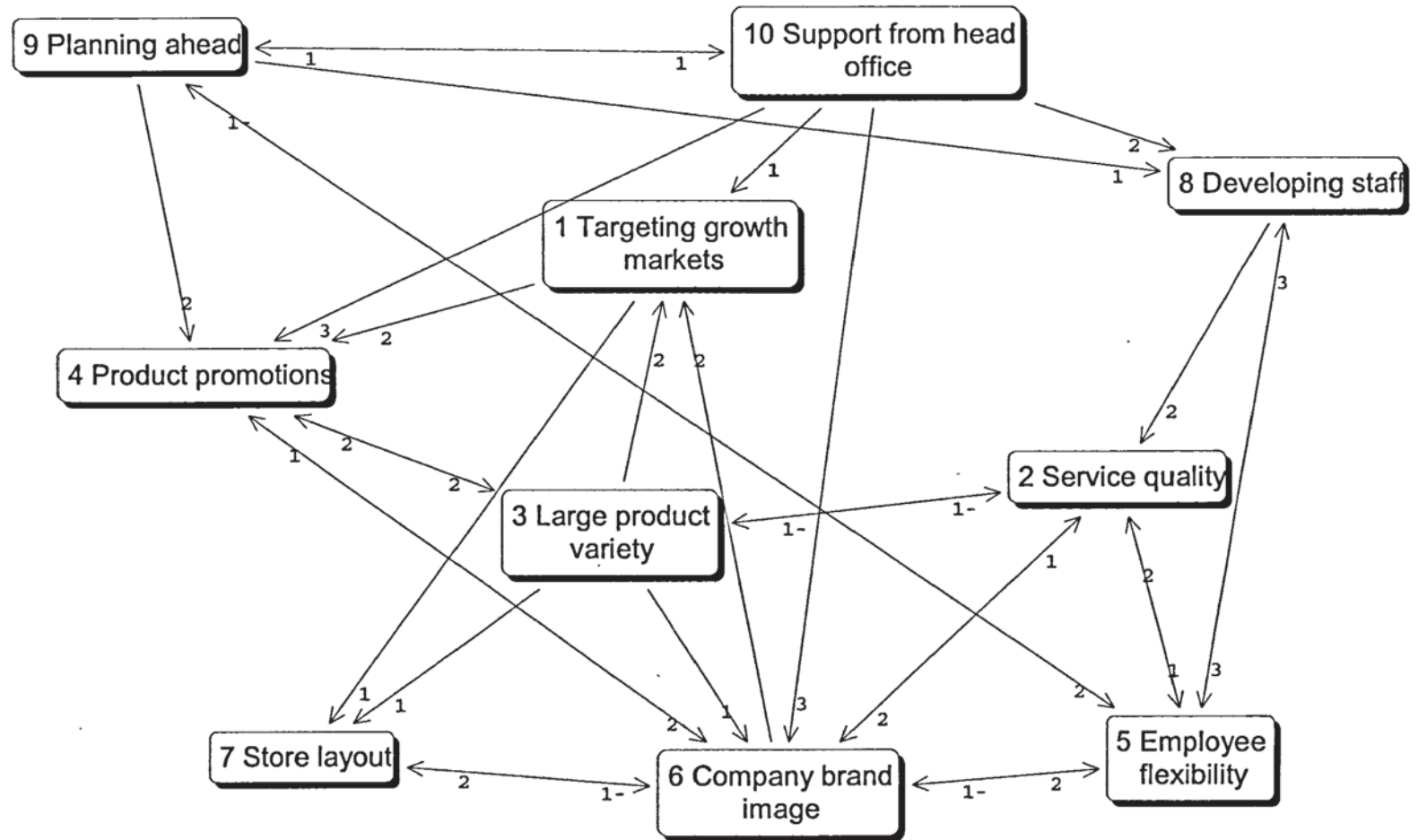
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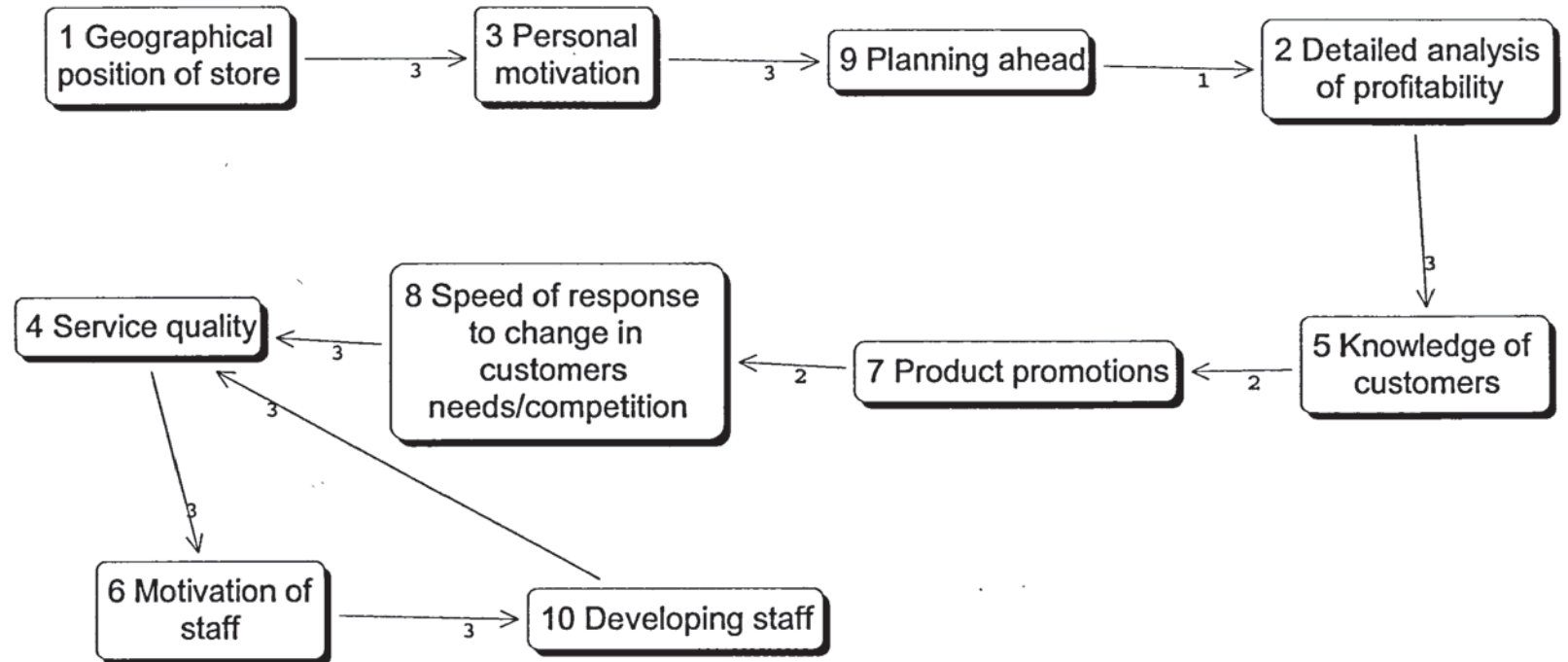
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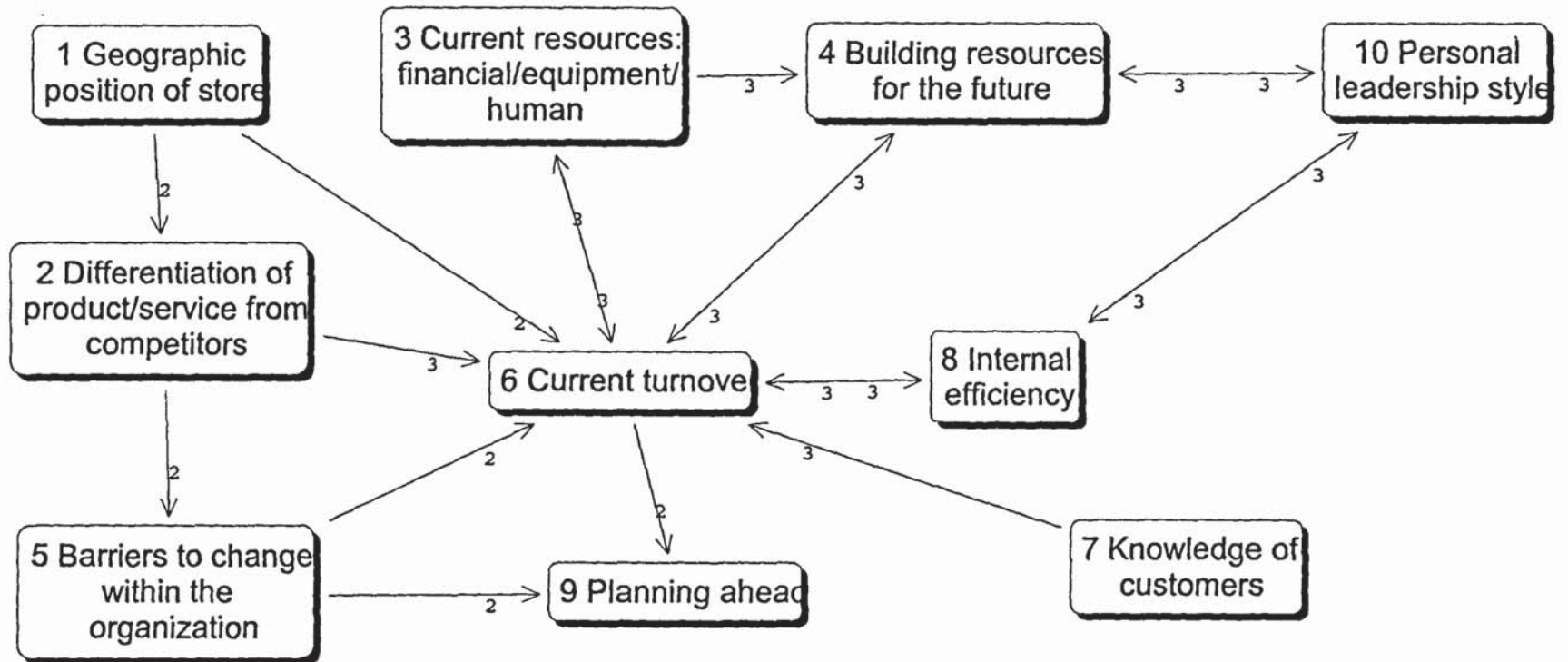
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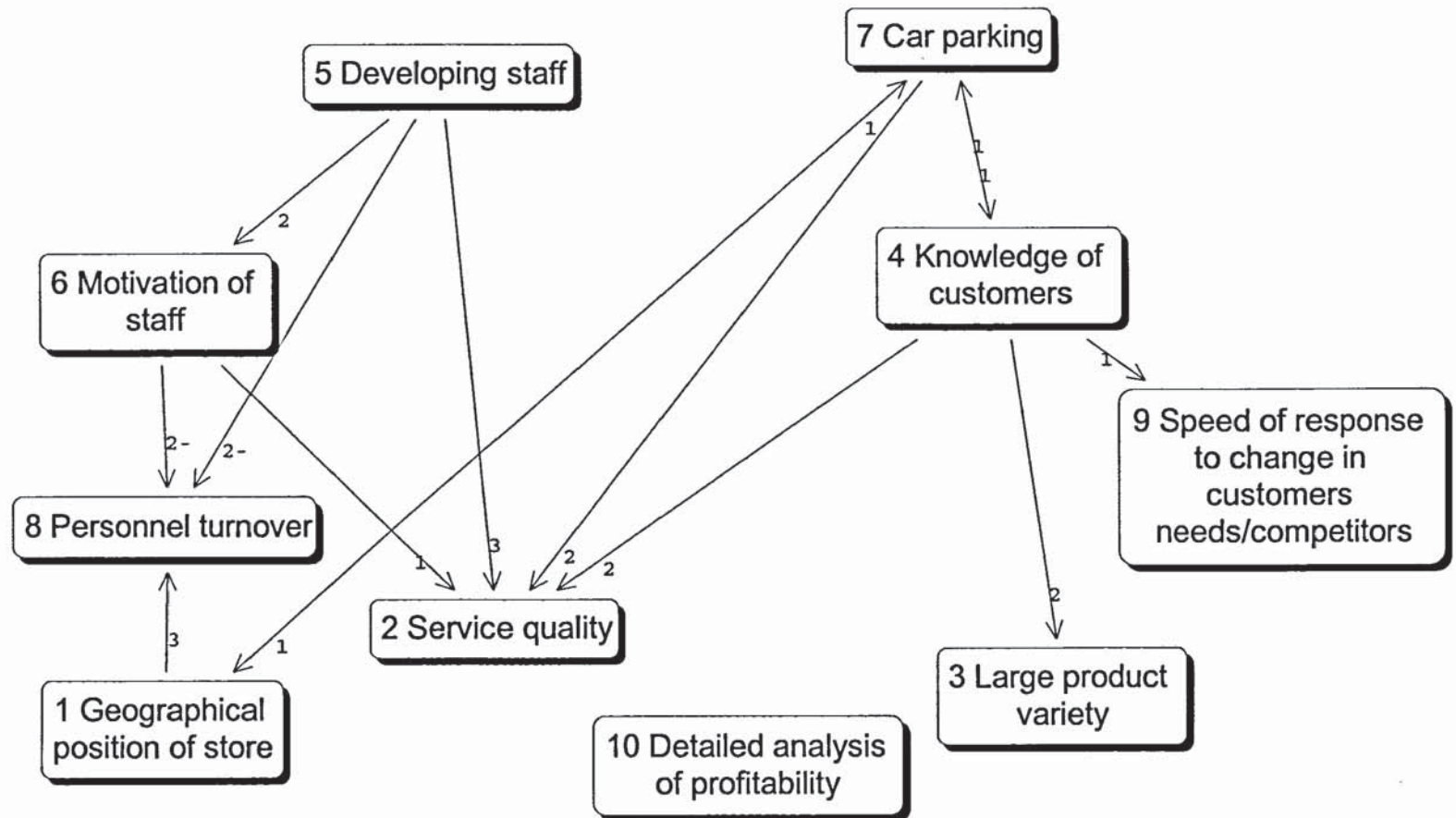
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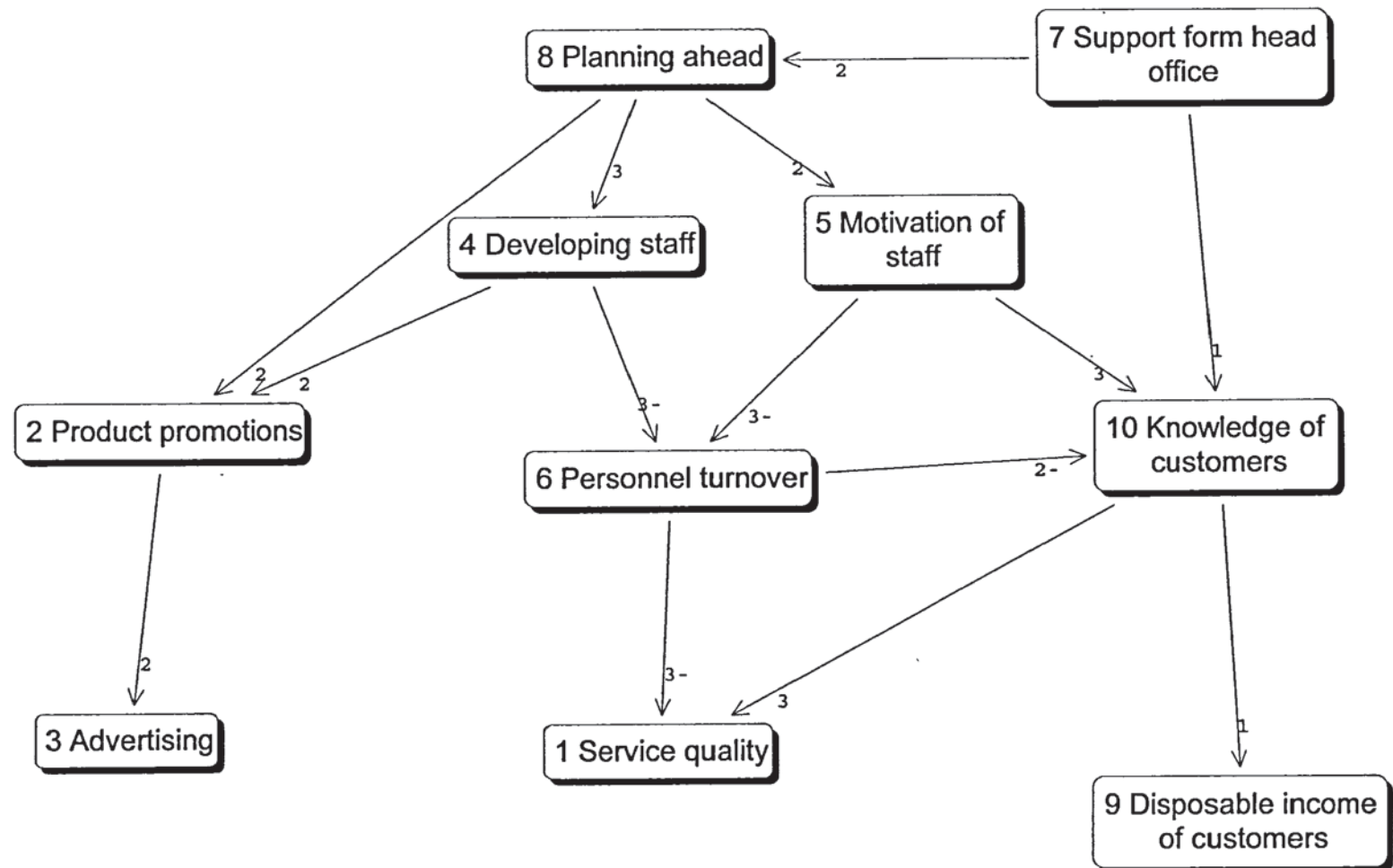
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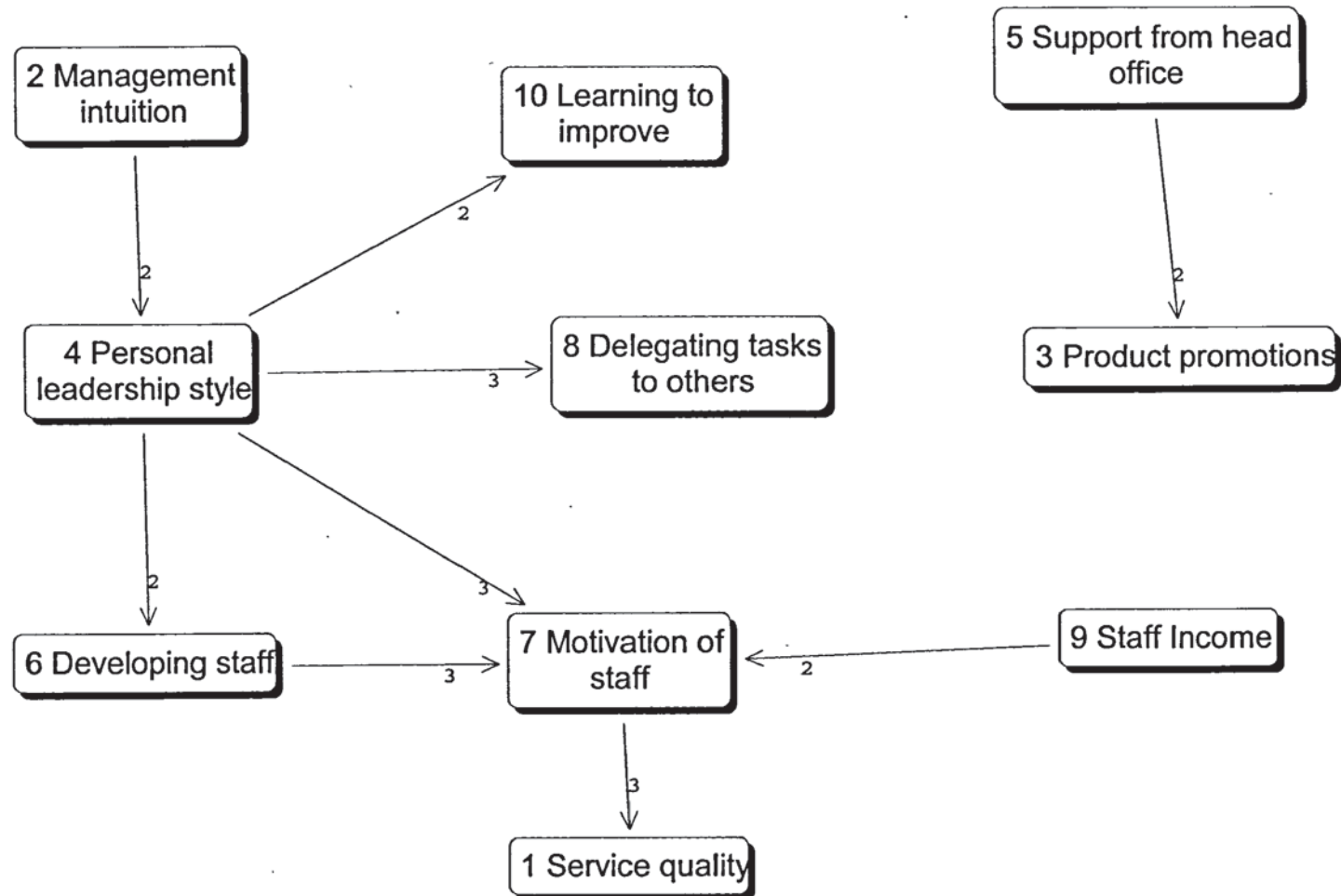
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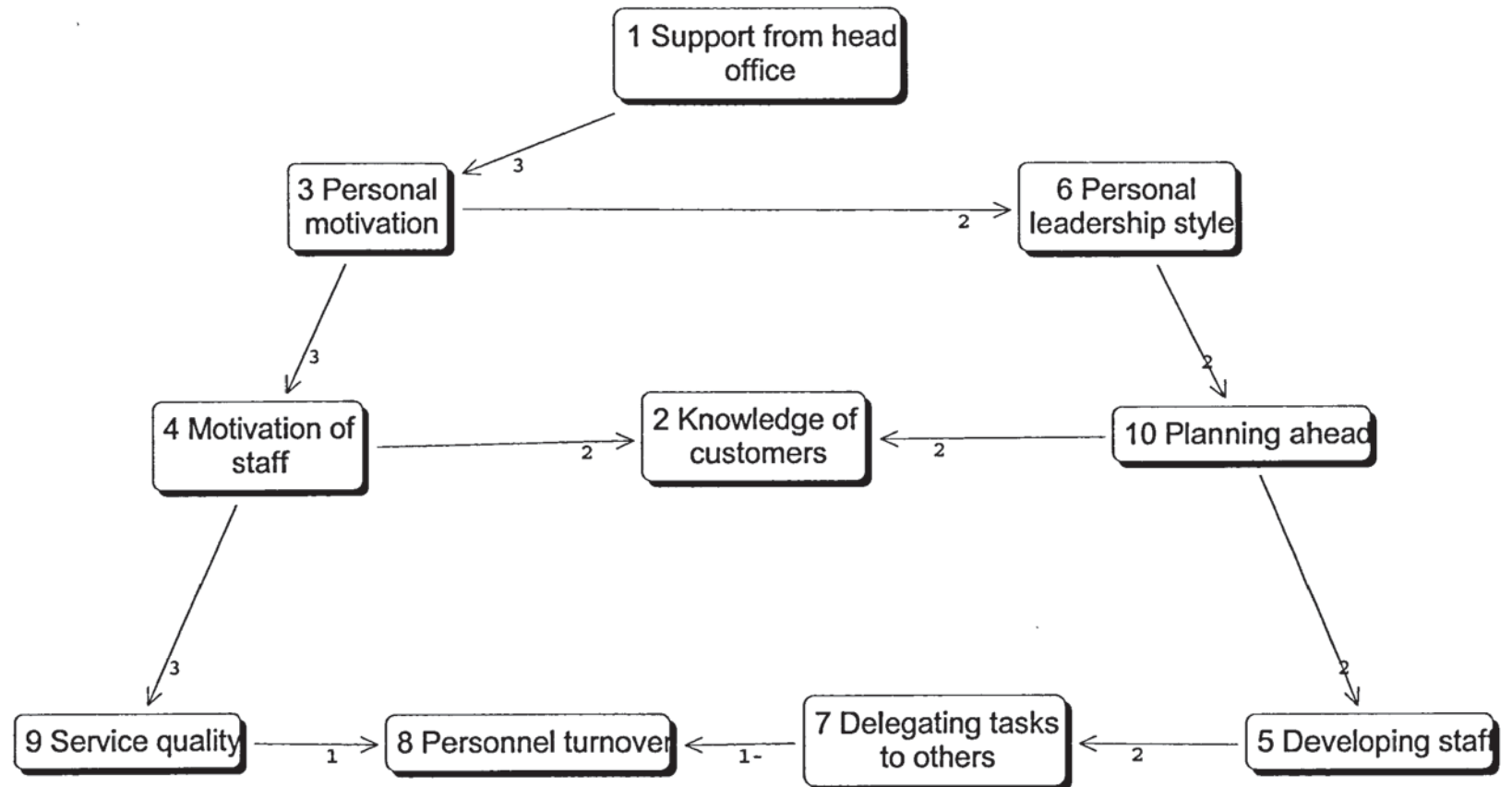
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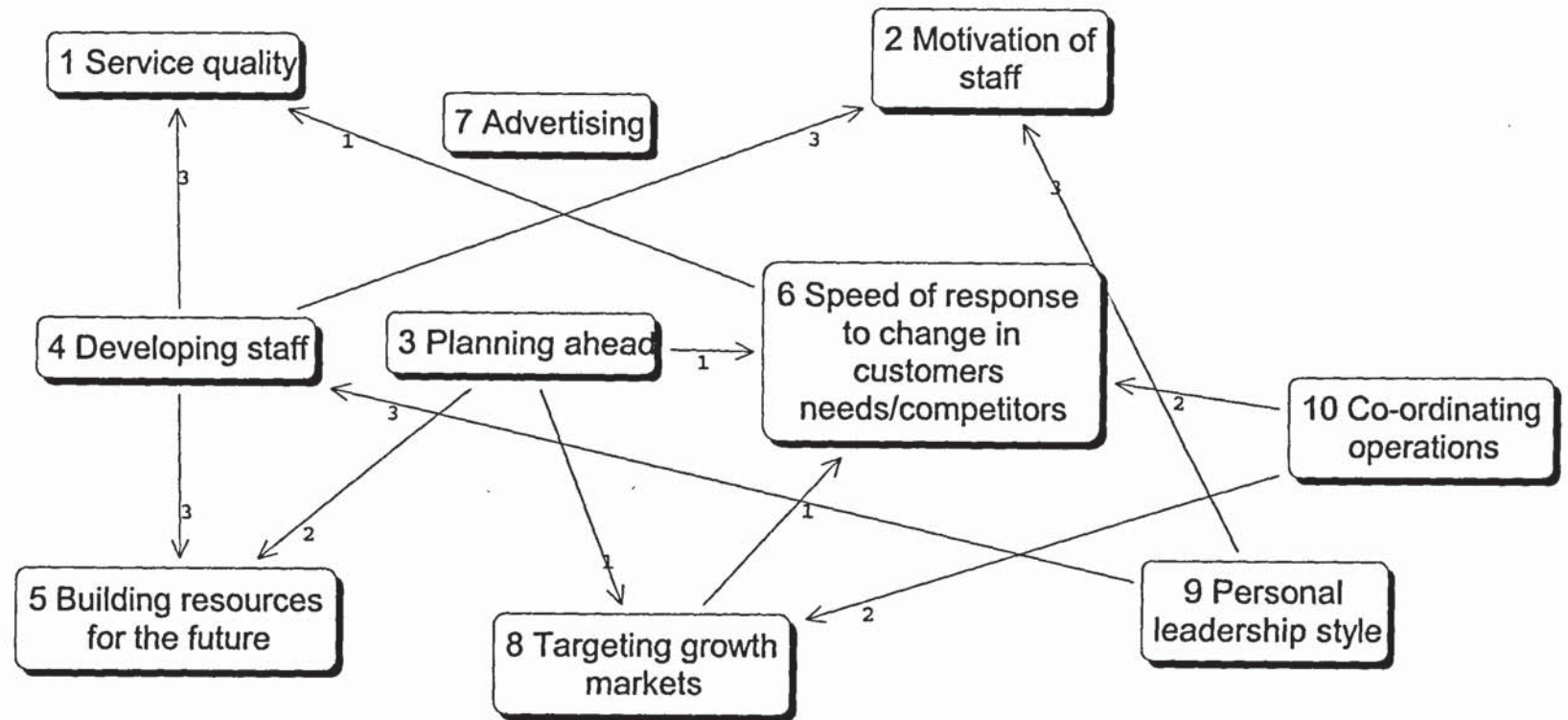
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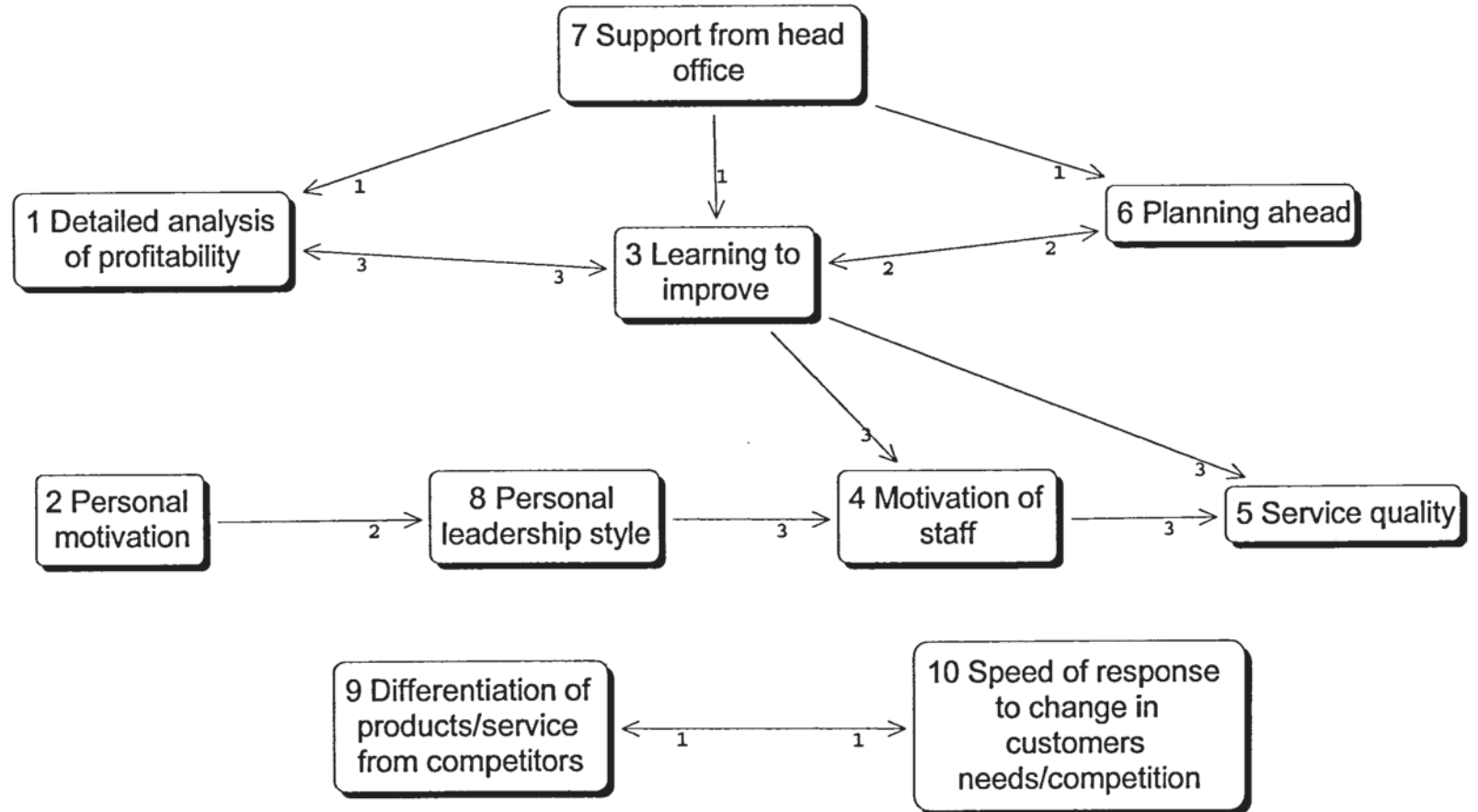
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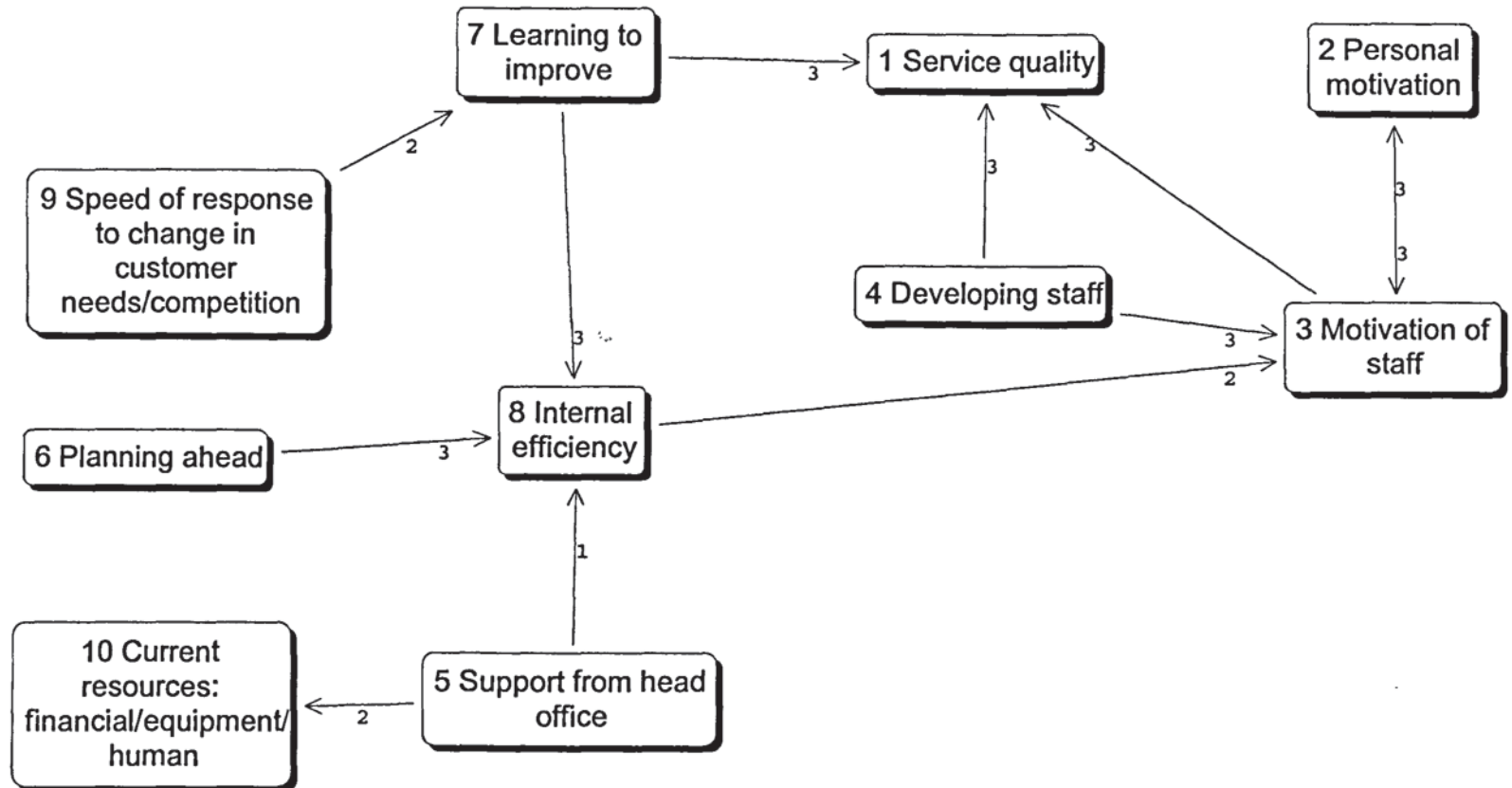
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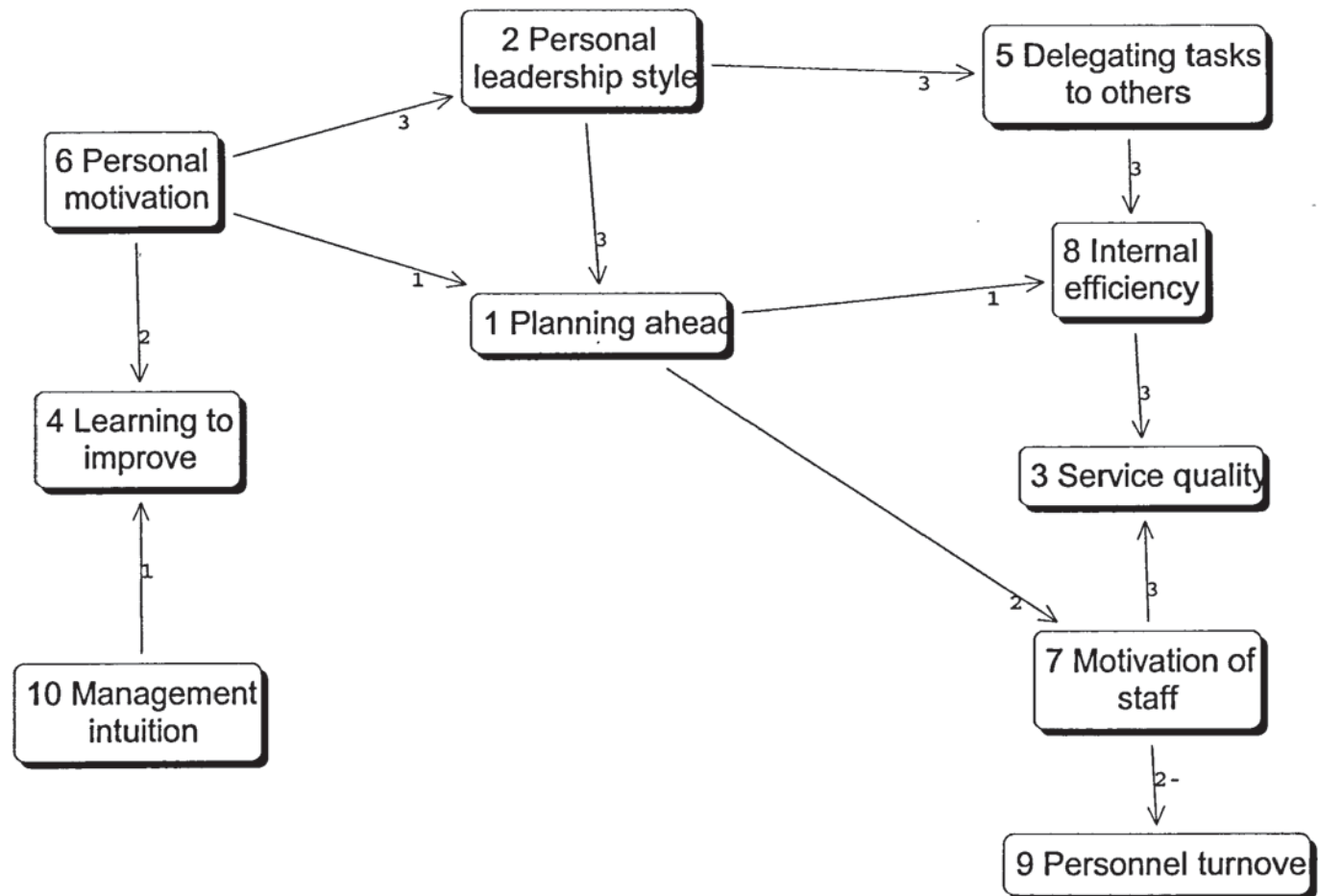
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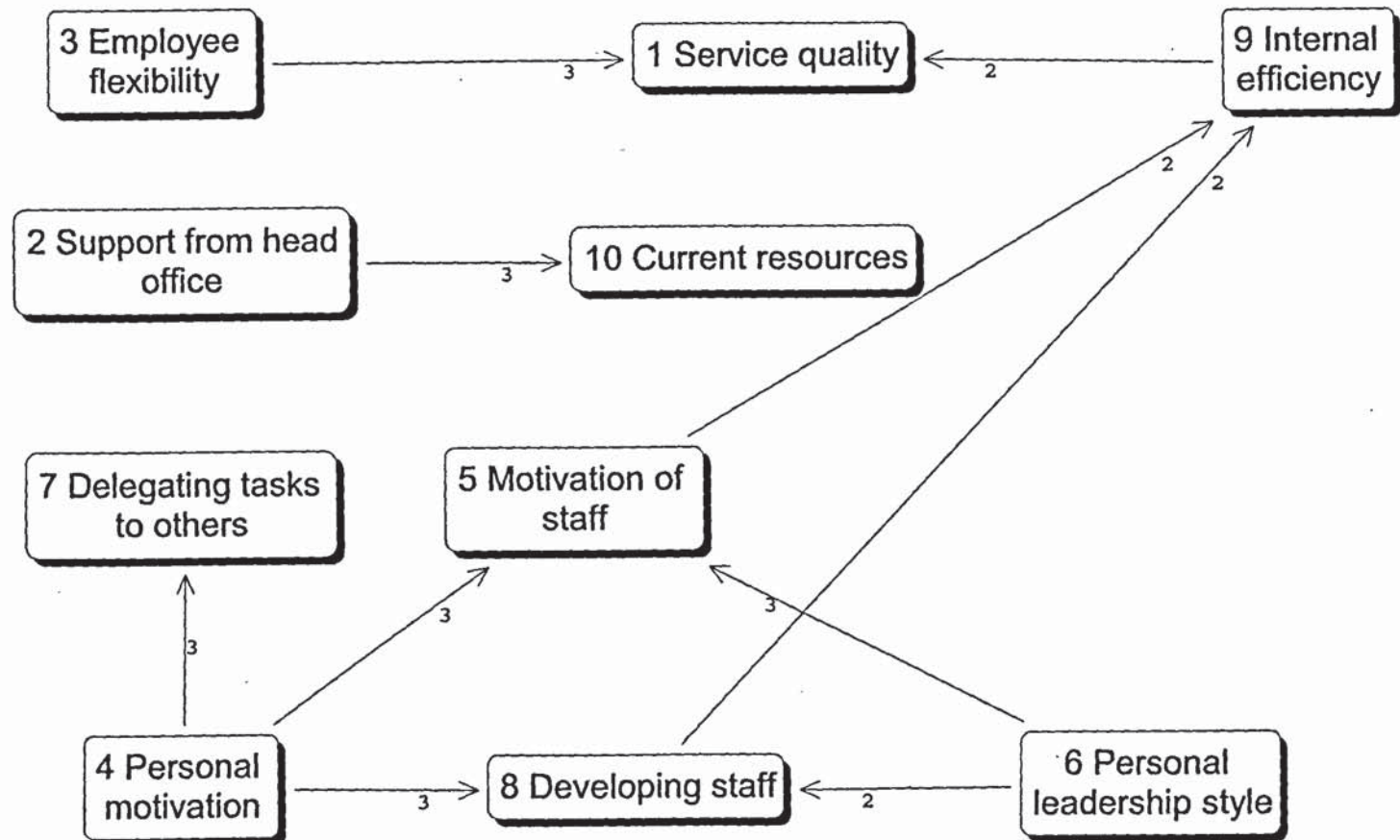
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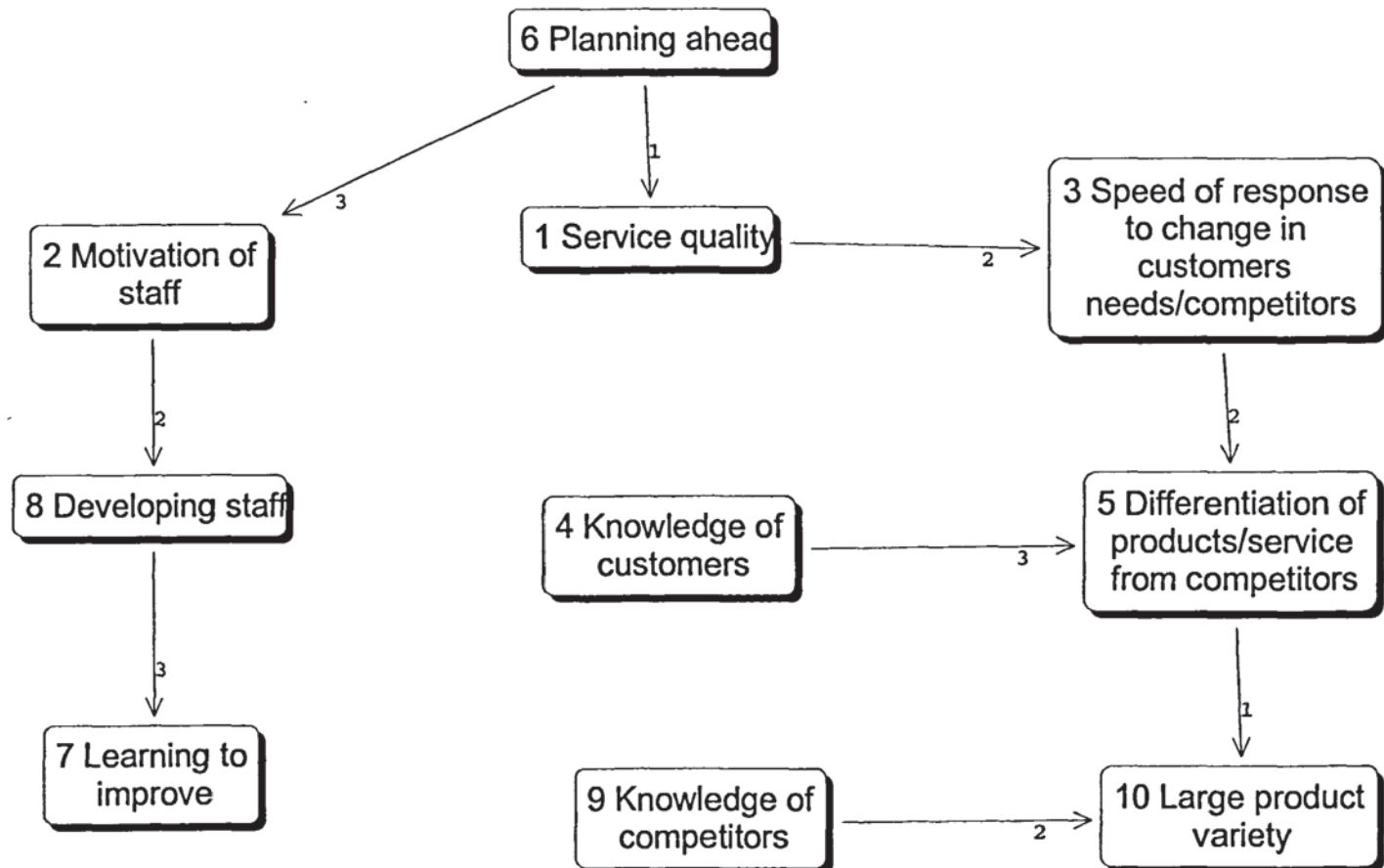
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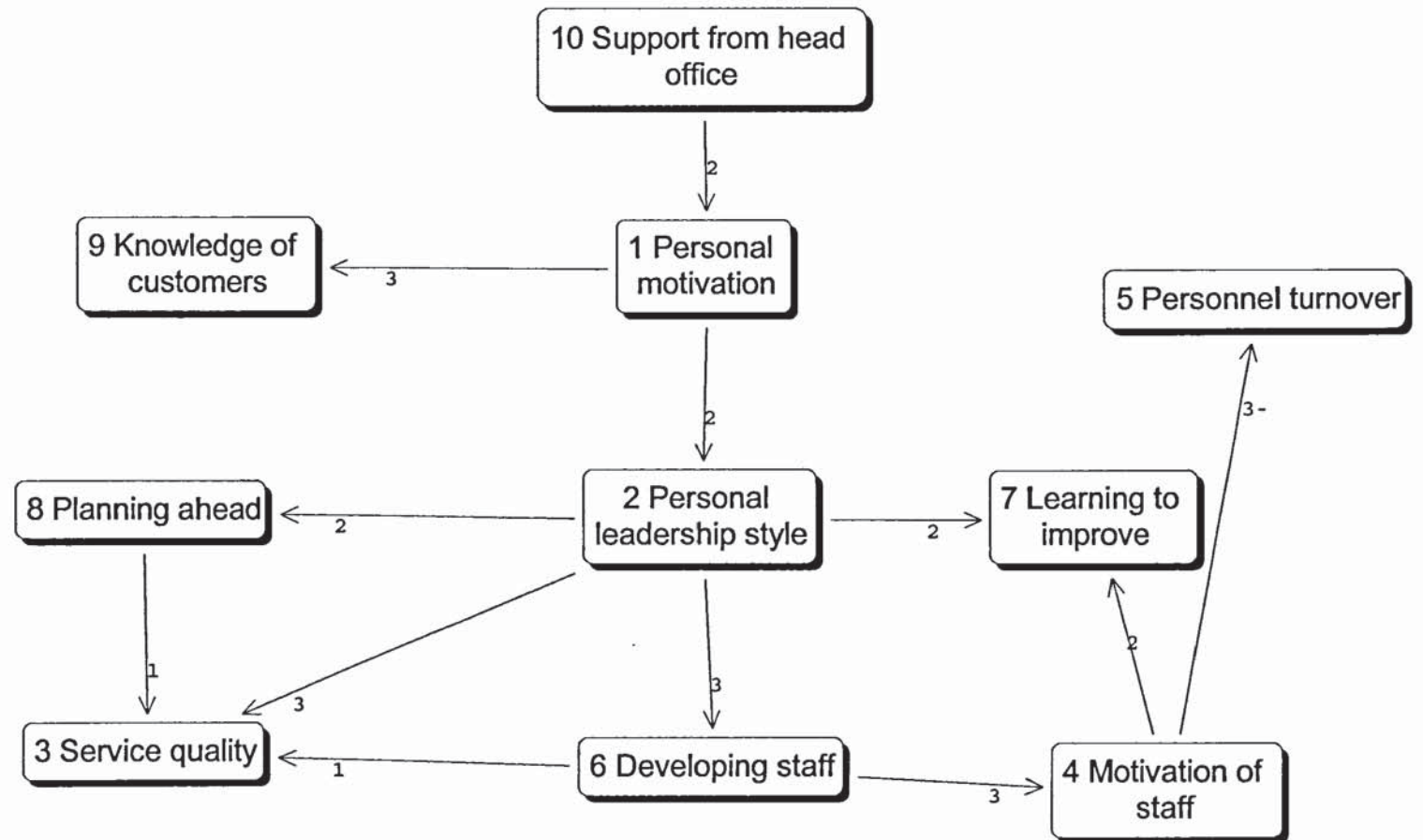
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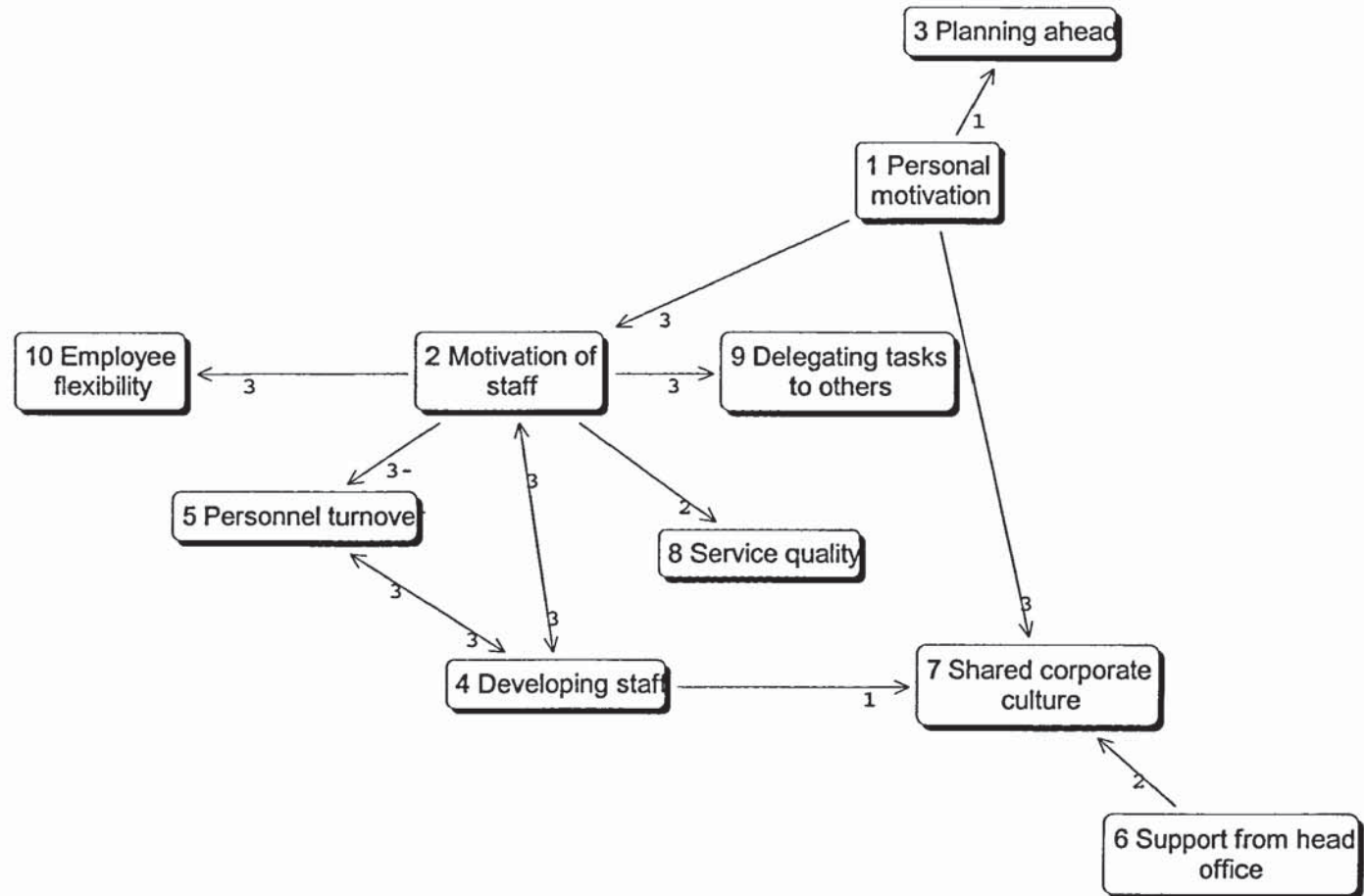
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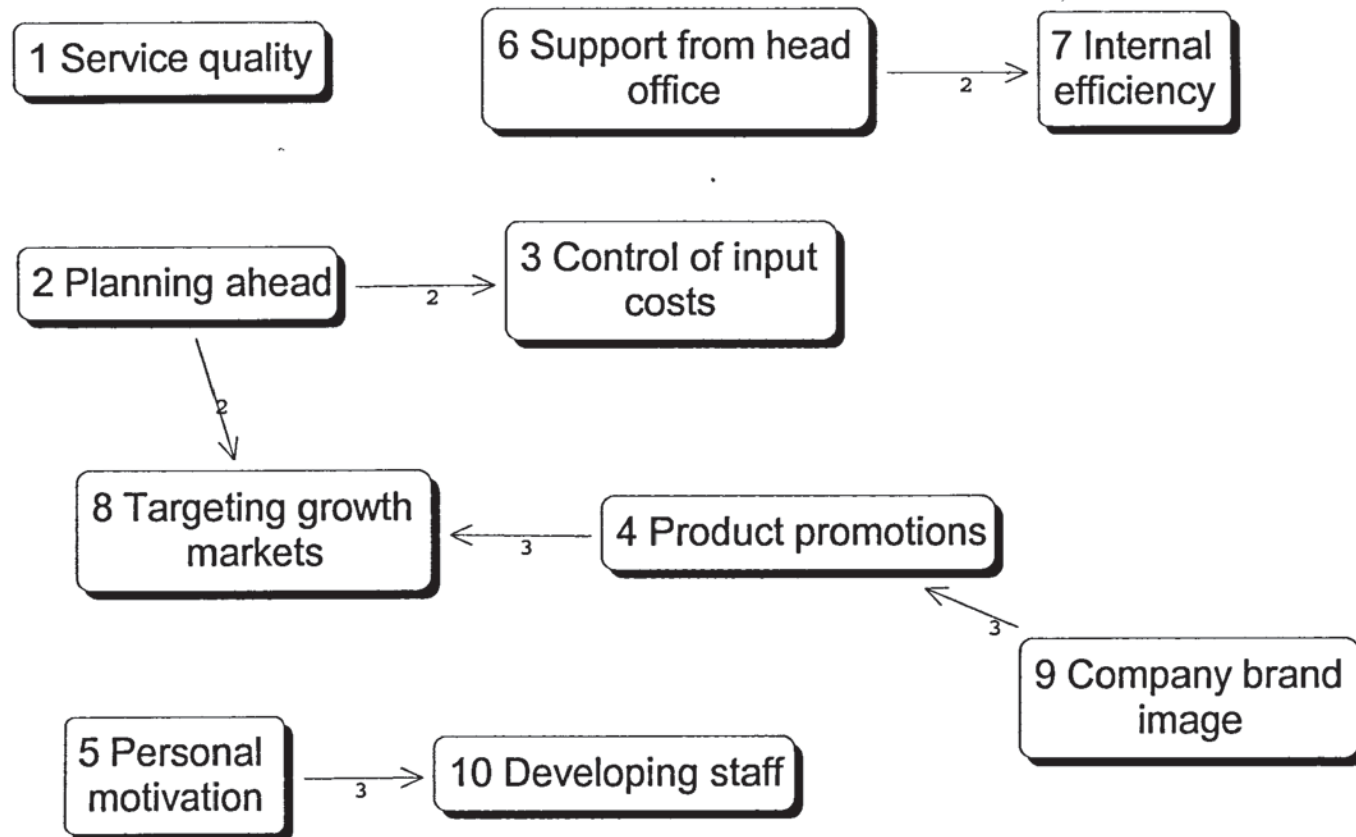
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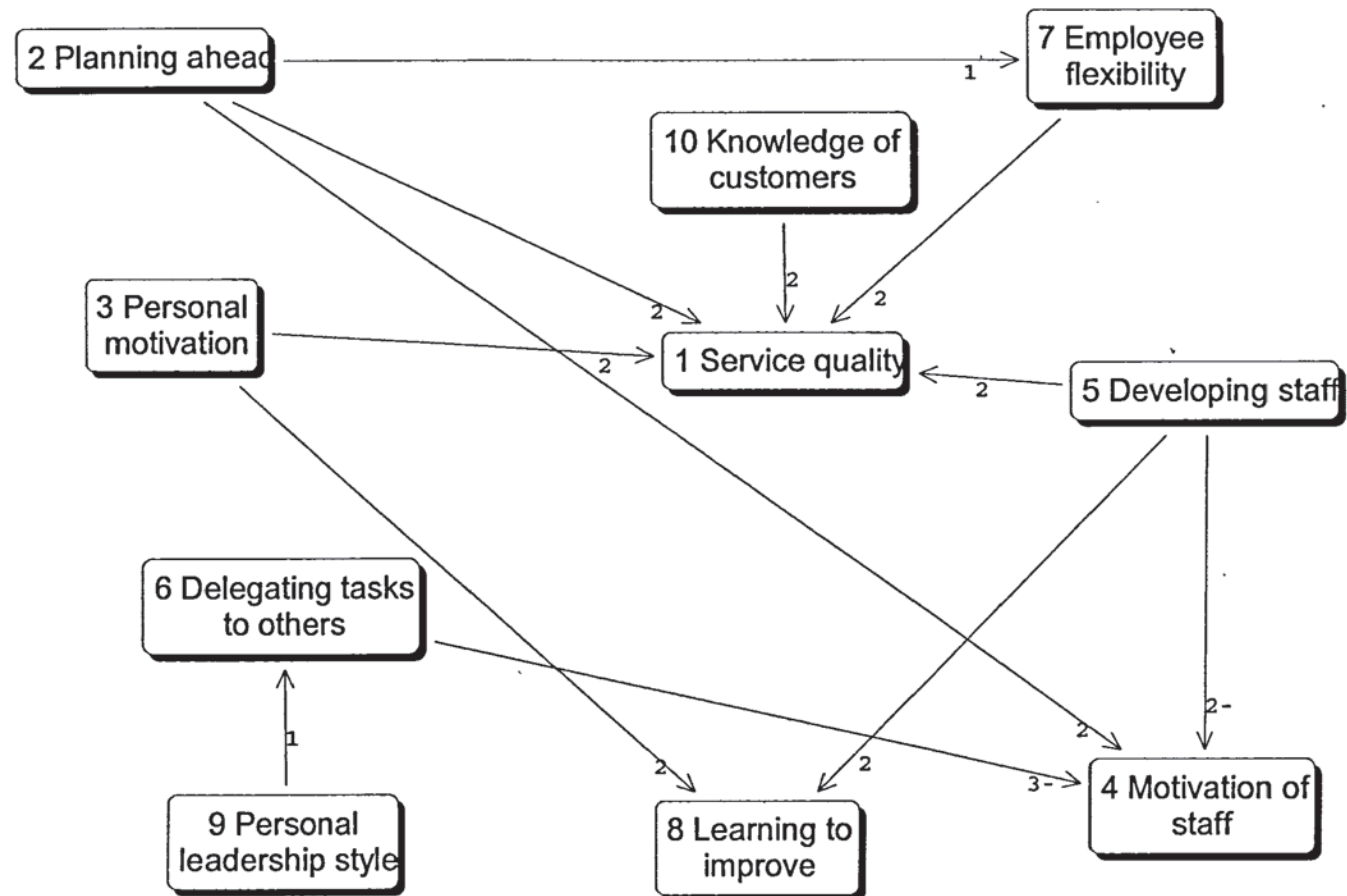
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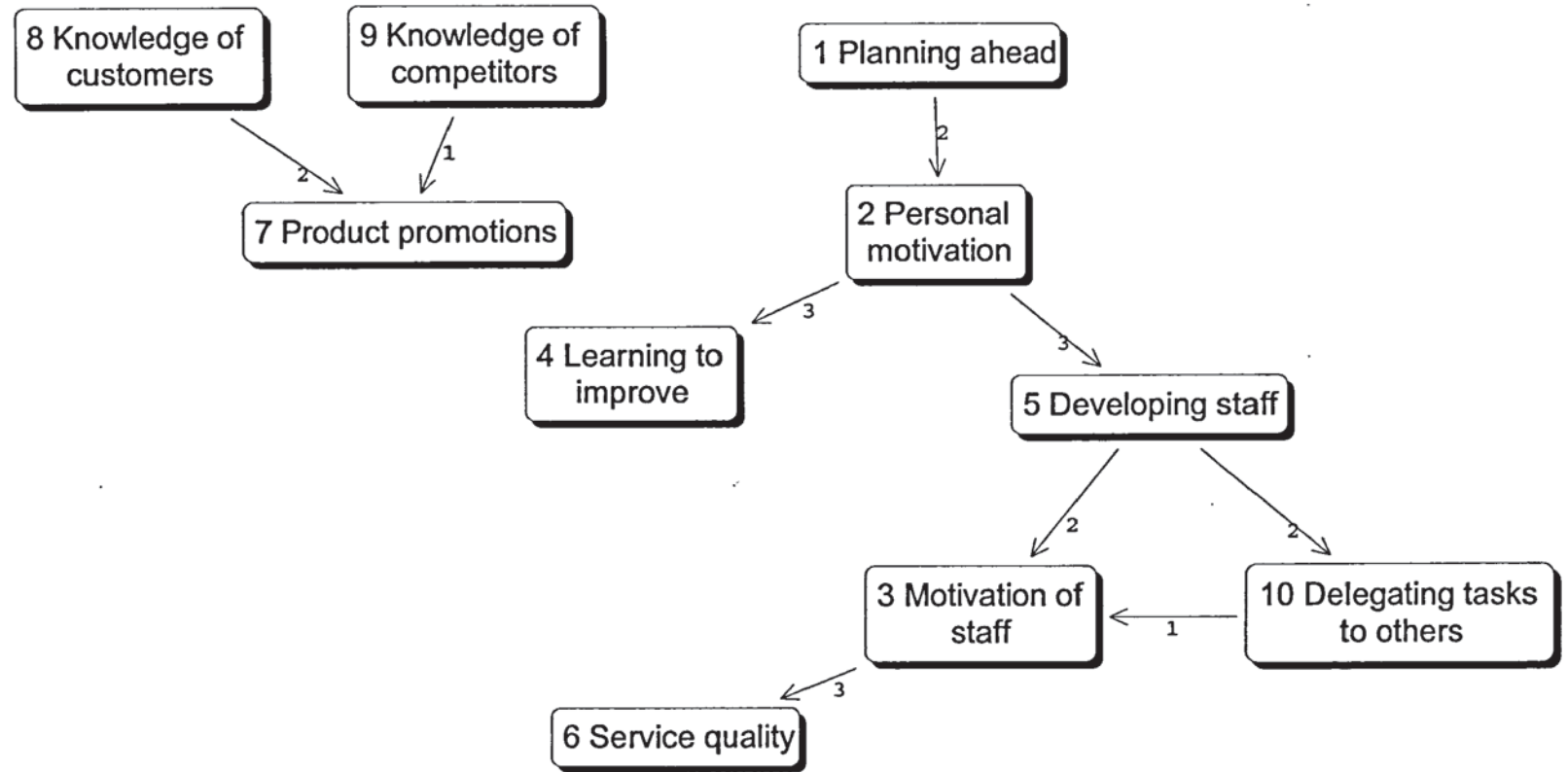
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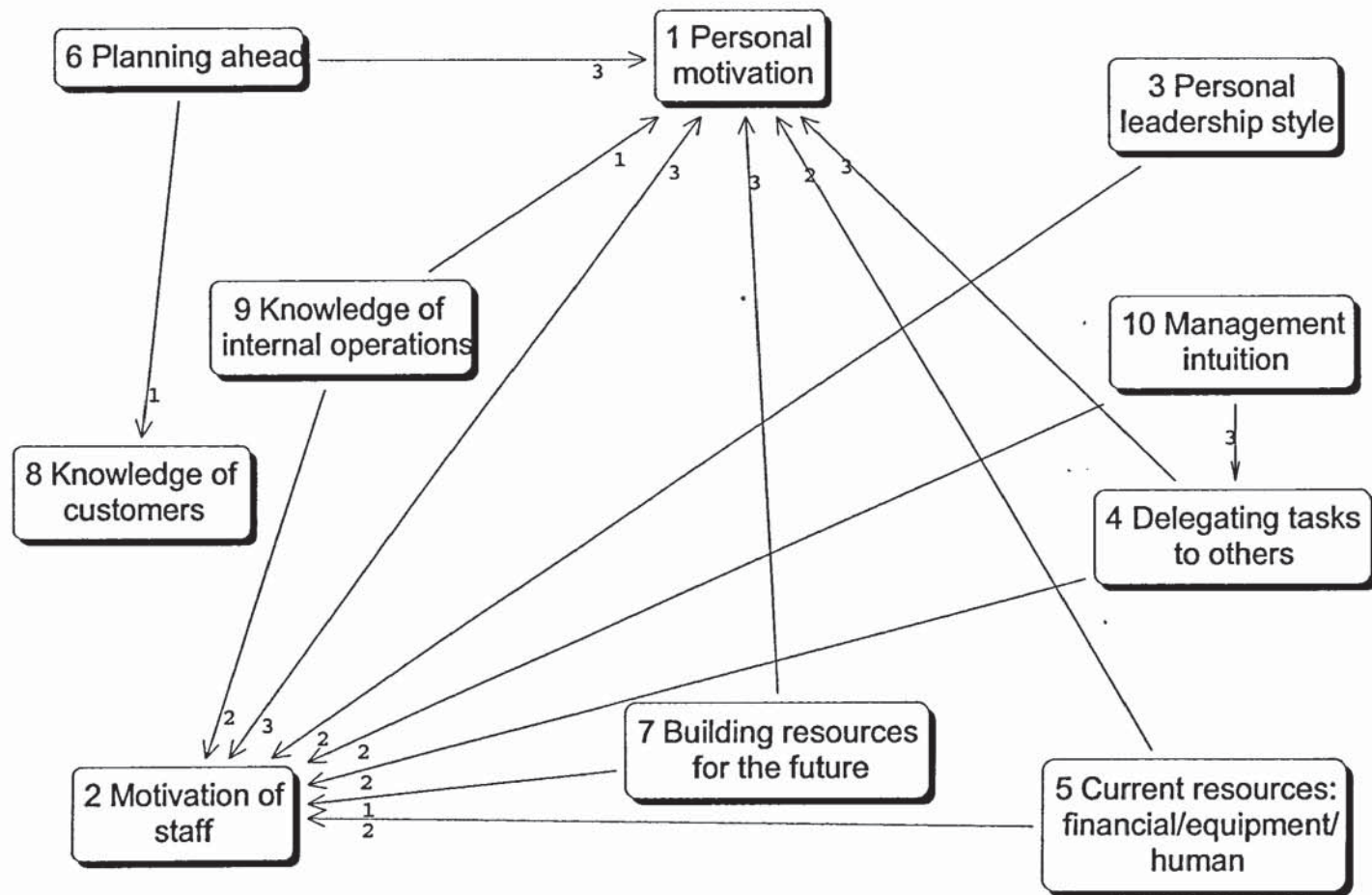
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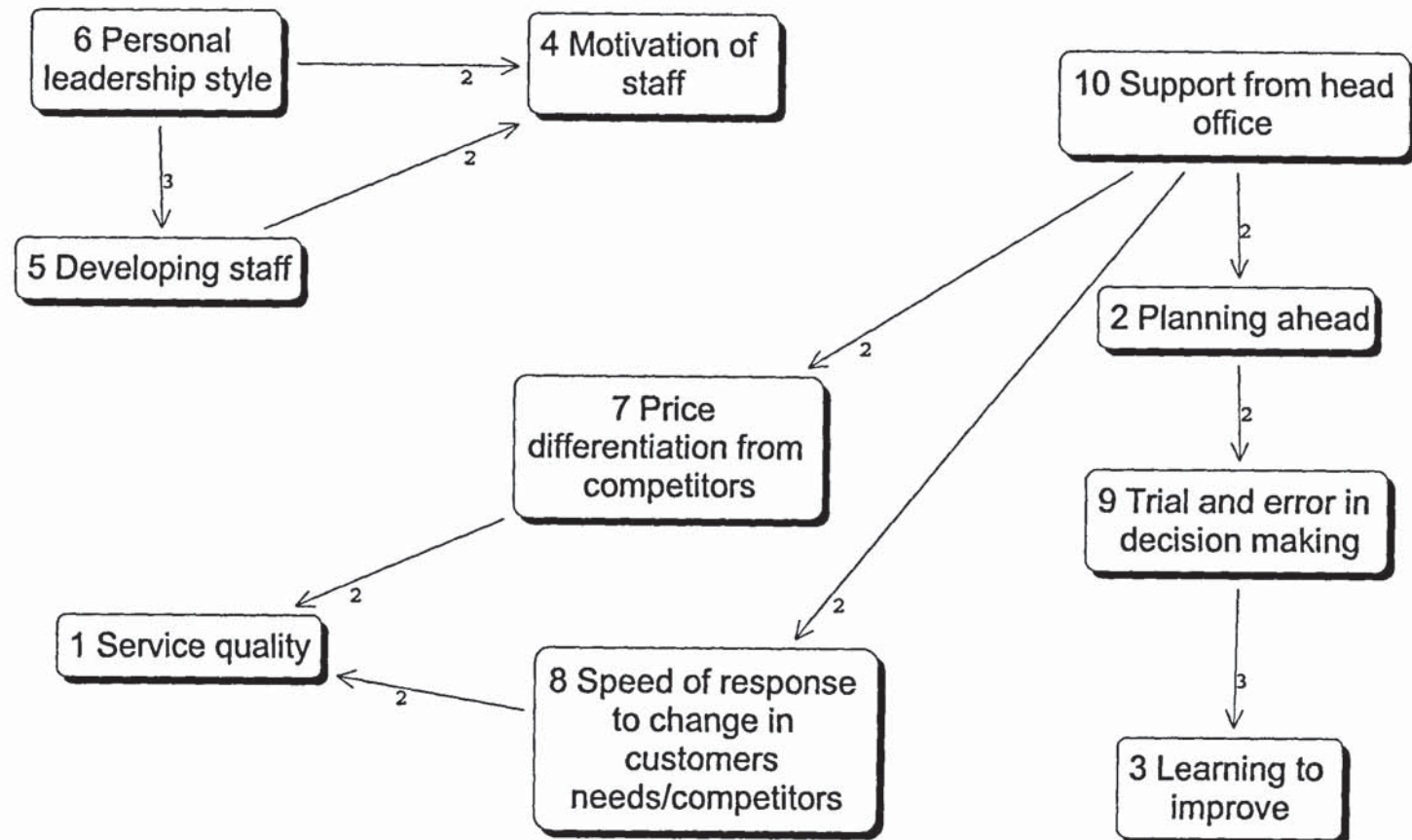
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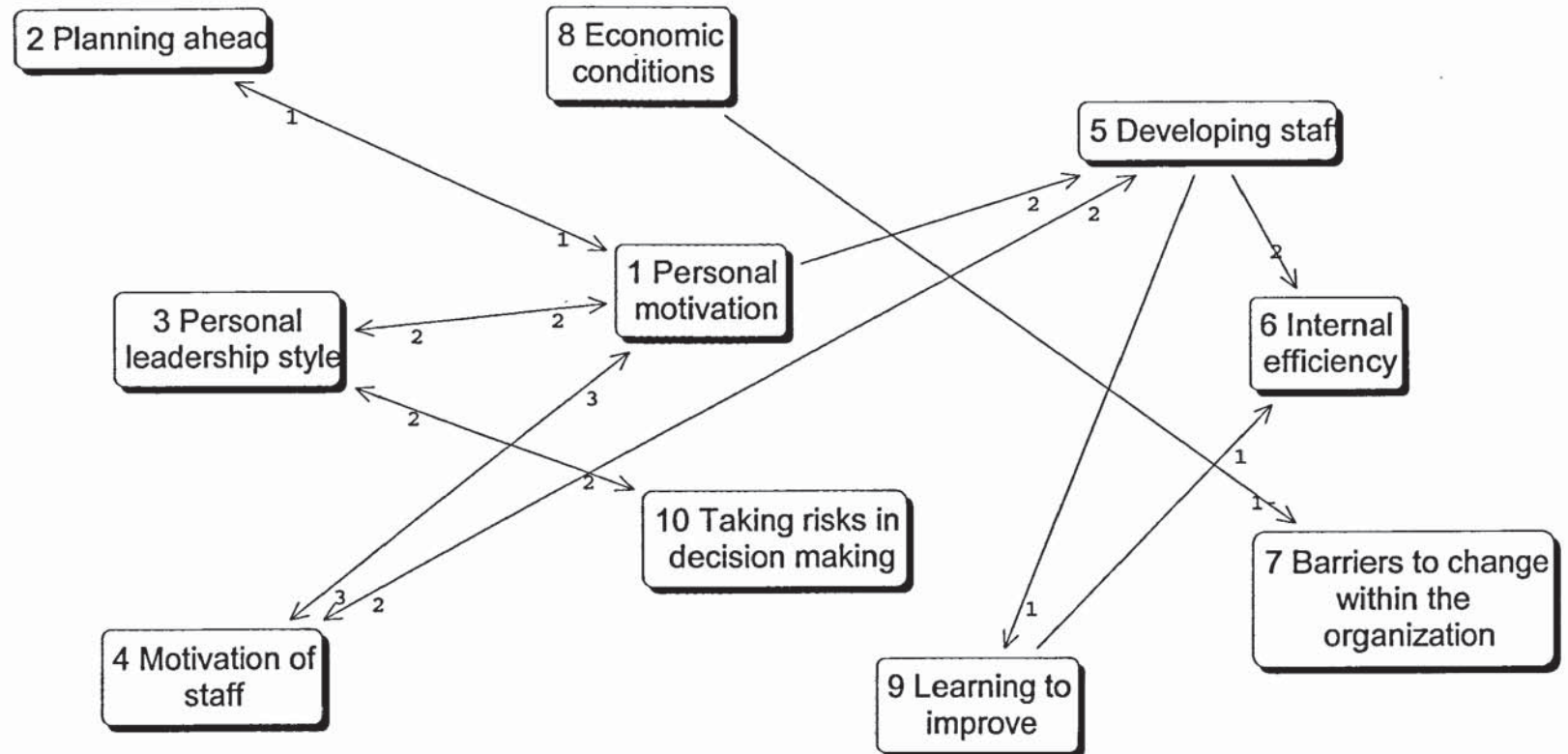
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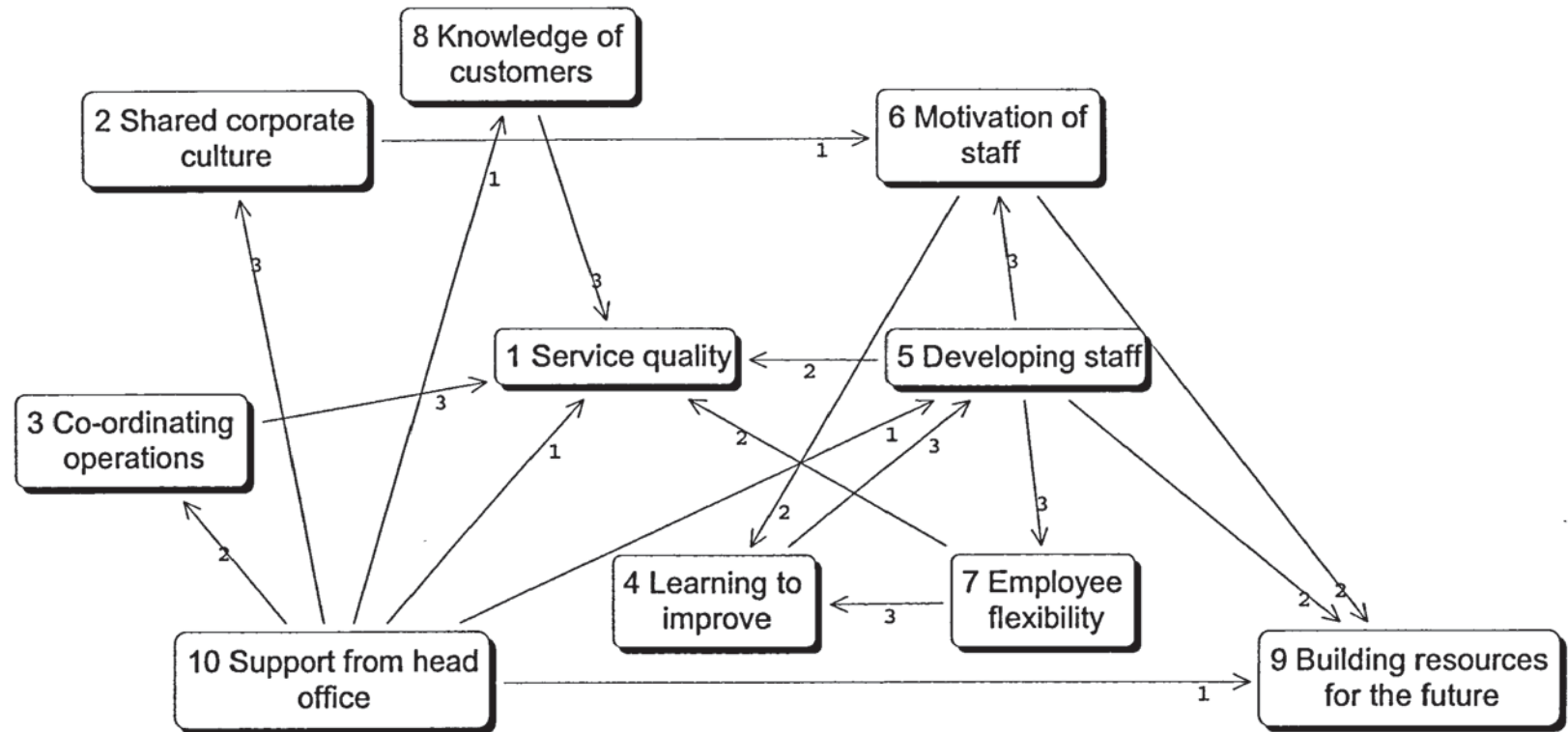
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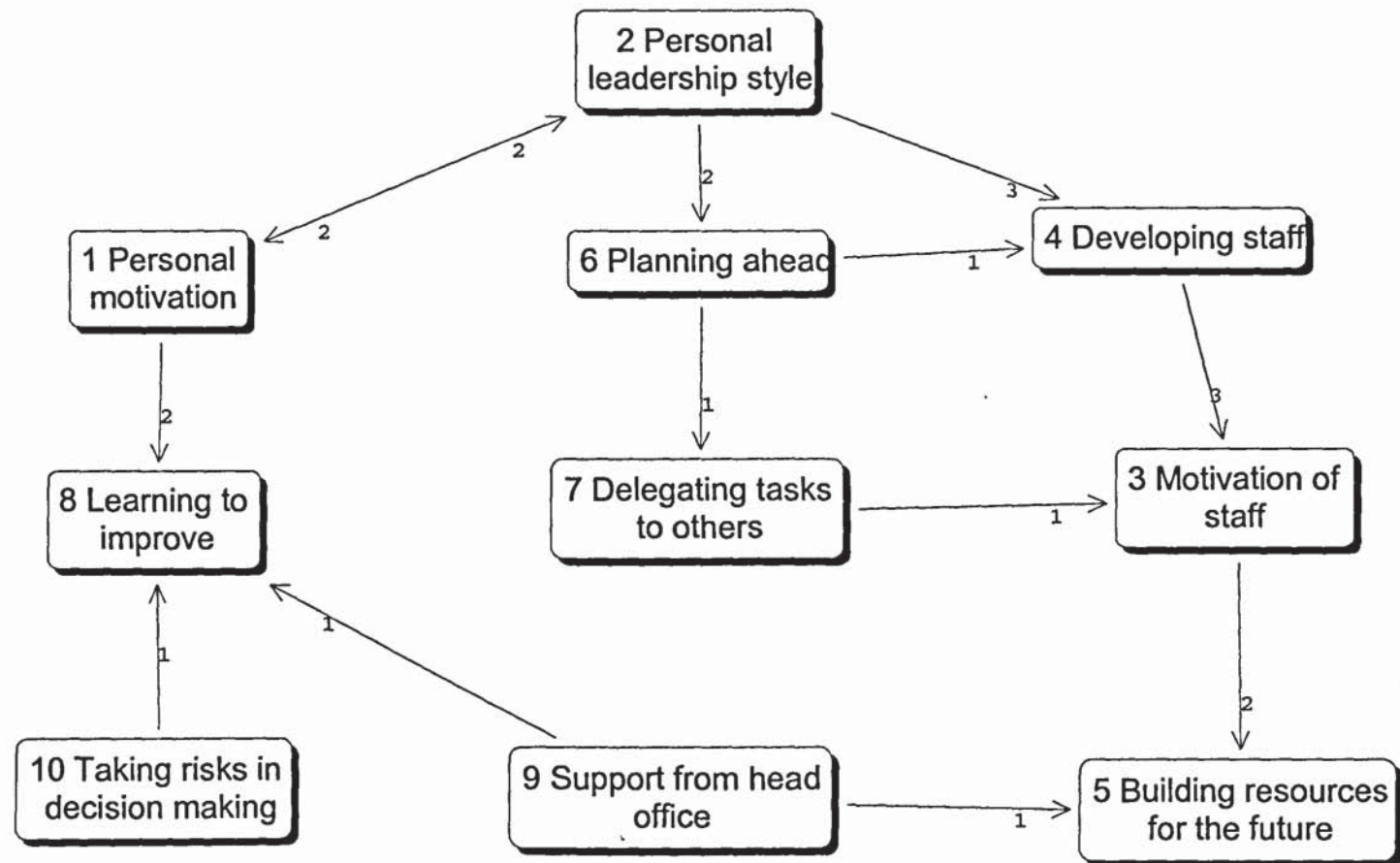
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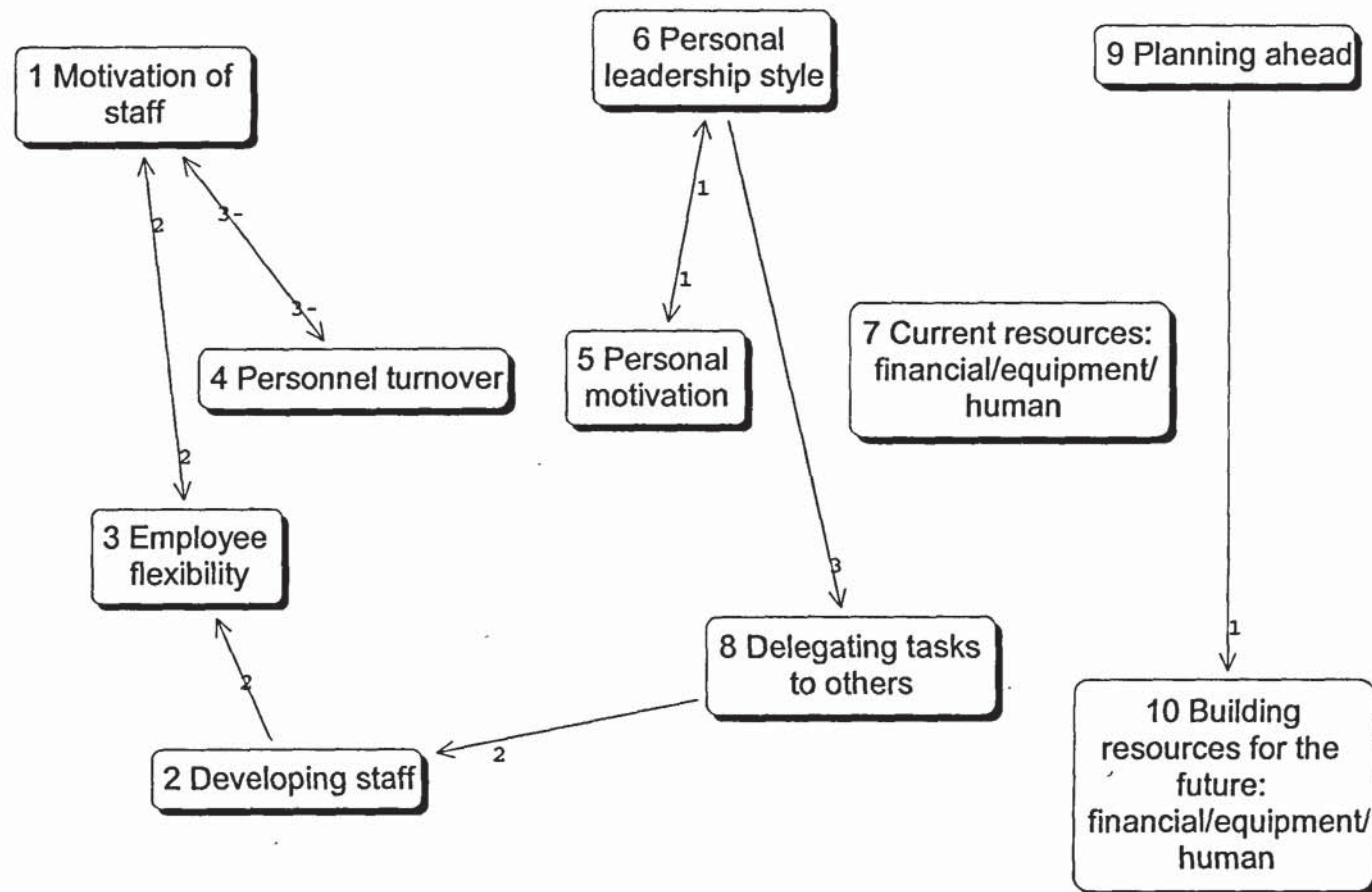
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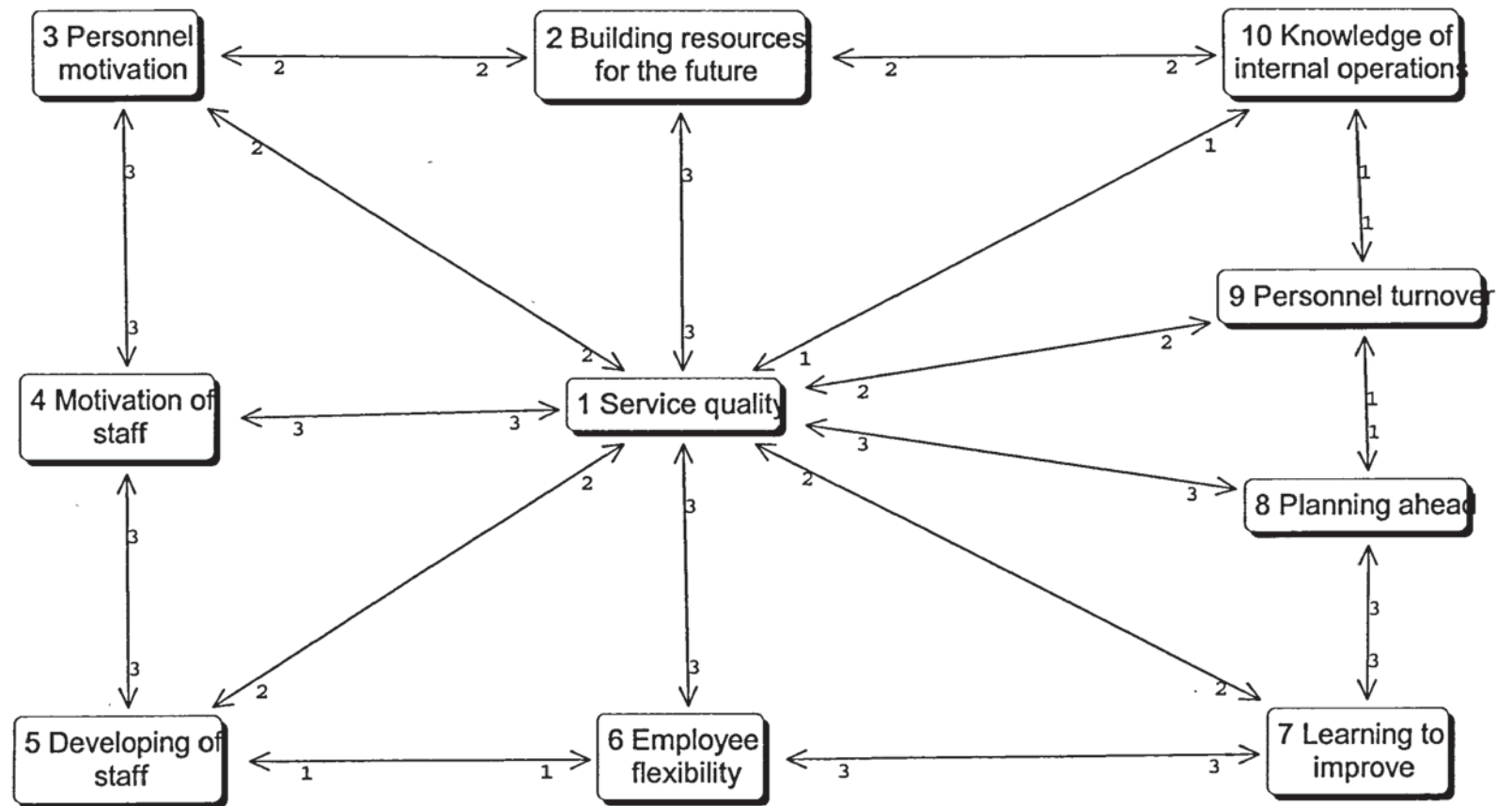
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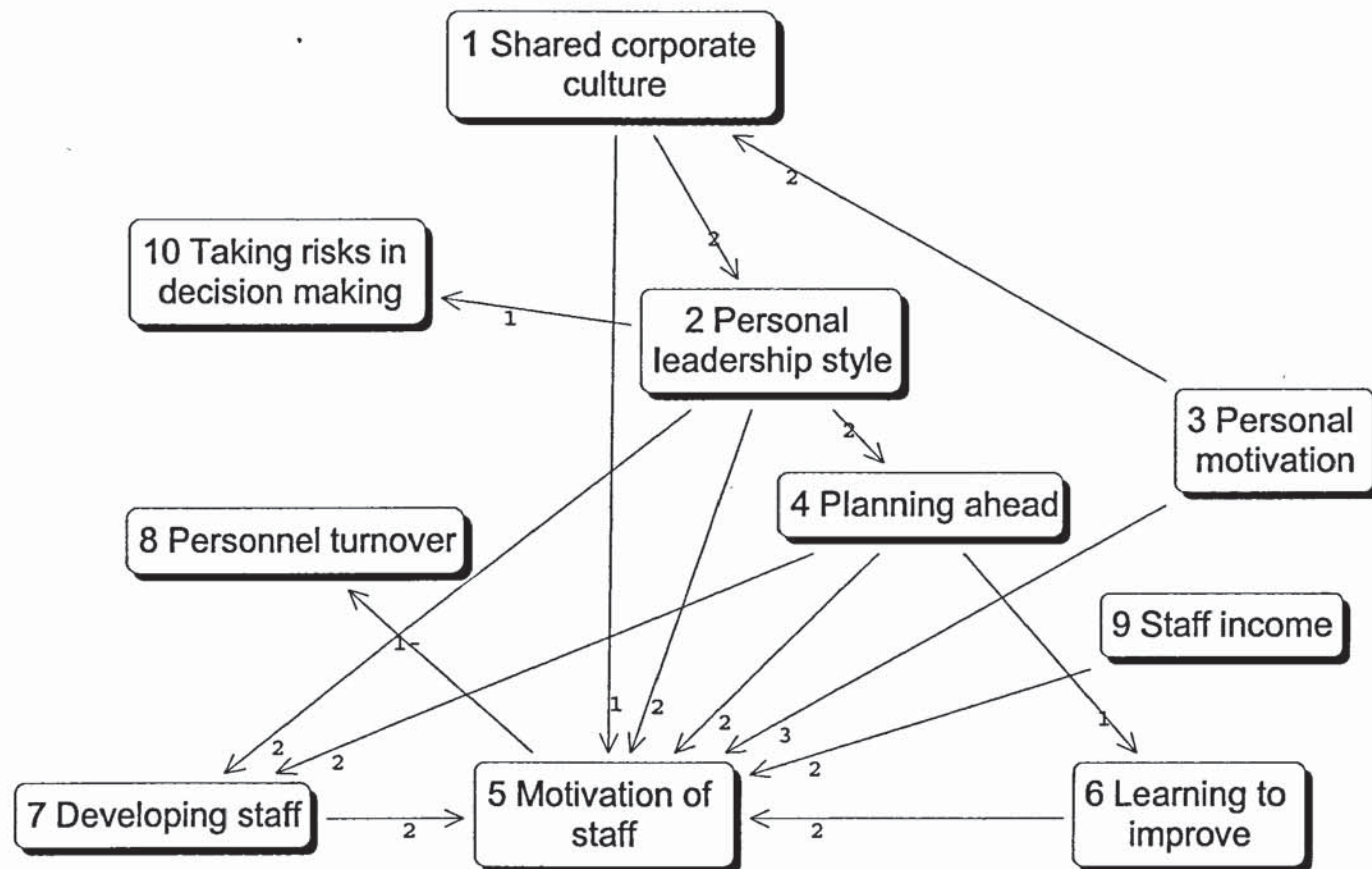
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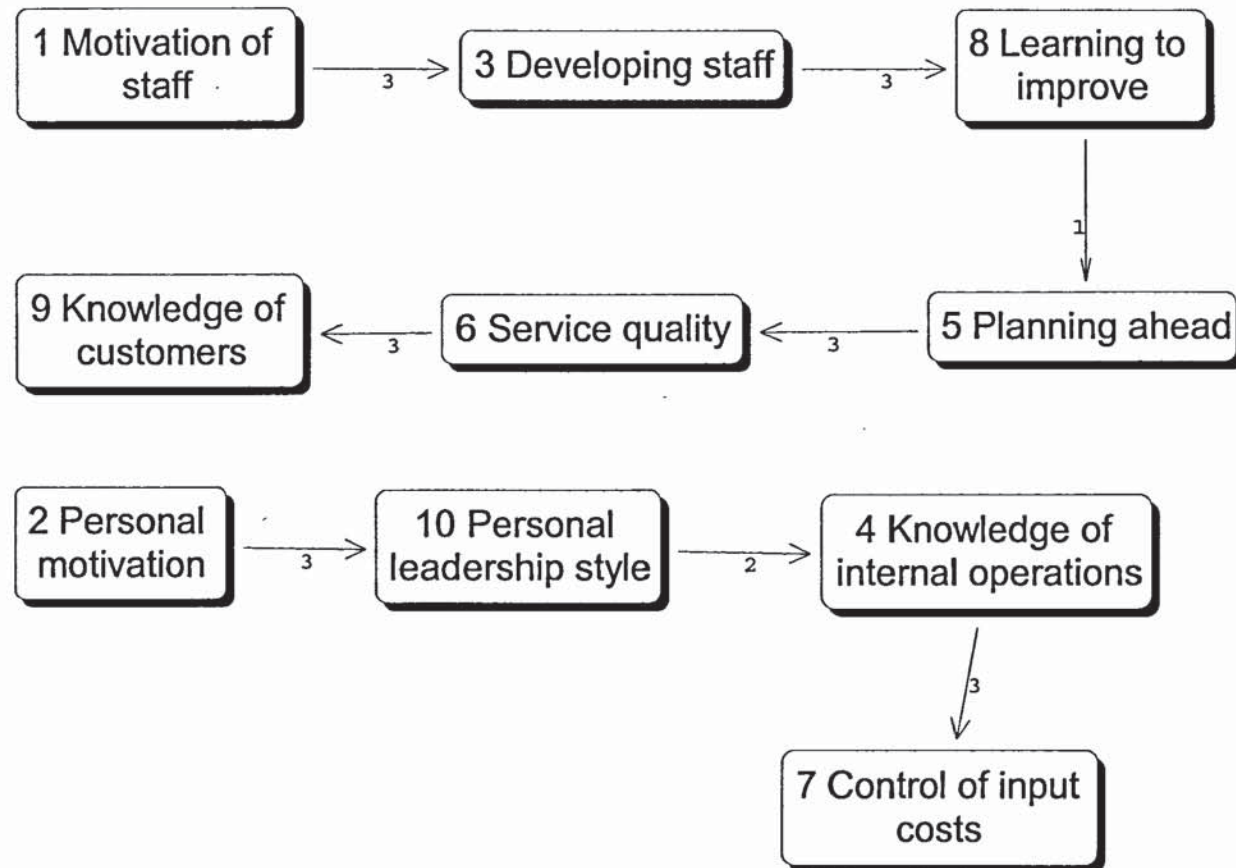
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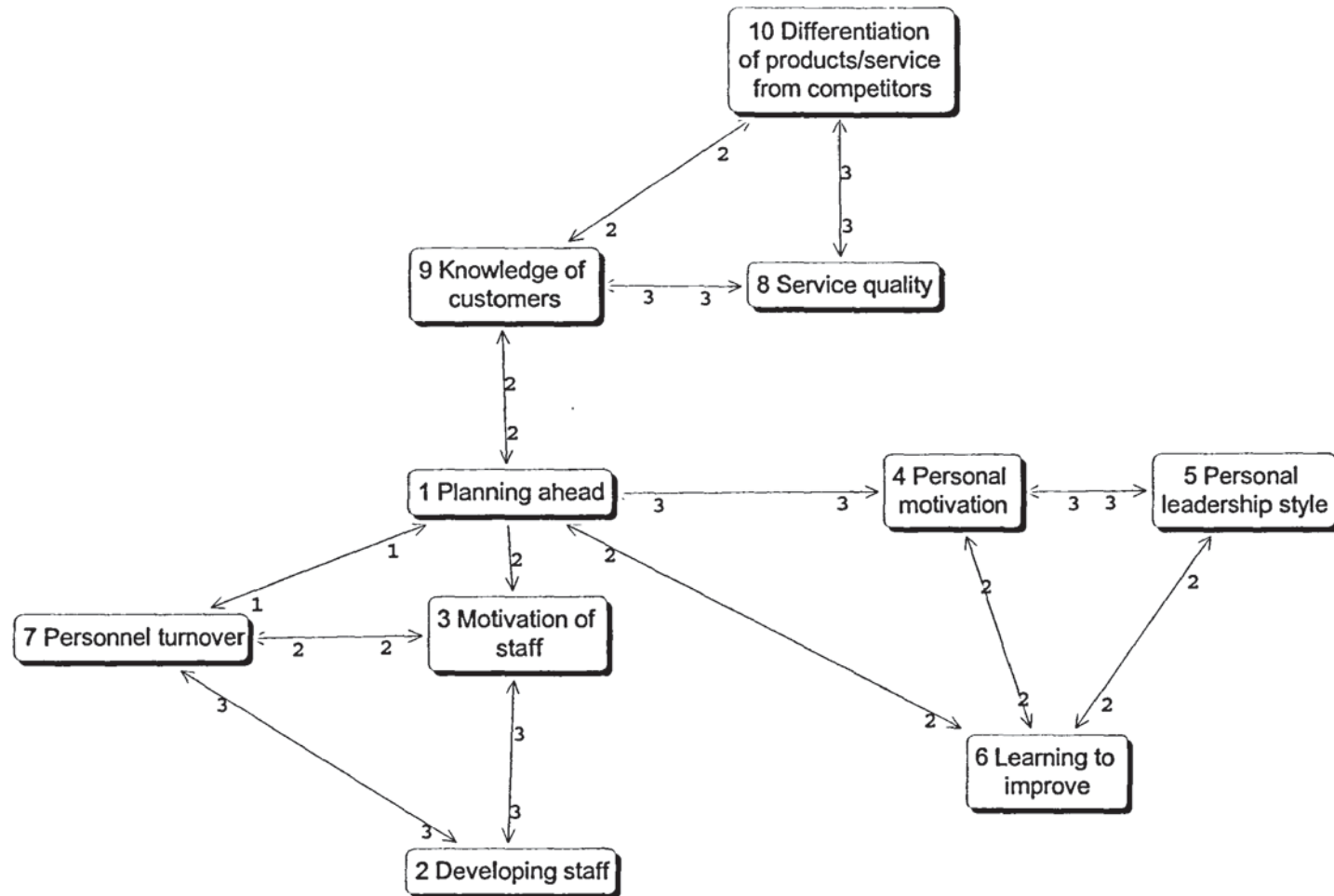
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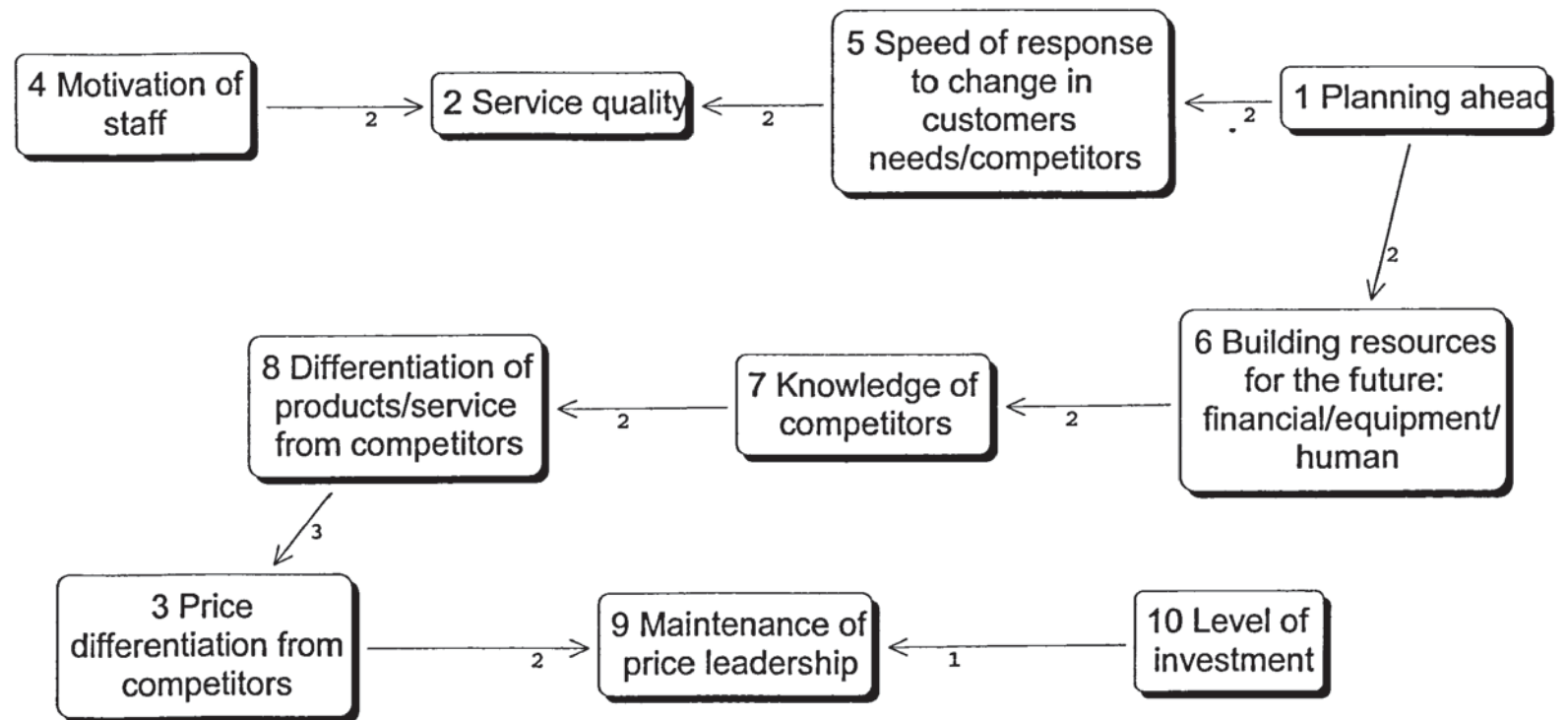
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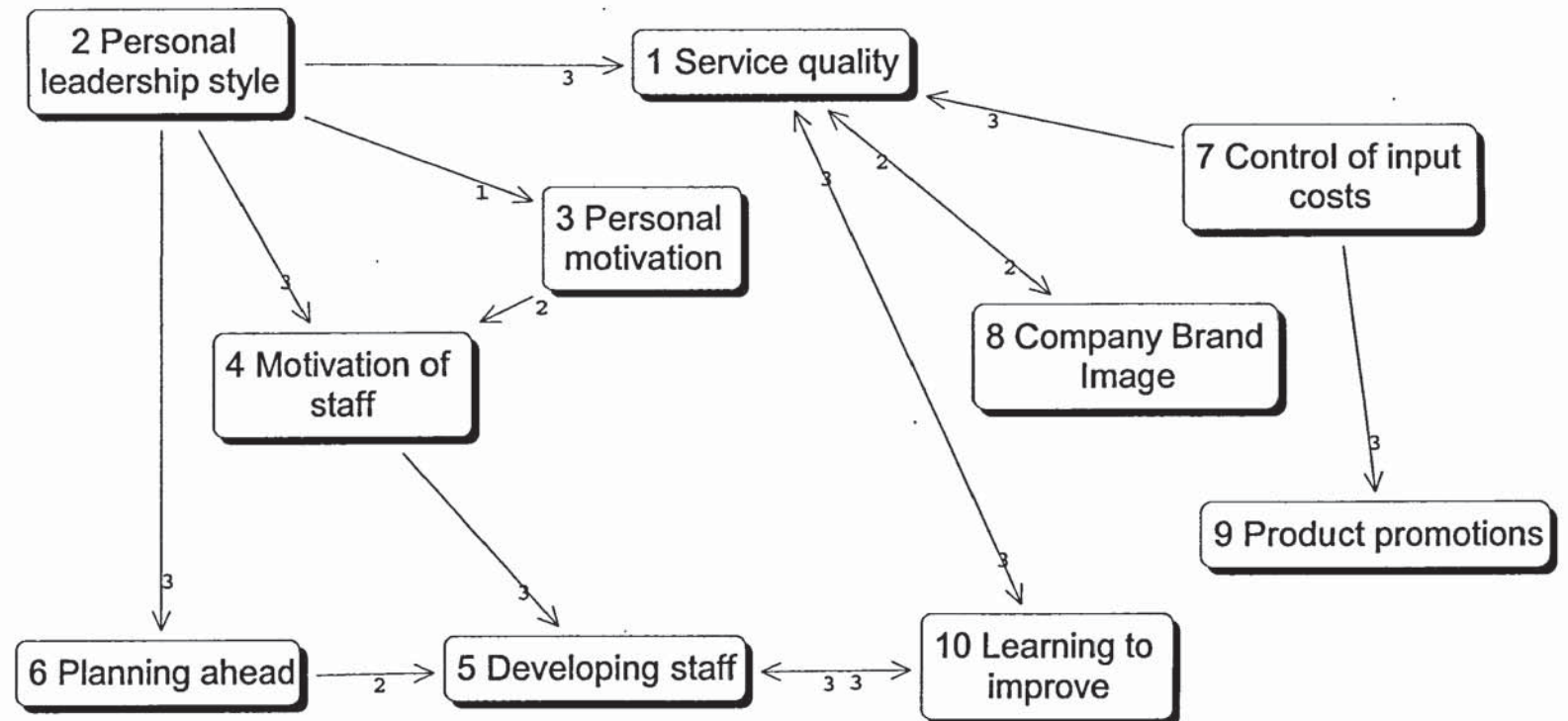
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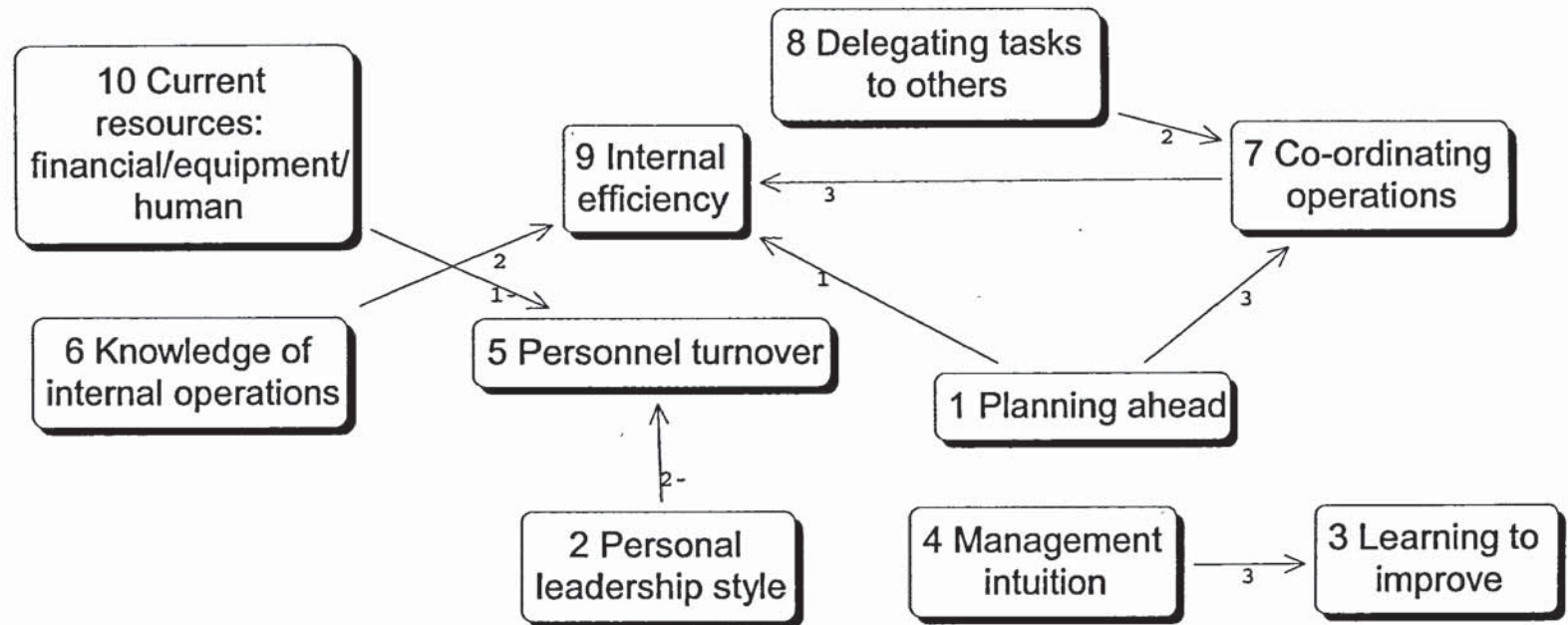
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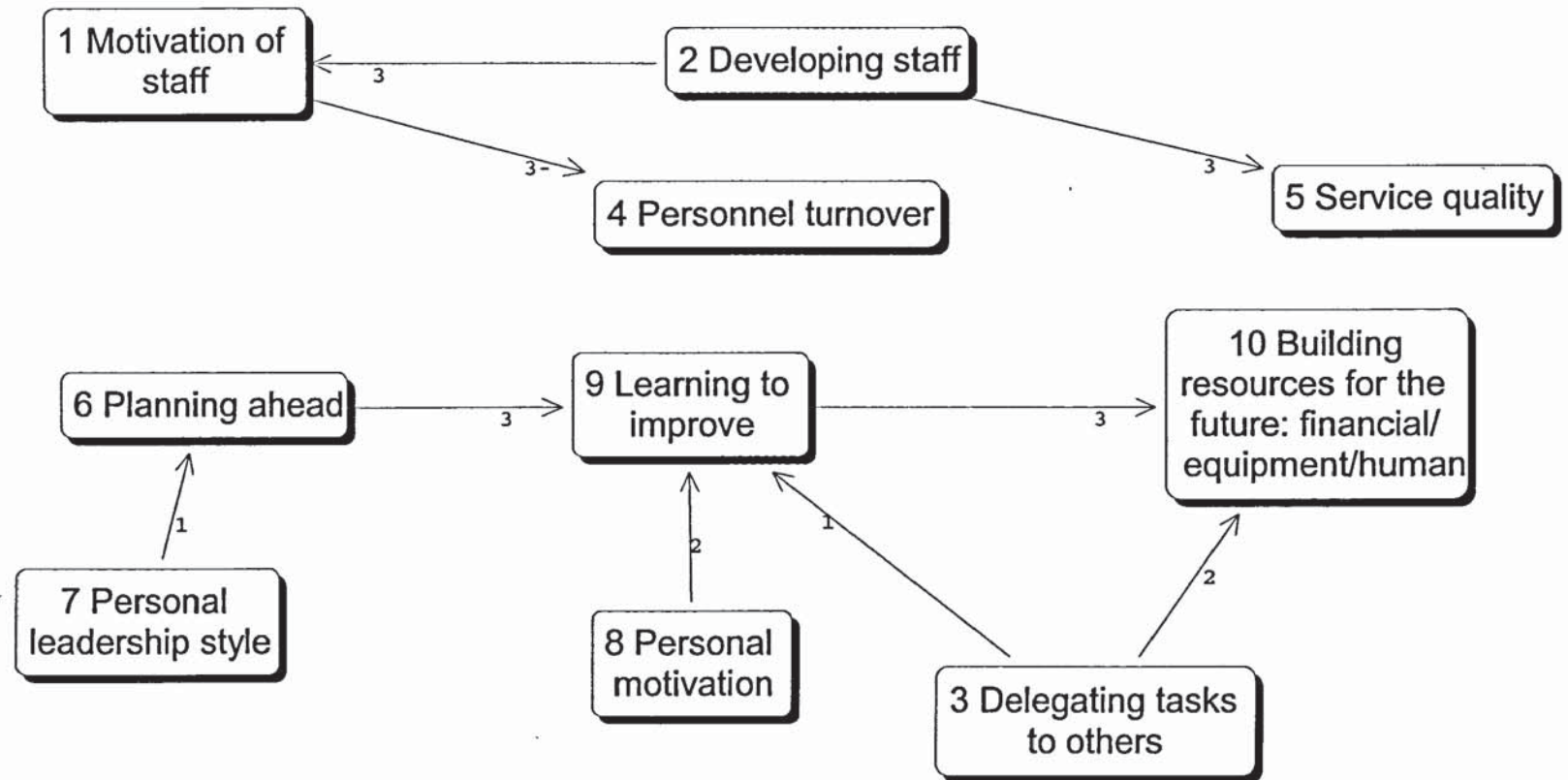
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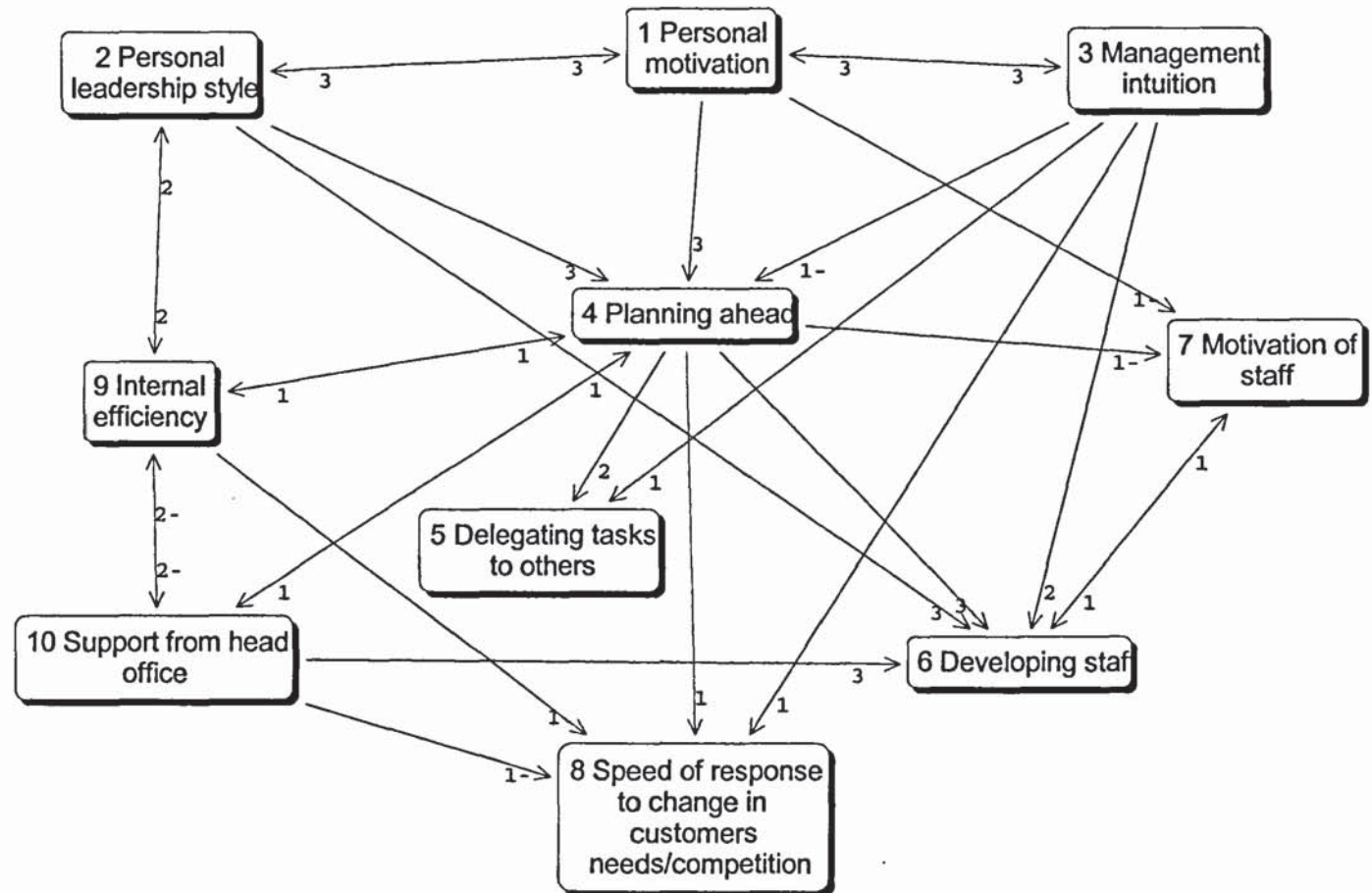
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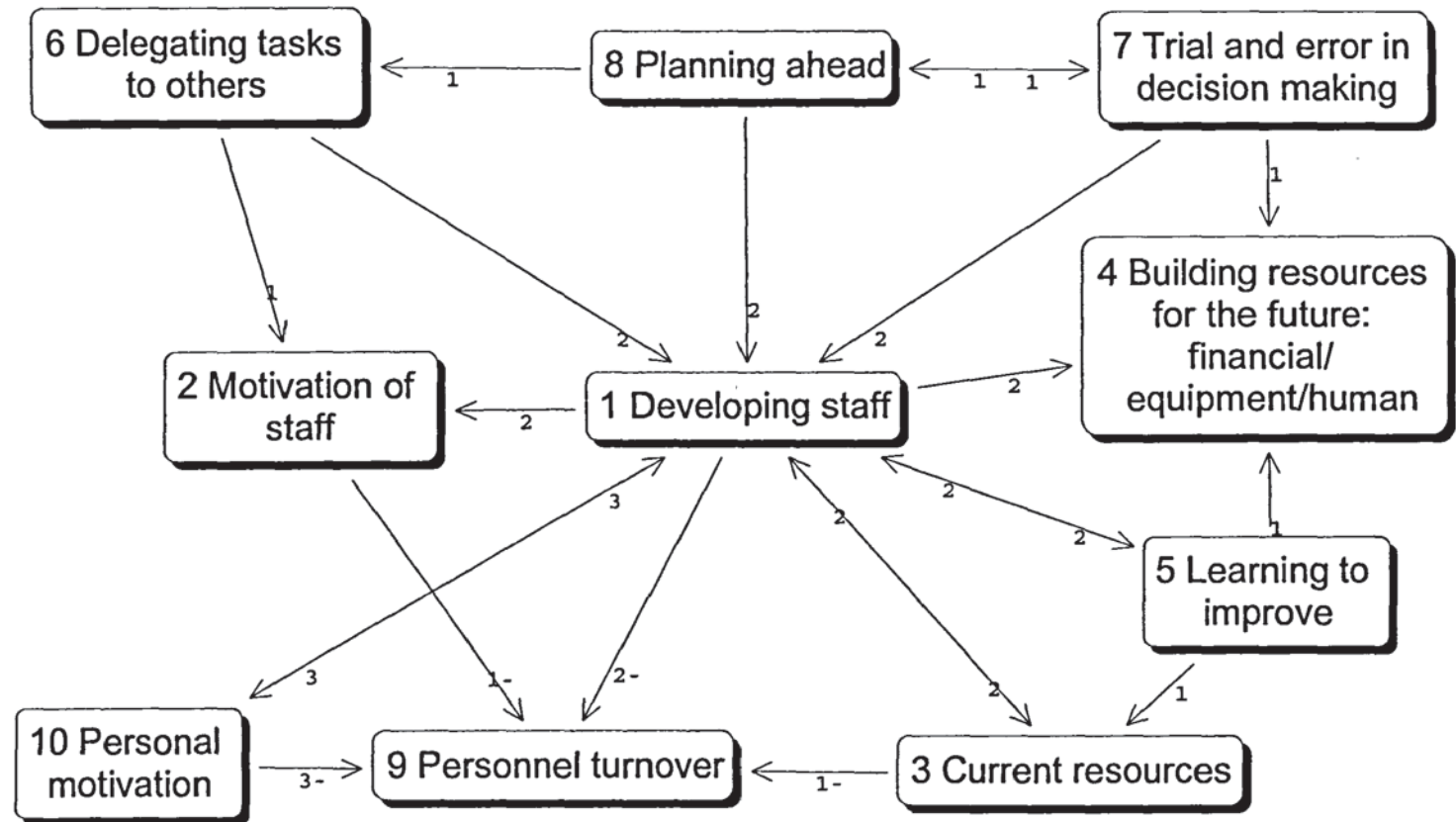
Cognitive Map of Respondent 38



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Cognitive Map of Respondent 40



APPENDIX 2

THE FULL TRANSCRIPTIONS OF ALL TAPED LADDERING INTERVIEWS

The transcriptions were made by two independent transcribers employed in this work at the Treasury Solicitors Department of H.M. Government U.K. The work was carried out during weekends.

Interview with Respondent 1 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 23 Sept. 2002

- Interviewer: I see that you have put down Geographic position of store as the most important factor. Why is that important to you?
Mr 1: Everyone is working to struggle to make it achieve based on nothing more or less than this one. The same goes for some other stores ? place or equally just inside the right place just nearer the tube station and that makes them a success.
- Interviewer: Okay, so that's like a success factor, essentially. Why is that important to you personally?
Mr 1: Because that's one of the major things that you can't control so there is absolutely nothing you can do about that. If it's wrong, it's wrong and it affects all your actions.
- Interviewer: Okay, so you can't control it so it's important because of that. Why is that issue really important, why is a control important?
Mr 1: Because it sets the agenda for what you can achieve. Some stores are about recording growth and other stores can be about just maintaining costs control within the corporate part of it. The store can be doing quite well but it's never going to be a success so you just control the costs. Somewhere else – okay, we're going to invest in this one, we're going to see what it can do.
- Interviewer: Is that important for your personal motivation?
Mr 1: Yeah, it's a lot easier to get motivated in a store that is growing and is successful. I mean obviously you have your successes in a sort of more defensive type of management role. You have your successes but they're not as easy to shout about. Not so positive.
- Interviewer: So, that motivation bit is really important to you. Why is it really important to you, is it important to your work experience.
Mr 1: Just from a personal point of view, I tend to come to work for the sake of work, so the motivation I have to get from the job. I'm not personally motivated by the money or whatever, just by the success of doing it and the success of the people that are in the store. It's more the people and other people's perception of their store.
- Interviewer: Okay, so perception. Is it a perception of quality maybe or perception of a well-run store from outside? Why is that issue really important to you personally?
Mr 1: I'm not too sure. Maybe I just like to see it. ? Not from the ambitious point of view or anything like that. I just like it to work.
- Interviewer: Great, thanks. Branded products we've got as another issue that's really important to you. Can you tell me why you think that's really important to you?
Mr 1: I think it's grown more and more in the last say, 5-10 years that people want ..
- Interviewer: Are you talking about manufacturers' brands?
Mr 1: Yes. Manufacturers brands, not our own products. Although a place for our own brands has gone away from like being a ? to something more innovative. So the innovation tends to come from the own brand but customers want to come in and find the same products that they know and trust like Stella Artois and that's what they want.
- Interviewer: Own brands innovation. This is quite an important issue for you as well. So you're highlighting here the happiness of the customer. They come in, recognise something and so maybe we're getting up towards another success factor, linking into before.

Service quality – next issue. Why is that important to you?

Mr 1: It's one of our company's point of difference. We are a smaller store so we can get closer to our customers and give them a more local and personal service than what we feel the larger stores can. It is also one of my actual strengths to get to know the customers and to be able to give them a level of service and feeling of belonging in the local community. That's the difference. You can go and get Heinz beans anywhere but we just add our bit on top and we give them Heinz beans with a smile.

Interviewer: Okay. So that's important for I suppose people coming back, people trusting the store.

Mr 1: Yes, we're very much aiming for the daily shopper so we're not trying to attract them with vast ranges and big price cuts. We just want them to come in because it is a pleasant part of their daily routine.

Interviewer: Okay. And can you think of why that is important to you personally so that why you want them to keep coming back. Is it presumably because it is a lot easier for business and that sort of stuff.

Mr 1: And what is another personal motivation that you can think of as to why that issue is very important? So that it's easier for business, it's.. It is. If people are satisfied then that's just another measure that I am doing something right.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr 1: No customer complaints or few customer complaints and a few compliments and we must be going in the right direction. This also gives an atmosphere of customers being able to talk to us and tell us what they want.

Interviewer: Another important issue?

Mr 1: Without shouting at you. They come and talk to you.

Interviewer: And so this nice and friendly atmosphere is important to you obviously as you have mentioned it quite a few times here and the service quality and given the right things, why is that terribly important to you personally?

Mr 1: Personally, that's just the way I like to live. Maybe lifestyle, or workstyle, I suppose, if you can put it like that. Workstyle

Interviewer: Brilliant. Thank you. Are there any other issues that are important to you? Maybe something different like internal efficiency. Why is that important to you?

Mr 1: Again, mostly due to the size of the store. The amount of staff you have. All the staff have to undertake a wide variety of tasks and so they have to be conversant and efficient at a wide variety of tasks so that they can adapt themselves to do quite a few different things rather than just being good at just a few. Then those tasks might take up all their time and that leaves me to do them.

Interviewer: So it reduces workload presumably?

Mr 1: But then it gives me time to think and be creative.

Interviewer: Your strategic managing role rather than just fire-fighting or whatever.

Thinking time is quite important. Are there any personal issues that you can think of as far as that is concerned. Why is that useful? How have you found it worked in the past or whatever?

Mr 1: I'm not sure how to answer that one but just generally about thinking time, we have to make the most use of any opportunities we get – talking with our peers, and some of the staff just about ideas. I personally need to spend a lot of time talking to people to sort of build up a picture.

Interviewer: Picture of what? Their needs of what they...?

Mr 1: Yeah, more a picture of how to resolve, actually a bit of both. Yeah, more a picture of the issues and the resolutions. Sometimes when you're just working you become blind to some of the issues. So occasionally, you need to stand back and take yourself out of it and talk to people to see what is actually wrong.

Interviewer: Great. So would this be something to do with what you consider to be a key issue as far as management is concerned? Can you elaborate a bit more than that?

Mr 1: Your motivation, why is it really important to you with regard to your thinking that this is the best way to manage. Again, because of the type of store we are, the smaller stores are more involved in routine tasks and your schedule involves some of the routine tasks and it's hard to break away and take a fresh look. We need the help of others to make sure ?. They need to help management do their bit and they need to from their peers and line management to every now and again just say oops, stop, come out. Let's have a look at this from a different angle.

Interviewer: How does that fit in with you? Have you found that to be very useful in the past or have you found it to be...?

Mr 1: Yes, as I said, we try and talk to our staff both formally and informally and at our sessions we can get ideas from them and then a lot of times it's quite surprising. This is what everyone else thinks and maybe what I'm doing is not quite right. Or not as important as you thought it was.

Interviewer: Right, I see so it needs an evaluation of the importance of issues. So does that feel as if maybe you were trying to get people on board to I suppose inform people and have maybe joint discussions about things...

Mr 1: Yes, I try to have very much an open culture and open discussions and give people all the information and then just invite them for their thoughts.

Interviewer: Can you tell me roughly what you feel as if you can be told by the control bit (?) or do you feel as if you have got control over with regard to success, for instance, the geographical position I can understand there is just nothing you can do about that. What can you do inside – this is a Convenience Stores Ltd. question I suppose this bit – what do they let you do, what can you do?

Mr 1: With agreement, no-one is going to say no. Not just now I know. As long as you can sell your idea and prove or give a hint of some proof that it will be a success. And it's not going to cost too much then yes, we are allowed to be flexible and creative.

Interviewer: What have you done in the past that you found, for instance, made quite a difference success-wise.

Mr 1: It's only mainly just staffing at different times. Particularly in this store we have done really well with Sunday trade. We have really built that up just by investing in a bit more staff than normal for Sunday and making sure we have got a good level of stock throughout the day. That has been a good lengthy (?) success. To get the initial okay to have a couple of more people on Sundays, it worked.

Interviewer: How about the layout of the store and that sort of stuff? How much control do you feel you have got over that?

Mr 1: Not so much in this store as it is quite a small store so there is not a lot you can do really. Not so much in this one. In other larger stores you can help deal more with promotional displays sort of linking products together. Space is quite a premium here so you can't really....

Interviewer: Yes. What about new product lines and traditional products?
Mr 1: That's quite strictly controlled by ? so we can only suggest then. We can take products which are available in larger stores but again, the space restricts us a little bit.

Interviewer: What is the policy about moving you around? Do you stay at one shop for quite a long time?
Mr 1: No. I have never been anywhere more than 3 years. I worked for another company before this one. I have never been anywhere within Convenience Stores Ltd. - only 18 months – 2 years on average. It's novel but it's something that I have done for the last 20 odd years so you start to run out of ideas and you relish a fresh challenge.

Interviewer: You like the challenge.
Mr 1: Yeah. I like all of that.

Interviewer: Do you have to move house a lot?
Mr 1: No, luckily, working in the London area there is always a ? within an hour or so. There are quite a few places to work.

Interviewer: Yeah, right. I think that's about it really. I think you have given me a lot of information to go and analyse and stuff.
Mr 1: Good.

Interviewer: Do you happen to have an e-mail address of something like that I can contact you.
Mr 1: Not a business one, a private one.

Interviewer: Can I use that? Perhaps you could write it at the top because we are trying to find some archetypal plans for people – cognitive maps is the term used for these so it's trying to find out some archetypal, cognitive maps of different people and how they think. So maybe you would find it interesting to find out what other people think in this area and see how, in theory, you should raise the same sort of issues and maybe try to link it to some issues about the size of stores or maybe geographical location but that's quite difficult, I suppose, because maybe people are moving round...
Mr 1: That's just what I was thinking actually. I wonder if it does change in respect of what size of store you are. The way you have to think to run that store.

Interviewer: Maybe you can give us a size criteria I should use on this rather than anything else. Is there anything you can think of? I've got size criteria in square feet there. Is there anything you can think of – number of staff – that's another size criteria.
Mr 1: Yeah, or we have three broad bands I suppose of convenience stores, supermarket and superstore. Those three areas will be different. I've always worked in supermarkets or convenience stores. I haven't worked in superstores.

Interviewer: Any other issues you think may be will change criteria, people's thinking?
Mr 1: Again, I think they would be very similar. I imagine that in the larger store the more business type decisions, strategic type decisions will come through rather than the local stores with a work catchment area?

Interviewer: What are your career options – is it to go to a larger store, is that what you would like to do eventually?

Mr 1: I'd like to work actually.

Interviewer: As long as you are happy with what you are doing?

Mr 1: Yeah, that's it. I mean as long as you can be somewhere where you can get a level of success then it's okay. I mean in this company we do tend to move from smaller to larger depending. You get stuck in the bigger stores. Then you work in the biggest one and what do you do then? There is only going to be one biggest store, isn't there?

Interviewer: Yes, that's true. What is your opinion of the different ways of thinking maybe at Head Office level compared to store managers. Do you think they will think differently about these sorts of issues?

Mr 1: On the operations side, probably not, I would hope. Like I said our company has got quite a flattish structure and way of thinking and we all attend pretty much the same courses so it should be fairly simple I would hope.

Interviewer: Non-operation side? More issues..

Mr 1: Again, they are involved in the same training, courses as we are all involved in but their focus is going to be that different. It's probably just that we understand enough about the way they work to sort of think that we've clicked (?) it.

Interviewer: Do you think I am going to find out some different things at different levels so far as the brand is concerned? What people conceptualise the brand?

Mr 1: You shouldn't do.

Interviewer: You think these issues are so universal company policy.

Mr 1: That's company line, that is. That's one of the good things about Convenience Stores Ltd. though. We are quite aware of our position in the market and the company and the individual stores and whatever. It's been such a drive for our success over the last six years both in the individual stores and the company that we know what we are good at. Being under 2 (?) means it is fresh and local is quite a difference. The value is pushing through.

Interviewer: I didn't know until I looked at the website that you did home delivery.

Mr 1: The website is waiting to be updated. We do have different local stores. We used to have, there was not an internet based delivery system. But we do hand-deliver from local stores.

Interviewer: I didn't know that.

Mr 1: Again, it's the local flexible thing. Some stores do. Where people come and shop and pick up and some stores operate a system whereby you can 'phone and order and then pay by cash or cheque.

Interviewer: Did you try and do the internet thing like Tesco's?

Mr 1: Yes, I was actually involved in a central London, out of Kensington store. They finally close down the operations this month or next month I think.

Interviewer: Did it work?

Mr 1: No, it's just not, you need the volumes of scale. That's the hardest problem. You need to carry the range.

Interviewer: I know and I know Tesco's has a lot of trouble with deliveries and what has been put on the delivery van is not what's on the order. It's very difficult.
Mr 1: Delivering in London is difficult. You need two people – one to deliver it and one to drive round the block. You can't stop. Everyone who wants a delivery in London moves to a fifth floor flat! Loads of bottled water, what a surprise! So you just have to – all the major ones are struggling. But if it's working, it is a threat to local stores.

Interviewer: Length of service with the company. So you have been with Convenience Stores Ltd. for eight years?
Mr 1: Yes.

Interviewer: How long have you been with the industry?
Mr 1: Twenty odd years since 1977.

Interviewer: Thanks very much. Very kind of you.

Interview with Respondent 2 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 24 Sept 2002

- Interviewer: Some of these items that you have put as your most important factors. Knowledge of customers – now why are you looking for different links here between why you think that's important. Why is that particular factor really important to you?
- Mr 2: Because if you know what a customer is like, especially on the fast foods, aim your market at their own products, get it in during the week so you will have a very similar customer base every week. The same people will come in and buy the same thing.
- Interviewer: So repeat customers. So why are repeat customers really important to you?
- Mr 2: Because if they keep coming back, we must be doing something right. This is a success factor because they know they can get it so they will come here rather than go somewhere else.
- Interviewer: Okay. Where else do they go to by the way?
- Mr 2: There is a Tescos at Rickmansworth or Amersham and there is a Tescos in Watford, Sainsburys, you name it...
- Interviewer: Why is that success factor really important to you? You want to be successful in your..
- Mr 2: I feel that if I keep tempting the customers back, there must be something I am doing right. I am offering the right service or the right products.
- Interviewer: So it's personal job satisfaction.
- Mr 2: Okay, service quality. Another issue of high important. A lot of people put this one as quite high importance. Why is it important to you? Maybe similar sort of things.
- Mr 2: It's for the customers. I feel that if they are happy with the service, again they are going to keep coming back so there will be repeat business again. If they can come in, get what they want without queuing up, even if it's for a packet of fags or whatever, they come in, get it and go. As long as they are happy with their visit.
- Interviewer: It's convenience, speed. Okay – company brand image. Why is that important to you?
- Mr 2: Because Convenience Stores Ltd. show down here that they've got a good company name and people know Convenience Stores Ltd. for good quality, good service and reputation. They do have some good promotions.
- Interviewer: Why are these things really important to you? Reputation, for instance? Do you want to work for a good company or is it, what is it?
- Mr 2: Yes, I think I want to be working for a successful company which will, in turn, hopefully make me more successful.
- Interviewer: Personal success. And what sort of personal success criteria do you have, do you think?
- Mr 2: Just running a successful store.
- Interviewer: Is it a career development thing? Are you wanting to run bigger stores?
- Mr 2: Yes, I would like to run a big store. One of the biggest in the company just down the road, Chalfont St Peter.

Interviewer: And why would you want to be one of the top guys around here. What is the personal motivation behind it?
Mr 2: That I achieved everything I set out to do. I have achieved running a small store, I could achieve running a big store. Just so that everyone could say that he's done well for himself. He's managed to work his way up to a big store. So as an achievement and recognition that I've done it.

Interviewer: Is it the money reward that is interesting you or is it or any other type of reward?
Mr 2: It's not really the money. It's just certain customers and having a successful store. It really comes in handy but you can get money whatever you do. The money is not brilliant in retail, the hours aren't brilliant in retail.

Interviewer: What else are you committed to apart from giving service?
Mr 2: Being successful in the store. Be a well-known manager. Someone who manages the big store.

Interviewer: Personal success, achievement.

Mr 2: Your personal motivation. This is quite an important issue.
I feel that if I'm motivated it shows to the customers and the staff and they can see that I'm highly motivated and that I'm enjoying my job and I want to give them back something in return for the fact that I'm enjoying myself.

Interviewer: Job enjoyment bit again. You obviously do enjoy your job which is good.
Mr 2: I do.

Interviewer: What aspects do you think you really enjoy? The fact that you're in charge of it, that you can do lots of things?
Mr 2: You're working as part of a team. I enjoy working with people and getting to know different people. I am more of a people person than a figures person. I'd rather be on the floor than sitting in here doing paperwork.

Interviewer: I hate admin. I'm terrible at it really. Motivating staff.
Mr 2: I feel motivated so that will go through to the staff. He's up for the job – why can't we be? I want to make sure the store is successful.

Interviewer: Do you find a bit of a buzz when that happens?
Mr 2: Yes, sometimes when I come back from holiday, they can see I'm up for it and I want to do well and want to get the store moving forward. When I start talking to the team members who are talkative and friendly I start to enjoy the day as well. Just my way of being out and about and talking to them.

Interviewer: What sort of data do you use as far as your customers go. You obviously have a good feel for them by being around all the time and being friendly with them and they ask you questions.
Mr 2: So we stock and order all our fresh foods which obviously we do daily.

Interviewer: Do you do that rather than Head Office?

Mr 2: I buy from order books and I log onto a big Tescos who have a computer system. That gives us a more in-depth way of seeing what our customers want themselves rather than what Head Office says. That helps and also we can keep them at six months at a time. I can see what the average customer spends at the computer myself and sales per item and all that sort of thing.

Interviewer: And do you have the power to order here or do you have to send off?

Mr 2: We get told what we can stock. Especially on the grocery and the other side of things. We got told what we can stock. If something is being promoted, we are allowed to stock than one as well. Fresh is a bit more up to us at the moment because we can stock what lines we want to almost. But long ago this was controlled by Head Office. It's a mix.

Interviewer: You can influence things and you can be successful with your empire you have got or do you feel as if there is a bit of a tension here.

Mr 2: I feel there can be. Obviously all the stores are different. Each store is set up by people who have got a lot more sales experience than I have. For the whole market not just our company. They've been successful in other places, we can be successful here. Eventually customers will get used to what we stock. If I know they stock this and they stock that, then they will come in and buy it, they won't think they used to have this when are they going to get it back again. Which is good. They come in, buy what they want and think they have got everything they wanted. Another successful visit for them again.

Interviewer: You can basically explain some of these items here. Why did you put car parking knowledge of customers?

Mr 2: Because we've got an issue with car parks at the moment. You can only park out there for a certain amount of time. Then of course customers won't bother to come, I get irregular customers who don't know what they want to buy. It makes me out of sync with my customers and I can't achieve the success I want to.

Interviewer: A bit of negative one for you.

Mr 2: That's one of the negative ones and the store is a bit negative – the fact that it's getting old and needs a refit.

Interviewer: You didn't think the investment bid was all the geographical positions..

Mr 2: I think the geographical position is fine. We're right on the High Street of Chorleywood. People go through it, pop in. The internal look of the store is a bit dated but that's being sorted out in January anyway so that's getting sorted out anyway. So we're getting there.

Interviewer: I've been around a lot of stores. Quite a lot of them have not been updated.

Mr 2: Yes, so we're having a big change which is for the first time in a few years which is just after Christmas. Customers are looking forward to it and so am I.

Interviewer: No room for a car park basically. That's it.

Mr 2: No room at all.

Interviewer: Do you suggest your success is partly determined because you haven't got a car park and..

Mr 2: Yes, in a way of thinking because as soon as the car park came in about a year ago, sales dropped quite a bit. I think it does affect the sales in a way.

Interviewer: So when you have put in like this bit here – it's going down..

Mr 2: I think it's because of the car park and we are closing earlier this year than we were last year. Two hours in the evening but I don't know how busy we were because I wasn't actually here then. It might affect the sales of the store.

Interviewer: Shorter opening hours and no car park.

Mr 2: What did you have before then? Did you normally have unlimited car parking?
Unlimited parking. Now it's two hours and you have to move on.

Interviewer: It's interesting because not so much with the car park, the position of the store people think is quite important because they haven't got any control over that often and they often may be lumbered with a store that's not in a great position..

Mr 2: I think we're in a good position. We've got a place over the road, we've got a news agency inside of us. Just over the road, there's an off licence, butchers, Boots the chemist..

Interviewer: People don't stay very long because they can't park very easily.

Mr 2: It is a problem but you can get round most of them in two hours. Either that or come in one day and do the shopping in one place. I was aware of the customers coming in every day or every week. Now they come in every Friday. So now on Fridays I see them, on Mondays I see this person and on Tuesdays I see that person.

Interviewer: So one issue is product emotions and knowledge of customers.

Mr 2: Are you suggesting that you can direct your product.
I think I can direct. We have a leaflet every two weeks and we feature about 10-12 items in this store alone. I know what my customers like so I think that would go well in here so let's do a big feature of that

Interviewer: And you have got a choice to do that..

Mr 2: Yes, so we have got control over that – the smaller stores haven't got the space to store. Otherwise I'd bring the whole lot in and go mad but I can't do that. So I feel that I know what the customers like so I will stock up on those ones.

Interviewer: Advertising – can you do much of that locally? Or is it done in Head Office.

Mr 2: I know we're in The Sun and in The Mail we have an advert every two weeks there is our main promotions. I think the leaflet gets distributed in the local papers. We've got pages in the front. I think they'll come in and say have you got any of this or that they've seen on the poster. Especially for people who have just come in here to do the offers or whatever. We offer a delivery service as well.

We had a woman in here who lived 3 miles away. She rang up every week – can I have 4 of this, 4 of that and 4 of that on offer. That's the only thing she would go on – the promotional leaflet. So in a way they help themselves a lot. Buy one get one free. Then we get the money back at the end of the week. They don't know that, they think they're getting a bargain. But chances are they'll just buy two of it anyway. So that sort of thing helps big time.

Interviewer: Thanks very much. That's it. It worked very well. I've got an interesting idea of how you think about things and the different issues you think.
Mr 2: It's a change – almost like going back to school. How I think about things, and why I think about things. It's interesting to do.

Interview with Respondent 3 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 7 Oct 2002, 2pm

Interviewer: OK. First of all you mention service quality as an important issue. As the most important issue, can you tell me why that factor's really important to you?
Mr 3: That's what customers demand nowadays. Pricing is isn't that important. But our customers, and especially our customer base, they want service, and if they don't get the service, then they'll go somewhere else. They don't complain, they vote with their feet. And that is retail nowadays. I think most people are no longer greatly concerned about the differential in prices, the way you're treat. Convenience Stores Ltd. as a company are small. And if you look at the likes of Tescos, you go into a Tesco or an Asda and you're treated as a number. We know an awful lot of our customers by name. And it makes a big difference. And that's why they shop with us. They're not worried that the products are few pence dearer. Or the special offers might not be so good. But they visit us daily and know a lot of my staff by name. And it's a different culture.

Interviewer: OK. So you think that, it's customer demand, as to how to make sure you fit in what customers really want. And why is that issue really important to?
Mr 3: Why is it important to me?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 3: I'm obviously here on behalf of the company to make sure the store is as profitable and to take to take the store as forward as far as we can.

(Interruption)

And at the end of the day I can't do that if the customers aren't happy. Else I can't do it if the staff aren't happy. So that's selling one to get the other.

Interviewer: OK. So why is that issue really important to you. Why is that a moving forward issue...? Is it for your personal satisfaction? Or what is it for?
Mr 3: It's a job that the company pay me to do. On the other hand, I like to think that I'm professional and I do my job well, so.

Interviewer: OK. Professional job. And maybe some responsibility to the company as well?
Mr 3: Yeah.

(Interruption)

Interviewer: Do you feel that there are other responsibilities (background noise)
Mr 3: I've got a responsibility to my employees.

Interviewer: Employees as well.
Mr 3: The more profitable the store is, the more job security they've got. The majority of people that are promoted within a business are promoted from a successful part of it. So if you've got a successful branch then chances are that a younger management team are going to go on to bigger and better things.

Interviewer: OK great. Can I ask you about personal motivation? You recognise that as a really key issue as well. Why is that issue really important to you?

Mr 3: If you don't enjoy your job you don't do it very well. I'd put it like that. It's an old-fashioned word and to be honest, speaking to some of the youngsters nowadays it's not that important, but it's job satisfaction. Yeah? And nowadays it is more a case of go to the highest bidder.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 3: And if you go back to my generation it's not about going to the highest bidder it's about doing it's about job, it's about loyalty. I mean I've been in this game for 25 years and I've actually only ever moved company once. Been through numerous buy-outs, but I've only ever moved company once. Because I didn't like the culture.

Interviewer: What was the culture that you didn't like?

Mr 3: The culture I didn't like was Asda about 10 years ago, 12 years ago. And it wasn't nice. You couldn't talk to your staff. I couldn't go and have a cup of coffee with my staff in the canteen, let alone go and have dinner with them. You were not allowed to do that 10 or 12 years ago. They were animals and I didn't want to become an animal.

Interviewer: That was when the deputy chairman of the Conservative Party or whatever...?

Mr 3: It was just before he came in. Yeah. Archie Norman yeah. Just before he came in. I mean I believe now it's an entirely different kettle of fish, now you've got Walmart taken them over. It's far more you know, staff-friendly. But I mean at the time it wasn't a nice regime at all. People worked in fear. And. If you're not a big enough animal to do something about it then get out. Because you can't.... It's no good being miserable in what you do.

Interviewer: No no. Good point, very good point. And I have the same philosophy myself I must admit. OK so you feel loyal, you want to enjoy your job, you feel as though everything's working out. Do you feel that this is to do with the things we've just mentioned? Job security, doing a professional job? Is it to do with your career path at all or? Is it to do with some other loyalty to your family? Making sure you are doing a good job for them?

Mr 3: Yeah I mean at the end of the day I come to work for my family. And I think the older you get, I think the more important that becomes. When you've only got yourself and maybe a wife to worry about, if you want to change your career and take a year out, then you can do it. When you've got kids that are one step away from university, or daughters that want to become vets and things like then, then you've got to take a different outlook. But I think it's all part of growing up and maturing and things like that. It doesn't affect the way I do my job.

Interviewer: Right. What do you think really affects the way you do your job?

Mr 3: I think it's the way you're treated by your superiors. You've got to be happy in the job you're doing. You've got to get a lot of self-satisfaction out of it. But at the end of the day if the company doesn't recognise your skills, or chooses not to recognise your skills, then that puts a different light on things.

Interviewer: Right. So you feel as if being a valued member of a management team is....

Mr 3: Of a team, I think that's very very important. If you're not valued you'll go somewhere else.

Interviewer: Yeah. Great. Thank you very much. That's great. The other issue we've touched on is shared corporate culture. And you've somewhat touched on that with the Asda experience I think.

Mr 3: I think it's important that you're all sort of batting for the same side. Whether it be through company policy or... I think it's.... We've just been taken over by a company, Convenience Stores Ltd. has been bought by an XXX company XXXXX.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 3: And within 3 weeks, well within 4 weeks of being bought out, we were all taken to a conference and the head buy stood up there and said right, this is where we want to go. You are the people to take us there. And that is important. You need to know, you know company-wise, as a store manager I may believe that I'm doing a very good job, but if I'm not doing the job the company want me to do, then it doesn't matter how good a job I think I'm doing.

Interviewer: Mm. So. In that sort of vision of the future that they had, what sort of vision did they...?
Mr 3: Well that basically, I mean they've moved into the UK market, they don't intend to stand still. We're looking at doubling the size of the company almost within the next 5 years. And there are opportunities there for everybody that is in the company.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you feel as if you're pulling....?
Mr 3: Yeah, you're part of a team.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you very much. Corporate culture. Can you explain sort of what you think the corporate culture is. Is it your store and Convenience Stores Ltd. generally, do you think they're different. What sort of culture are you trying to instil to people, to staff?
Mr 3: Loyalty. Honesty. Treat others as you expect to be treated. A fair day's work for a fair day's pay. I would much prefer to see someone do 75% of their job and do that well, than to do 100% of it and only give me 80% of the standard that we require.

Interviewer: Yeah. Why is that issue really important to you? That loyalty, honesty, well we've somewhat touched on that because you've said about your ethos, your philosophy of working...
Mr 3: If you're working with a team of people you've got to be able to trust them.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 3: You're handling cash. You're handling high value stock. And at the end of the day you've got to trust the people that are doing that for you. If you don't, then why are they doing the job?

Interviewer: Yeah. OK great. Knowledge of customers. Why is that really important to you? You're linking in with.....?
Mr 3: It's linked in with the way the store trades. We are a niche supermarket group. We're not an Asda, we're not Tesco's. A lot the products we have on our shelves you wouldn't even find in an Asda.... And vice versa. I think percentage-wise we are far more fresh food driven. Because we're aiming at people on a daily basis. Whereas most of the big boys, it's sort of once a week or once a fortnight. That's not us. We're a daily business. Which is very very important. And the whole of our distribution centre is linked around a daily fresh food delivery. So that is very much linked into the corporate policy as well.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. Fits together to make sure that this fresh stuff is there. Developing staff. This is a key issue I suppose. You've talked about quite a few issues about developing staff. It's obviously very important to you.
Mr 3: I think it's the biggest sign of a manager's success. Personally.

Interviewer: So why is that important to you? Is it to do with the professionalism of your job? Or is it enjoyment? Satisfaction? What issues?

Mr 3: I think it's part of my job to develop people that possibly become store managers or. I mean one of my ex-deputies is now my boss.

Interviewer: Right.

(laughter)

Mr 3: I've produced what, I've produced about four store manager, one regional controller, and numerous supervisors. I've had people that have gone on to manage Waitrose, people that have gone to manage in Sainsburys.

Interviewer: And you feel proud that you've played a part in their development or?

Mr 3: Yeah. I mean at the end of the day. Everyone can be a success at something. Everybody is good at something. And it's a case of, can you identify that? And 9 times out of 10 all they need is somebody to put the opportunity their way. And if you put the opportunity their way and they take it, then I think that's a very good thing.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr 3: Everybody is good at something. Nobody is totally useless at everything.

Interviewer: Yeah it's just a matter of finding it.

Mr 3: Yeah it's a matter of tuning in to what they're good at. Or they might be absolutely useless at figures, but when it actually comes to talking to people and coach, they could be brilliant. But it's a case of finding out what those skills are. That's one of my jobs.

Interviewer: Right. And why is that job important to you? Because that's a bit different to what a lot of people think. I happen to think exactly the same myself but, some people don't think like that. Why do you think that's important to you personally?

Mr 3: It helps. If they're being developed you can have a better team member. But also as an employer, I dunno, we're old-fashioned. I think you've got a duty, you've got a duty to help people develop and not to hold people back. I mean the days of it being us and them, they're dead, they're gone. The person that you help today is the person that tomorrow is going to get you out of the soft and smelly stuff.

(laughter)

They are. You're not buying them. But what you're doing is you put them in a position where you can develop them. I mean it comes to a point sometimes where people cannot be developed any further. And they've found actually what their threshold is. I think it's a sad thing with management in this country that the majority of people do not reach their potential.

Interviewer: Is it partly because they don't take the opportunities that are presented to them or?

Mr 3: I don't think that the opportunities are put there. I think, I still think there's a very - don't teach them too much they might take my job - yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 3: I mean we spent a while in the States, and the difference in culture between their way of thinking and our way of thinking, it's frightening. It's absolutely frightening.

Interviewer: In what ways?

Mr 3: Well. They're so go-ahead. Give someone the opportunity. Give them the chance. If they fall flat on their face they fall flat on their face. Better to fall flat on their face than not be given the opportunity.

Interviewer: Very good. I think I've got a lot of information there. Thank you very much. Last but not least. Can I ask you a tiny bit about the strengths of these things? You reckon that developing staff leads to motivation of staff, all wrapped into one sort of thing. Employee flexibility, motivation of staff is linked.

Mr 3: All linked in. Yeah.

Interviewer: This plus 2. What does that refer to? Does it refer to this connection or does it refer to that connection or?

Mr 3: That one really. I think the motivation gives you the flexibility.

Interviewer: Yeah OK.

Mr 3: You've got to put something in to take something out. Which is the opposite way. Most people think you can take out before you put in. But you've got to do it the other way round to get the best results. You must put some input in, then you can take something out.

Interviewer: OK. Motivation of staff. Is this the plus 2 for this one here or is it for this one here?

Mr 3: I think it's linked. I think they're both the same.

Interviewer: OK. Plus 3. Is this a strong link here? Personal motivation?

Mr 3: Personal motivation yeah.

Interviewer: Flexibility is a very strong link?

Mr 3: Yeah but I would say that goes to all of them.

Interviewer: Right I see. Personal motivation is sort of linked to... I see what you mean now, I understand, OK I get that. That makes sense then. I was trying to make sense of what you...

Mr 3: It should actually go up through...

Interviewer: Yeah. OK. And head office support. That's because the head office have given you a lot of support and think the same way as you do, that encourages you to be more motivated?

Mr 3: Well I've got that down as a minus 1.

(laughter)

Interviewer: OK right.
Mr 3: It can it can be, it can have adverse effects.

Interviewer: This is for me sorry (scribbling).
Mr 3: Because I mean. It depends how your head office works. Our head office is very archaic. Yeah? They don't come out to stores.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 3: So I'll give you an example yeah? I mean. We've got a major day on Wednesday. Got a brand new promotion to set up for the next month. It will be massive work, and I mean massive work. Working probably a horrendous amount of hours to try and get it done. I guarantee someone from head office will phone up on Wednesday and ask for something that is totally irrelevant. Can you go and count the suntan lotion. Now we're thinking about planning for Christmas yeah? Because they don't know. Yeah?

Interviewer: Yes..

(laughter)
Mr 3: They're not.

Interviewer: Not to your way of thinking.
Mr 3: Don't get me wrong. To them, the suntan lotion is really really important yeah? And someone needs the information. But someone doesn't know what's going on in the store. And at the end of the day, I pay their wages, they don't pay mine. I'm the one that generates the turnover. I'm the one that generates...

Interviewer: ... head office yeah...
Mr 3: Yeah. And most head offices don't....

Interviewer: Don't feel like that no.

(laughter)

Mr 3: You're right of course. I agree with you entirely.
And it's the same with the shared corporate... I don't.. it's not a big minus yeah?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 3: But...
Interviewer: But is' more of a negative than a plus.
Mr 3: It's more a negative than a plus. I mean you could almost put like, zeros.

Interviewer: OK. So developing staff you think is very important. This one here? Internal efficiency. Developing staff? Is this a 2?

Mr 3: Yeah that's 2.

Interviewer: OK.

Mr 3: It should almost come backwards that one.

Interviewer: Yeah. That sort of thing?

Mr 3: Yeah.

Interviewer: Various qualities important as you say.

Mr 3: What I wanted to do was a hub. With economic conditions at the middle. Because unfortunately it's the one thing that is out of everybody's control.

Interviewer: It is yeah.

Mr 3: But it's the one thing that dictates everybody's business. Yeah almost that, with the spokes coming off it.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK. It is a very good point you're making. Also, maybe some other things you think are out of your control, I was going to ask you this question and you've just raised it. What things do you feel as if they are out of control, economic conditions being one of them? Are there any other things? And what things would you like to have more control of?

Mr 3: There's nothing else on there that is out of my control. That's the only one.

Interviewer: Ur huh.

Mr 3: I've even got some control over that, and I've got some control over that. Because we have conferences.

Interviewer: Right I see.

Mr 3: But that, I've got no control over.

Interviewer: Are there any other things that you think you should have control over? This is a difficult one.

Mr 3: No not really.

Interviewer: Ordering or?

Mr 3: I've got total control over that.

Interviewer: You've got that?

Mr 3: Yeah. There's no allocations coming...

Interviewer: OK. So you feel pretty happy with that control bit, but of course this one, nobody's got control of that anyway really?

Mr 3: No. And I think that's probably why it's such a big minus.

Interviewer: Yes. Right.
Mr 3: It's the one thing that's out of everybody's control.

Interviewer: Some people say that sometimes the store is slightly out of their control. The position of the store and this sort of stuff? That could be as a given, you're here now and that's it?
Mr 3: At the end of the day, it doesn't matter where you are, you're either in control of the situation or you're not.

Interviewer: And you think that's a management job.
Mr 3: That's a management job. To know what is going on within these four walls. What's doing on outside. What your customer base is. When you need the stock. Where you need the stock. When you need the staff. Where you need the staff. What calibre of staff you need.

Interviewer: I think we've covered quite a lot of issues in quite a short time.
Mr 3: I hope so.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.
Mr 3: That's all right.

Interviewer: I think it's very interesting. And I've agreed with lots of things you've said, which I don't see very often I must admit, because people have different views on these sort of things...
Mr 3: Probably because, we're probably about the same age group yeah?

(laughter)

Interviewer: Yeah maybe you're right.
Mr 3: Yeah and we have a different outlook on life.

Interviewer: Maybe you're right.

(laughter)

Interviewer's note: Mr 3 thought that his large growth in turnover was due to him focusing on customers that were a daily shop rather than a weekly shop and he suggested that he changed the whole store around to focus on fresh vegetables and layout has been changed to focus on this. He suggested that's where Convenience Stores Ltd. should be focussed and he's done more than perhaps most to do this. He suggested that initially it was quite difficult and he lost some trade because of it, but he's turned the store around and increased turnover because of this issue.

Interview with Respondent 4 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 30 Oct 2002

- Interviewer: You've put down personal leadership style as a key important factor, can you tell me the reason behind that? Why is that important to you?
Mr 4: Because that's how I would motivate myself, my personal leadership, things like what I take responsibility for, in my own life, not just in work.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: Not. Things that, within my personal leadership, are things that I can change, and not other people.
- Interviewer: So you feel it's like a control, you can control them sort of thing?
Mr 4: Yes. I can chose how I feel about certain situations. I've got the choice to say, someone's not turned up for work today, and I'm not going to fly off the handle at them, but sort it some other way.
- Interviewer: Right. I see. I suppose the question is, what is your personal leadership style?
Mr 4: What is it? Oh right. Well. Laid back I think. Approachable. Friendly. You know, I'm just, I am young so am inexperienced, so maybe these things will change over the. But at the moment, I think it's better to be, not come down on people with like a rod of iron.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: To people. And encourage them to come to me. And if they can give me feedback with something I'm doing wrong, I'd welcome that as well.
- Interviewer: Yeah. Excellent. So why is that aspect of your personal leadership style very very important to you personally do you think?
Mr 4: Well. If people see that I'm like that, hopefully that will encourage them to be like that as well. My assistant managers and my staff.
- Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 4: And, the more people I develop, will be I think the more measure of how successful I am. There more leaders I develop underneath me.
- Interviewer: Sorry?
Mr 4: The more leaders I develop underneath me, rather than just telling people what to do.
- Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 4: Do you know what I mean?
- Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 4: By me seeing myself as a leader myself, I can hopefully teach other people.
- Interviewer: Yes by example sort of thing?
Mr 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: I've got you yeah. Yeah I think that's quite important as well, because I suppose somebody recently said, well, actually one of the guys that was under me quite a while back, now he's my boss, and he's sort of, well, it works together like a network type of thing in some respects doesn't it?

Mr 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Why is that developing people really important for you personally? Why do you think? Is it to do with your career? Is it to do with your wanting to be a good manager or?

Mr 4: Yeah. I think it would be more to do with being a good manager. Because you can have the best standards in the world and you're still not taking any more money. You can have the best procedures in the world and you're still, you won't be any more busy.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 4: But if you develop more people. Then I think you're being a good manager. If you're encouraging people to grow in their own environment.

Interviewer: Very good. So do you think it's, as far as this leadership style and trying to develop people are concerned, they stand out, it's a very powerful way of going ahead. Why do you think you feel like that? Why do you think it's your, what are your goals, what do you get out of it?

Mr 4: Pride I think. I don't know if that's a good one though. When you see someone as doing something for themselves.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 4: Instead of coming to you and saying – What do I do with this? – It's more sort of, yeah, I think pride would be the biggest one.

Interviewer: And they take the responsibility for their jobs in some respects. Does that leave you with more free time, is it less hassle, is it?

Mr 4: Yeah. The time to do things more effectively I think. More different things. So I've not got my head down and I've cut everything else off. Now I can sort of look up and you can plan, plan ahead more effectively.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK. Do you think it feeds into your career aspirations? Does it sort of influence your wage packet, or does it?

Mr 4: Well not at the moment it doesn't. I don't know. I think that this is a, this is the way the company would be better off moving towards. If all managers tried to develop people.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 4: I think it can only be a good thing. Plus when I go home. I've never sacked anyone.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 4: I know that there are times when you have to.

Interviewer: You're tempted.

Mr 4: Yeah.

(laughter)

There are probably times when you have to. And there are times when you have to, but I can go home and know that I'm all right with that, because I did everything before that I could have done.

Interviewer: Yes yes yes. You have a very positive attitude to them, and if they mess up, it's probably because of their own.. in some respects.
Mr 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: And do you feel as if it gives you job satisfaction. This way of operating?
Mr 4: Yeah. It does yeah. Because when you've got a motivated team, everyone's happier when the team is motivated, everyone else is happier as well. And I'm sure the customers can notice that, if there's a happy team, I'm sure..

Interviewer: Yes yes. Right. Very very strong philosophy there I think. On personal motivation, you've linked that to that in quite clear terms. On the map here. Why is that? Why is motivation really important to you?
Mr 4: Although I feel that I'm developing people which is why I put that on there on there, that's something that will motivate me. Is that the sort of thing you meant there, because that's? What would motivate me is getting this right, and doing that. That's what gives me, that's motivational.

Interviewer: Yes. I see. So it's an end result of these things happening in some respects?
Mr 4: Yeah. I think that leads to that.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 4: Personal leadership leads to motivation.

Interviewer: So you put it up like that way?
Mr 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: But what about the other way round? Your personal motivation for your style?
Mr 4: Well yeah I suppose it would do yeah. The more motivated I am, I think the more I'd, well probably go down that way as well then, but the more I want to improve myself and, by doing that, by improving myself, I'll be improving my personal leadership.

Interviewer: Yeah. And I suppose. I'm not putting words into your mouth, but your philosophy of doing that, is directly coming from your motivation for doing these things. Do you see it in that way or?
Mr 4: Yeah I think so yeah.

Interviewer: So we could probably put that..
Mr 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why is that sort of personal motivation or these interlink wise, because they link together in quite a lot of respects? Why is that really important to you?
Mr 4: Motivation is important because I think, well if you're not motivated then, what's the point of me coming in here really, if I don't want to?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: You know, if I'm not getting out of it what I want to, not just get paid for it. But if I'm not getting the results in people.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: Then I wouldn't, why would I want to come in, basically?

Interviewer: You wouldn't be interested in the job if you felt like this?
Mr 4: No. It's not a. The money's good. But it's not a motivator. Motivators are things like seeing other people do well. And getting recognised for that as well I think, if I'm being totally honest. Recognised for developing people.

Interviewer: Yeah right. And that recognition, you would say no doubt that that puts you in the category of manager, and somebody that other managers respect, and that sort of thing?
Mr 4: Yeah. So you want respect and status probably as well. So satisfy that need on the way.

Interviewer: OK great. You've also said learning to improve is very important to you. Can you explain why that's really important?
Mr 4: It's probably just another need that you have that isn't satisfied by money, or by any of the other things from the job.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: Advancing myself.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think?
Mr 4: In all ways. Learning new management techniques. How to talk to people. Going on little courses they sometimes send us on.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: And how to pass it on to people.

Interviewer: And have you found that they've helped?
Mr 4: Yeah definitely yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: Yeah. Things like understanding what an effect, what things, how I see things have on other people.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 4: So I think about that much more now.

Interviewer: Yes right.
Mr 4: Little things.

Interviewer: Can you give us an example of how you've learnt something that you might have done in the past? This is a very big learning experience isn't it? Because in fact it's very difficult to teach anybody these sort of things?
Mr 4: Yeah. Before, I still do it now sometimes but I try, I think I'm getting better at it. Say if I'm in the office there, trying to tap an order on. Someone will come in and I'll be hearing them but I won't really listen to them, I'll be tapping away. But now what I'll try to do is stop what I'm doing, turn around, and actually just listen them, give them undivided attention basically. That's one.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 4: Another one is, instead of telling people what to do, get them to figure it out.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: Pull them instead of pushing them to do it I suppose.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: Because they know anyway. They know how to do it.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 4: I don't know if it's like confirmation that it's all right from me. But they know how to do it, so it's just trying to get that out of them by asking the right questions.

Interviewer: So just giving them a bit more confidence to get stuck in and do it themselves sort of thing. OK. And learning to improve generally for your personal career. What aspects are you really concerned about there? You know is it being the best manager in the region or whatever it is?
Mr 4: Yeah. For my career.

Interviewer: I mean they've given you a good store here, let's face it... Seen from the outside it looks, I don't know, but it looks really nice.
Mr 4: Yeah, we are one of the better ones yeah.

Interviewer: It's a nice area and it's nice.
Mr 4: Yeah. Could have been a lot worse.

Interviewer: So they've given you a good one?
Mr 4: They they have yeah.

Interviewer: So you must be pleased?

Mr 4: Yeah definitely. Yeah, I'm not sure if I'm pleasing them, but I think I am pleasing them hopefully.

(laughter)

Interviewer: So what do you think you're going to get out of this? Learning and gradually developing yourself?

Mr 4: Well, it's all quite new in our company I think. This, putting the emphasis more on developing people.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 4: Being a manager rather than a shopkeeper.

Interviewer: Yes. OK. Yeah.

Mr 4: So I think. You know, I'm committed to that. And I'm not so sure there are so many people out there that think the way I do, rather than the old way.

Interviewer: Yeah OK. That's a good point. What. I certainly understand where you're coming from. What do you think the old way was precisely?

Mr 4: People have called it I think baseball bat management.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. Hitting people over the head, going in heavy handed and.

Mr 4: Telling them what to do all the time. It's all tell tell tell.

Interviewer: Yeah and they don't take any responsibility. They don't develop themselves. And you have to keep on telling them all the time?

Mr 4: Yeah that's it.

Interviewer: And they come to you. And you can't delegate then?

Mr 4: That's it.

Interviewer: Have you experienced that? Because you've been an assistant manager?

Mr 4: Yeah. I've been an assistant manager, and I've been a shop floor assistant and a checkout, I've seen that.

Interviewer: You've seen it happen. And what are the consequences? With staff?

Mr 4: Well some people are very successful. The staff, I think they're unmotivated. There was a high turnover of staff in one store that I was at. I don't think the staff were very happy, let's put it like that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 4: And the manager wasn't very open I don't think. I don't know if that led to it, or if he was uncomfortable with that.

Interviewer: And you can see some negative consequences from that management style or whatever?

Mr 4: Yeah. I mean they were quite successful and very high up in the company.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 4: And they've done well for themselves I suppose. But like I said before. If I was like that. I don't think I could go home and be happy with myself.

Interviewer: Yeah I understand. It's a personal thing. You wouldn't like yourself and stuff?
Mr 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: You mentioned developing staff, and it's going through all of these things really, because it's obviously very very key to what you think. Motivation of staff. Can you make some comments about they're interlinked and why?
Mr 4: Right OK. Developing staff and motivation of staff. People like to be told they're doing well. And they like. If you see our certificates around the wall here, these are achievements that they've had.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: In departments. There are more than these. We just haven't got them back yet.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 4: People sit in looking at these they think, you know, we're all doing well. I've got a young man who's on the assistant manager's course for Convenience Stores Ltd.. He's going to be an assistant manager soon. We've got 2 more who want to do it.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 4: And I think that when people are motivated they just do a much better job.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 4: Which is part of good service quality there. And knowledge of customers and things like that. Yeah. So the more development, the more motivated I think. So there's that one to that. I think that one does that.

Interviewer: And certain things like profitability and things are not in here so much, and some, do you feel as if this is one of the keys?
Mr 4: Yeah. Service I think. Oh definitely service. I mean that's basically in the sort of store like this, because the customers know what they want, quite well off I think around this area. And it's a local place. It's not one of those. We don't have much competition from one of the bigger stores. Not that close.

Interviewer: Not that close yeah.
Mr 4: People would go there a lot, rather than people here, they wouldn't go that far. So I think service comes into it quite highly. I mean we've just finished having a meeting at Christmas about things we can do to improve service. And you know special little things like samplings. Put on fancy dress, that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Oh right. So will you be dressing up?
Mr 4: I'd probably delegate it!

Interviewer: Yeah.

(laughter)

Mr 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK great. Well what else can I ask you about? Plus 8% is really impressive.

Mr 4: Yeah that's quite good, although I have to say I've only been here for 3 or 4 weeks.

Interviewer: But obviously they've given you a good store, and they've given you responsibility for a good store.

Mr 4: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. What else was I going to ask you? That's about it I think.

End of tape. Recording ends.

Interview with Respondent 5 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd:26 Mar 2003 10am

- Interviewer: You mentioned service quality as being very, very important to you. Why is service quality really important for you as a manager?
Ms 5: Because it brings back customers if they get good service.
- Interviewer: OK repeat service. Now why are repeat customers so key? Why are they a key issue?
Ms 5: Because of the competition we have, we need to give a better class of service to ensure we keep the customers that we have and gain new customers.
- Interviewer: So repeat customers and gaining customers. What's the major personal reason why that is important to you though, why is it?
Ms 5: I suppose to raise the sales on the, the shop sales each week.
- Interviewer: And that is important because?
Ms 5: That's important to me as manager.
Interviewer: Why is that important to you?
Ms 5: Because, it, I don't know how to explain it, it affects the store, you know, in what sales we take and the more I can increase it, the more chance we have of them. The more sales we take, the more money we get to spend as in wages etc., because our wages are worked out on our sales.
- Interviewer: So as a manager, why is that wage spend important to you, is it your bonus or is it a staff bonus.
Ms 5: Oh no. No, it is having the money there to be able to employ the staff to give back good service.
- Interviewer: Right yes, so extra staff then basically, is it?
Ms 5: Yes.
- Interviewer: Why would extra staff, is it because it is less hassle for you or is it to make your, feel as if you are doing a good job, what sort of thing is it?
Ms 5: I think it would, more would be achieved with more staff, there is a lot of things that doing more often then they are getting done, because of the amount of staff I have, you know, even if it is just down to cleaning shelves etc., you know, to make the quality of the, or the outlook of the store look better and therefore entice customers in even more. I am not saying my store is filthy but there is a general day to day running of the store that needs to be kept up.
- Interviewer: And you think, why do you think that is really key, is it, what are you aiming for at the end of the day out of this?
Ms 5: Because at the end of the day if you have a clean and tidy store the customers will come into it, if it is dirty and untidy they are not going to come in.
- Interviewer: And what is your personal motivation, to have increasing customers coming in through the door and ...?
Ms 5: I would feel I am doing my job right if they, if sales go up by increasing customers then I would feel that means I am doing my job right.
- Interviewer: And why is that important to you, is it for recognition from people, from your staff or what is it that is really important?
Ms 5: It is personal, I think it is more, I would feel I am doing my job right by increasing those sales.

Interviewer: Right, yes.
Ms 5: And not, I mean obviously it would go down well with the area manager, but it is more of a personal thing.

Interviewer: Is it personal job satisfaction type of thing, is it?
Ms 5: Yes I think so.

Interviewer: Motivation of staff, you mentioned it as being really important why is that really important to you?
Ms 5: Well you need your staff to be motivated to do the job that you need them to do, you don't want them, I don't know, swanning, well not swanning, you know, sort of slopping around in the store and not doing anything, you need the motivation there to get them to do the work that you need them to do, without having to sort of order them to do it really, it is nice to be able to go up and say, "would you mind doing" so and so for me and they quite happily go and do it, you know? They are all friendly getting on, there is no harassment, animosity or anything between any of them.

Interviewer: And why is that really important do you think?
Ms 5: A happy ship!

(Laughter)
Ms 5: Yes, it makes a happy day, everyone is happy in their work!

Interviewer: And why, is that sort of, and are the things personal to you, do you think, you want to be in a happy place?
Ms 5: Yes I don't want to be with people that are unhappy and miserable, I would rather see a smile on their face and that also comes across to the customers as well, the mood of the staff, so the happier they are the better response the customers get from them.

Interviewer: OK and is there anything else you would like to mention? One of your goals here, you know, your personal job satisfaction I can see as very important for you, is there anything else that you think leads to motivation of staff and ..., or is it really personal job satisfaction, for it to be a happy place ...?
Ms 5: Yes, I think it is personal, yes I, there is nothing worse then working somewhere where people aren't talking to each other and, you know, there is an atmosphere and, you know?

Interviewer: Yes.
Ms 5: We are quite lucky here, we don't get that. I mean, OK, it is all female, no, we have one male that works here.

Interviewer: Token male.
Ms 5: Yes, he is only a young lad, but he is brilliant and we all get on so well and it just makes the day go better.

Interviewer: Yes, nicer. And developing staff, how do you think that is the key then, because it is linked into some of these issues of course, motivation and probably service quality as well?
Ms 5: Yes. It is developing the staff to be able to do basically anything they are asked to do.

Interviewer: So it is a flexibility type of ...?
Ms 5: Flexibility, yes, within, among the staff. So, I mean, they are trained to do more or less anything.

Interviewer: Yes, and why is that important to you ...?
Ms 5: Well that makes my life easier!

(Laughter)
Ms 5: I don't have to do quite so much and I, now I can ask someone to do something and I know it is going to be done properly. It is knowing that they have had the training or whatever is needed for them to do that job correctly and for me not to have to go round checking on them, you know, checking that it has been done.

Interviewer: And is there anything that, almost like making your life easier, is there anything, other thing that with developing staff ...?
Ms 5: Well it is also developing them so that they can go on to higher levels themselves, you know?

Interviewer: Yes, and why is that important?
Ms 5: Well it is important for their self esteem etc., that you know, they are trusted, they are trained, they are capable of doing the jobs, promotion is within reach, possibly.

Interviewer: And what is your main benefit from that do you think? That you are a nice person or that, do you think that it is, I don't know ...?

(Laughter)
Ms 5: I don't know, it is encouraging them to, I mean I started from the shop floor level, I have worked my way up, it is quite nice when you get a bit further up, obviously the pay gets nice, yes. It is to encourage, especially the younger ones, to encourage them to try and better themselves.

Interviewer: Yes. And you think the major thing is, because you get it, you feel as if some of the other people should have the opportunity to do that as well?
Ms 5: Yes, I do. I think it is a lot better working from shop, you know, starting from the bottom and working your way up.

Interviewer: Yes.
Ms 5: You get these others that come in, straight in as managers, never worked on the shop floor in their life and that is not the way to do it!

(Laughter)
Ms 5: I don't think it is the way to do it, I think you are better working your way up.

Interviewer: Yes, OK. Can you mention some of these difficulties that the other people have had in terms, or presumably you have experienced that sort of manager perhaps or ...?
Ms 5: Yes.

Interviewer: Any comments?
Ms 5: There is a couple of managers, well assistant managers I have worked with that have come as trainee managers and I don't know whether it is just them but it is like they know it all but they know nothing basically. They have not worked their way up, they don't have a clue when it comes to shop, so I don't know, maybe it is just those!

(Laughter)
Ms 5: Maybe the others were different, I don't know, I mean I wouldn't like to label them all the same. But the ones that I have worked with that haven't worked up, definitely.

Interviewer: And do they sort of have a funny sort of different style of management do you think, do they sort of tell you all the time or do they just, what do they do?
Ms 5: I can only go by the way that I have worked with but I mean ...

Interviewer: Well it is obviously quite important to you, you are sort of ...?
Ms 5: Yes, the attitude is totally different, I think. Mind you, saying that, both of them were quite a bit younger than me, maybe it is just me being, thinking I wouldn't speak to somebody the way they speak to people, you know? But that could be the age difference.

Interviewer: Yes, yes, what were the sort of things that they did? Just arrogant sort of attitude?
Ms 5: Yes sort of arrogant and talk down to people, you know, I don't know, it might just be me!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: No, it is just obviously, it is an important experience, because that might influence how you behave as a manager, you know ...?
Ms 5: Yes, it might also, especially one in particular, it could also prove why he is still an assistant manager and I am now manager!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: That is very good, very good. Support from Head Office, you think that is pretty key?
Ms 5: Yes, I mean we have technical instructors, or technical trainers from Head Office that will help with the development of staff, training them in certain areas, which can be helpful, because obviously they have the time to actually spend with the staff, whereas as you will appreciate, I have to watch, do all sorts there, you don't have so much time to spend with them training them, whereas the technical trainers have that time that is what they are there for.

Interviewer: So you see that Head Office thing is really linked to the staff development as being pretty key. You have also got it linked to ...?
Ms 5: Co-ordinating the operations.

Interviewer:, do that as well?
Ms 5: Well it, yes, I think it is important, you have got to have that link with Head Office, because obviously they know what is going on their end and this end, so you have to co-ordinate between the two.

Interviewer: Yes, is that sort of diplomatic sort of thing, do they really help do you think? I can see they help with the developing staff ...?
 Ms 5: Yes. No, they do help, I mean if you have got any problems, it is, you know, phone the support the desk they will sort it, they will either get, put you through to who you need or they will get the answer for you or get someone to contact you. So, I mean, the support is there and it is very good, because you normally get quite a good and quick response if you have any problems.

Interviewer: So the technical, the developing staff I can see maybe you can link that one to what you have down here, because you have talked about developing staff?
 Ms 5: Yes.

Interviewer: Sort out problems, can you give some idea why that is really important to you, do you, what is ...?
 Ms 5: What as in Head Office being able to help?

Interviewer: Yes.
 Ms 5: I mean if there are delivery issues or pricing issues whatever, yes if things aren't scanning properly through the till you can get on to the support desk, they will help sort things out. Delivery issues, if you are short or whatever ...

Interviewer: Yes.
 Ms 5: There is someone at the end of the phone for any problem you have really.

Interviewer: And why is that important to you, is it because ...?
 Ms 5: You know you have that backup.

Interviewer: And back up is ...?
 Ms 5: You know, if you don't know the answer, there is someone on the end of the phone that can give you that answer.

Interviewer: Yes.
 Ms 5: And it is sort of just knowing that you have someone there.

Interviewer: So it is a security type of thing?
 Ms 5: Yes, I suppose so, yes.

Interviewer: Why is that security back up thing quite important to you do you think?
 Ms 5: I think you want to have some sort of security don't you?

Interviewer: Yes.
 Ms 5: It is just knowing.

Interviewer: It is a nice feeling.
 Ms 5: Yes, you know you are not on your own, you are not sort of out there on your own, you have got the contact.

Interviewer: Yes, so it is like a team type of thing?
 Ms 5: Yes.

Interviewer: More like security from a team sort of type of aspect?
 Ms 5: Yes, we are all working for the same thing aren't we?

Interviewer: Yes. Why do you think you want this sort of team involvement or you need security working together with people?
 Ms 5: Well not everybody knows everything do they? I don't think anybody knows everything.

(Laughter)
 Ms 5: And for the bits you don't know somebody will know.

Interviewer: And is that because you want to be known as a good manager or you are quite keen on planning and therefore you want to sort these problems out or what is it?
 Ms 5: I like to think I could be a good manager and by sorting things out things run smoother!

(Laughter)
 Ms 5: I don't know I suppose it is, I don't know, it is just knowing the back up is there, I suppose. There is always going to be a problem come up and you are not going to know the answer. It is more so for me having only been manager for such a short period of time. I mean, some of it is new to me, so I need that back up there.

Interviewer: And current turnover, you have sort of put this at the end here, as well, can you explain that a little bit?

(Laughter)
 Ms 5: I don't know why it went at the end!

(Laughter)

Interviewer:, you are going to aim for that or whatever?
 Ms 5: Yes! I mean obviously the current turnover is trying to increase it.

Interviewer: Yes, so you have that as a general aim do you think?
 Ms 5: That is my aim, to increase the turnover, I think, it is certainly difficult!

Interviewer: Yes indeed, especially with all the other things you mentioned.

Ms 5: I just think this store could be a little gold mine.

Interviewer: Yes.

Ms 5: I am not quite sure how yet, but I just feel you could get a lot more out of it then it is getting at the moment and that would be my aim. I would love to be able to phone up each week and say my takings are blah, blah and it is so much higher than the week before, to gradually increase it up and be able to maintain that.

Interviewer: Why would that be, why would you like to do that do you think?

Ms 5: Because I feel that I would have achieved something, it would be job satisfaction I guess, I don't know, it is a challenge, I do like a challenge! I suppose that is my challenge to try and increase the turnover.

Interviewer: And you would maybe thought of as a good manager then and, is it?

Ms 5: Yes I suppose so, hopefully I am thought of as a good manager, they must have thought something to even give me the job, mustn't they?

Interviewer: Of course yes.

Ms 5: There must be something.

Interviewer: But you feel as if that is a bit of a payback type of thing, you think is it ...?

Ms 5: I suppose I have got to prove to them that I can do it, because, I mean I did get promoted a lot quicker than I expected. I mean I was always told, oh I was told by a few of the managers that I worked with that I was capable of it, but I suppose now I want to prove I am, you know, to prove that they were right and I am capable of doing the job.

Interviewer: Yes, so it is like a belief in yourself type of thing?

Ms 5: Yes I suppose yes.

Interviewer: Thank you very much that is very good, very interesting.

(Laughter)

Interviewer: I think you have talked me through some of these things.

Ms 5: Yes.

Interviewer: Service quality, motivation of staff and developing staff is quite key here, service quality, yes. Thank you very much.

Interview with Respondent 6 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 8 Oct. 2002, 11a.m.

[Transcription note: interviewee a little difficult to decipher]

- Interviewer: You've put personal motivation as the most important I can see at the centre of everything. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?
Mr 6: Well I just believe that it's... in order to do my job, the store will not move forward as fast or as quickly as somebody like myself if I am. it's not just structure, but obviously everything comes from the top now. You know if I want something done, it sort of cascades down. I don't want something done... you want to feel the benefit or whatever in the store. So I believe everything you know, comes from the top down.
- Interviewer: OK. So the major reason is for the benefit of the store. Why is that issue really important to you?
Mr 6: I just feel that this, I can't, I will not make this store succeed if I am not motivated. If I don't want to be here, I'm not going to put in the work that I should do in order to make the store succeed. But if I want to make the store succeed then I'm motivated. And I will do it.
- Interviewer: OK. Why is it important to you personally to succeed in this?
Mr 6: I'm very ambitious. I want to better myself. I want to get promotion. I want to be the best I can be basically.
- Interviewer: Do you see the role of management to do that? To be looked on as a really good manager, esteem as a manager or whatever?
Mr 6: Some managers are looked upon as very good, but you know in reality perhaps they aren't as good as other managers or whatever.
- Interviewer: What would you say, as far as good managers, what are you told about them, what do they do, to be classed as good?
Mr 6: You hear obviously, you hear a lot more of success than you would failure, and obviously people fail, and stores fail, but you hear more of the success, because the company tries to promote success, and obviously anything bad that... happens, the opposite is there, so they'll try to keep it quiet, try and organise and try and sort it out themselves. So you hear a lot more of success than...
- Interviewer: What sort of things would be highlighted? What do they class as success?
Mr 6: Well we have every week, an in-store magazine, a company magazine, it's not really a magazine it actually a leaflet put out on the company, and it tells you all about store openings or... regions that come in the top ten performers of the last week. You know that is being the success. Where you put very close monitors to try to get on to that, so that everyone can see them as a success.
- Interviewer: It's done or turnover or against planned turnover?
Mr 6: Yes.
- Interviewer: The trouble is of course there is certain things you can do, and you can't do in a store. Do you feel that's a little bit of a gamble or?
Mr 6: Yeah. It's sort of different. Like in this store my sales plan is very hard to achieve. In other stores the sales plans are very easy to achieve. Some stores have just come out of a re-fit. Their sales plans are very low and their sales are very high just because of a new re-fit or whatever. You know. There's varying factors as to why stores are up there. But you know...store managers aren't stupid or whatever.
- Interviewer: Sorry?
Mr 6: The store managers, the managers that I know aren't stupid, they know, they know that.

Interviewer: Of course yeah. But you consider that, as long as you know that, your personal motivation is one thing to get you up there, to overcome these difficulties even if the store is a bit of a bad location or whatever it is?

Mr 6: There's always something you can do. There mightn't be a lot you can do, but there's always something you can do. Even companies who are...obviously multi global organisations, they're still seeking to try and improve themselves. So much fine tuning, but there's always something you can do.

Interviewer: And. This career ladder. What do you see as the best way forward then? Are you... trying to get into better stores, in better locations, bigger stores? What's the?

Mr 6: There's not. There's bigger stores, area-wise, size-wise. Probably the biggest store in the company is obviously..... but now that's been sold to Safeways or whatever, so taking off the ones that have been sold or whatever, one of the biggest ones I've across is 150

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 6: This one does 85, 90, could do more. So. Now I am one of the highest turnover stores. The average turnover stores in the company is actually 30 grand.

Interviewer: Right yeah.

Mr 6: So if you want to look at it for a higher bracket, better stores if you want.

Interviewer: It's a good position you're in. Reasonably newish and whatever. Yeah absolutely. Opened in 84 was it?

Mr 6: Yeah. I only joined the company 3 years ago but I believe this store had a re-fit 3 years ago, so as you say it's fairly new.

Interviewer: OK thank you. Motivation of staff then. You consider that as a key issue. Mainly for similar sort of reasons. Any other things you'd like to add to that?

Mr 6: Basically if you're staff aren't motivated you're not going to build up the business. You know. I can't build the business, build the business success myself. I need, you know, I need staff to work for me.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 6: And again if they don't want to come to work, they're not going to do a good job.

Interviewer: I can see you've got one lot of building resources and developing staff as a building type of process, you're sort of quite keen on that?

Mr 6: Oh yes. Definitely. Because you know you're going to get personnel turnover, you're always going to get it, and obviously you can control it to a certain degree. If staff are happy and want to do well, or are doing well and are motivated, you know the less likely they are to leave or go away. So I see the development of staff as a key issue. So then if people do leave, what you want to do is have a good strong team around you, so that no matter what happens, if staff leave, your core team will still support the store and support me.

Interviewer: I also notice you've got flexibility down here. Why is employee flexibility really key?

Mr 6: Reasons for that, again. Every store maybe for a month or 2, will go through a period where there's nobody applying for jobs or, there's just staff leaving. You need employees who are flexible, who will say, I can do another hour or 2 today, or come in an hour or 2 early or. Oh if you want that, I'll do that for you.. that's what you need.

Interviewer: Yeah. Is that for? Is it for building the store? I can see it's important for that, but it's also for lack of hassle for you? Is it?
Mr 6: Bit of both probably. You know lack of positive... is obviously, if they aren't voluntarily committed (?) then I would have to swallow it and either myself doing it, or maybe other management doing it. But more... I only, I don't ask staff unless I really have to, because you know, they have their life or whatever. But I do think it's very important. But I only ask staff to stay on an hour or 2 if you, if, you know, if someone has phoned in sick and, customer service is going to be.. it's only for short term day-to-day things you know.

Interviewer: What about different tasks as well. Because you mentioned you're giving extra time or whatever, but flexibility is quite a complex issue. What type of things would you consider to be in that term flexibility?
Mr 6: Well obviously the flexibility of staff to learn new things. Obviously with some staff it's, one member of staff who is 60, he's only done one thing, and he just to keep on doing that kind of thing. You might have somebody who is only 27 or something, who wants to do well for himself. And maybe he thinks – I wouldn't mind being assistant manager some day – and he's shown how to do... produce list for a supervisor and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Great. Internal operations. You also consider this as an important issue.
Mr 6: Yeah. More in terms of trying to make the business succeed. Like I'm still learning how the business operates and la la la. You know there's certain things you can do in store that can improve your business. You know it's all about knowing our costs... how long it takes to do a certain job. So actually knowing. The course that I came on when I joined this company was called an RMT course. What it is, is the company runs a one year very fast track introduction to management. For the first 6 months you basically, you work in every single department in the store. Deli. Produce. And you're given the opportunity in the last week, of each type, each month to run that department, actually run it yourself, control it yourself, the staff and everything. Unless you actually know how to do that, you can't commit as a manager, and there are people not knowing what it is they actually have to do, what's involved and what you're asking them to do. So actually knowing the operation is very very useful.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you can see where they may be going wrong, or right or whatever.
Mr 6: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Why are those sort of issues very important to you? The smooth running of the store? Is this another criteria that you regard as a good manager or whatever?
Mr 6: Well what you want to do as a manager, you want to obviously build the store, build the sales, you know cut down obviously on lost costs. Because you know what they're not going to do, again coming back to personal motivation, what they're not going to do is promote a manager who can't run a store smoothly.

Interviewer: No.
Mr 6: Because then how can they expect that manager then to go into area management and run 12 stores probably you know?

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 6: So you know, you want a store that's run fairly smoothly. When all the staff are developed, they all know what they to do, they're all on routines, they all know what's being done. They're in the business. And you know. Probably at that stage, if that happens, that holy grail or whatever did occur, then in that case, at that stage it's probably going to be 3 or 4 years, and at that stage then there's not, probably not an awful lot more that manager can do in that store. Because

they've been in the store quite a long time, and missing opportunities perhaps. Maybe put them in a new store. Put them in a new environment. Open their eyes up again.

Interviewer: Are there any things like that that you feel as if you've had to change here quite quickly? Because 2 weeks is quite a short period of time?
Mr 6: Basically I came here, and what I've done, I grabbed a clipboard and wrote down what I wanted to improve in each department.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 6: Because even, you know even after one day, if you actually look closely at things you'll see that... you know a week later, if you've been in the store one week.. over your head or whatever, there's a list of things. So I wanted to come in with a fresh set of eyes and just write everything down.

Interviewer: OK. What sort of things were at the top of the list do you think?
Mr 6: Basically the deli. And routines. Probably routines more than anything else. Routines and training of staff.

Interviewer: You were missing a few things here and there and got a bit slack on certain things, and this sort of stuff?
Mr 6: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK great. The staff issue is quite an important issue here as well. It links in with a lot of things you've been saying really. Why do you think developing staff is so key? I can see the flexibility, getting them on board, making sure everybody's working in the right direction, routines are good. Why is developing staff the key thing? Is it motivation of staff? What do you think?

Mr 6: It's just. It's very. If you can build a solid foundation to the store or the business or whatever, then you know, you're going to be able to weather the lean periods, threats whatever. You're going to be able to come through them. If you've got a good team of staff that are aware, use their initiative, can see things that maybe you can't at a shop floor level. Then you know, you've got a good team of staff that are going to identify problem issues, or help to solve them or whatever.

Interviewer: OK. Some of the issues we talked about before about some things are more predictable than others, and some things you can control and some things you can't. Which things do you think are easily predictable out there, and which do you think aren't so predictable?

Mr 6: Predictable. Internal or external to the store?

Interviewer: Both really.

Mr 6: Well. Externally, what customers want to see when they come in is consistency. Consistency of offers, consistency of availability of products that they're looking for. Yeah. Fair enough they're to come into the store and there's going to be some stuff that we don't do that others do. But what they want to do is, they know what they're going to get when they come into the store. At the minute that's a bit unpredictable in this store, but that's obviously what I want to cure. Predictable offers, customers know what they're going to get.

Predictable. I've only been with the company 3 years but I already know if I ask for something or, I need something done or, whatever, I've a fair idea what their response is going to be, you know from head office, or from my boss, or from the management team, from staff. You know I might have an idea already of what the response is going to be. But you know, my way around it is if you don't ask you'll not get.

Interviewer: Yes Indeed.

(laughter)

What are the sort of things that you can order, like promotions and stuff you can order, different... do you have a feel for the predictability or the take-up of some of these offers?

Mr 6: Again it comes with being long enough in the store. Obviously different geographical areas have different people living here, different demographics, C1, C2, B1, B2 or whatever. After a while you get a feel for the products they're looking for. In the last store I worked in was quite a big unemployed rate, and it was just factories and breweries. There was no Next, no Burtons none of that you know?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 6: And all they were looking for was the sort of cheap stuff. You know, you get a few people coming in buying the big expensive stuff or whatever but generally, it was the cheap stuff they were buying. And this store here, from what I've learned so far, from what I've seen so far, you know, the new brand stuff probably wouldn't sell as well as the brand stuff would. Whereas with the other the new brand stuff would probably sell slightly better.

Interviewer: OK yeah. So this is quite a rich area, and completely to your experience before then?

Mr 6: Yeah. I think, being XXX, and being obviously quite a large residential area, especially it's basically a commuter area more than anything else..

Interviewer: Yeah, where you before?

Mr 6: XXX in Wiltshire.

Interviewer: Oh I know it yeah. OK. So predictability. Some things you can predict and you get a feel for it after a while so it's a bit of a learning process as well. OK yeah. What things do you think are out of your control? Like do you think the recession or the boom makes a difference for example? Do you think about these things or do you just say, we do well or?

Mr 6: Generally I don't think about them, you know if it happens it happens. It's, I can't really, I don't have control of the economy or anything so, if it happens it happens, if it doesn't it doesn't. I've just got to try and cope with it the best I can at store level. Obviously head office will support us where they can and all. But there's only so much at store level you can do. You've just got to cope with the tills that we've got.

Interviewer: Yeah. Because you're focussed on what you can do and building, these things are less important to you, and you don't really consider them too much. Is that right?

Mr 6: Yeah.

Interviewer: Thank you for your honesty. Very interesting ideas. I've got rather different ones...

(tape off and on)

Mr 6: ... maybe I've got a skill or a knack or whatever for doing that.

Interviewer: And you reckon it's down about?
Mr 6: I'd say you're looking probably about 2% down each, each week against planning.

Interviewer: Yeah OK. It would be very interesting to find out.

(end of side one of tape, end of interview)

Interview with Respondent 7 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 25 June 2003

- Interviewer: OK, first of all, as the most important factor targeting growth markets, why is that really important to you?
Mr. 7: It is what the people want to buy as receiving targeting, more convenience foods these days.
- Interviewer: Yes.
Mr. 7: People just want to go in the shop and buy a ready meal or pizza or anything else like that and that is like the market which we will be going towards, whereas in the old days, you like to buy, a piece of roast beef and you would buy your vegetables and you put it all together, cook it and 4 hours later it is ready, now they want just a microwave thing, stick it in and two minutes it is down. So that seems to be the way the market is going I think, that seems to be like the main growth not just in Convenience Stores Ltd.'s but if you go into Sainsbury's it is all convenience foods and things.
- Interviewer: So you notice that trend over quite a while?
Mr. 7: The trend is slowly changing over the years, towards convenience and seems to me is the main growth, we don't emphasise on selling joints of beef and things like that, which take longer to do.
- Interviewer: Why is that making sure the customers get what they want really important to you?
Mr. 7: So they come back and spend more money!
- Interviewer: And why is that important to you?
Mr. 7: If the customers know where they can get convenience food on a regular basis they will keep coming back.
- Interviewer: Why is the repeat business really important to you, personally as well as anything else?
Mr. 7: It puts money in the till, customer satisfaction, word of mouth thing, yes; go to Convenience Stores Ltd.'s in East Horsley because you can always get what you want. So good write up as it were.
- Interviewer: And why is that really important to you? Is it something to do with your career or your personal sense of faction of different things?
Mr. 7: Probably personal satisfaction, I like people to be happy when they leave here, that they have got everything that they wanted. The last thing you want is customers saying I won't come back there because this was wrong, that was wrong I couldn't get this and I couldn't get that.
- Interviewer: Why is that sort of customer happiness really important to you? I mean presumably you are assessed on the quote or the money for the tills in some respects.
Mr. 7: Yes.
- Interviewer: Presumably, is that really important to you, or is it more to do with your own personal satisfaction as a manager, to be able to do that, what is the ...?
Mr. 7: Well both I suppose, certainly the money in the till, obviously the store doesn't want to have sales going down year on year in. So continuous growth means rather having more customers or more customers and they are spending more money. I think we are doing, providing a good service, sales keep going up and up and up, the customer count goes up as well.

Interviewer: And why is that really, that happy customers, good service really important to you?
Mr. 7: It is part of job satisfaction; it keeps Head Office happy as well!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: OK, well we both mentioned that is presumably the same sort of thing ...?
Mr. 7: Service quality, people want a convenience, they want to get in the shop, get it all together, bag up, pay for it and get out quick and get a good service at the check out and obviously the service of filling up the store as well, that they have always got the things to buy.

Interviewer: Why is service quality key do you think? Is it to do with the competition or is it to do with ...?
Mr. 7: It can be, because you know sometimes you go to Sainsbury's or somewhere and like 30 checkouts, you might have to stand in the queue for 10 minutes sometimes. So, then they think oh we will go to Convenience Stores Ltd.'s because I can get in there and get out quick.

Interviewer: OK so this is, is this ... so there is a differentiating factors you think really, sort of something different from the other competition?
Mr. 7: Yes certainly in this store, we are different to like the big notables, because the turn round of people in and out of the store is really quick, if you go to Sainsbury's you might be there for an hour, if you are going round the shop with a trolley and then you have to queue up and bag it all up.

Interviewer: So you are aiming for a quick fast good quality service?
Mr. 7: Yes, where customers can get what they want, all the basic lines, quick meals together, plus extra things like bottles of wine and things like that. Yes.

Interviewer: Anything else within this service quality that is really important? You could be meeting the customers more often because you are such a small store and ...?
Mr. 7: Yes I find ...

Interviewer: Is that important to you do you think?
Mr. 7: Yes it is only in this store we have got to know a lot of the customers, a lot of customers know us by name, because it is a very one to one service and all my staff are local people anyway, they know like half the customers anyway. But you go to Sainsbury's or something like Tesco's, you go to the checkout, you are done and you are out and it is virtually, hello, good morning and good bye, whereas here you get to know a lot of the customers, a lot of people know me by my first name and how the store operates and you know, it is all just part of the service, fresh sort of friendly service. Convenience Stores Ltd.'s Mission Statement includes the words fresh friendly value.

Interviewer: Yes I had sort of noticed.
Mr. 7: You have heard that?

(Laughter)

Mr. 7: Yes fresh friendly value, it is the Mission Statement.

Interviewer: And you think that is true, that is the way it should be?

Mr. 7: Yes, certainly in a small store like this, where you get friendly staff and it is always a value for money.

Interviewer: Does the service quality, underneath other things, so you are talking about convenience, speed of going through getting it, getting convenience foods, getting what they want reasonably quickly and you are talking about it is important for being different as a unique bit for Convenience Stores Ltd.'s compared to the multiples, is there any other things that service quality does for you?

Mr. 7: Not that I can think of, no. I am sorry no.

Interviewer: Large product variety, why is that really important to you?

Mr. 7: Certainly in a store like this, we can buy everything convenient for a meal, but do a variety, a large variety. We don't do lots of the same product, like we don't do like 20 different types of, I don't know, Coca Cola, we have got 2 brands, Coke or you can buy Coke, here, See the brands of lemonade, because you get like in Sainsbury's they will have R Whites, their own label, I don't know, somebody else's and somebody else's... which they are all lemonades but they are all just made by different people, the, might be slightly different or something. Like in a Convenience Stores Ltd.'s store you can get a large variety of things, which is like the basic everyday lines. That is what I call I presume like a large product variety, we do cover a large variety of products.

Interviewer: Of different products basically ...?

Mr. 7: Different products but not like 20 of the same particular one, like you might get in like Sainsbury's or Waitrose or Tesco's. It is again basically like in everyday lives there is a lot of the same are used over the years, where you can get the basic lines.

Interviewer: Yes, I see what you mean. So why is that important for you, you are basically saying that they need to get a little bit of this, and a bit of that in, and whatever, yes? Customers don't really mind if they haven't got each big choice of each individual item?

Mr. 7: Yes that is right.

Interviewer: But when they put a package together, their, comes to them?

Mr. 7: You can do a whole meal and buy it all in the Convenience Stores Ltd. store. Your starter, your vegetables, your dessert, your wine and your lemonade, which they do in like Sainsbury's and you think well I wish they made, this one, that one, that one, if you look at the wines ...

Interviewer: You can spend 3 or 4 hours in that aisle alone!

Mr. 7: Hundreds of wines, you know ..., Convenience Stores Ltd.'s as well there is a few to choose from, I am sure within that little range you will find something that will be suitable.

Interviewer: What you are suggesting I suppose, in some respects, by giving customers a little bit less choice, as long as their quality is ..., they will save them a lot of time in most respects.

Mr. 7: Yes you might well save them time, yes that is right.

Interviewer: OK so that fits in with what you were saying earlier on about convenience and speed of service and this sort of stuff?

Mr. 7: Yes that is right.

Interviewer: Product variety, so that is coming down to making your customers happy again is it?
Mr. 7: That's right, customer satisfaction. If you are on the check out and you do a customers basket, you know exactly what they will have for their entire meal, like if they are going to have pasta, there is pasta, there is a bottle Dolmio sauce, there is a bottle of wine, there is a packet of mince and you think oh they are having bolognese tonight. You know you must foresee it what they are going to have for dinner tonight and they put together a meal.

Interviewer: And then, have to change all that

(Laughter)
Mr. 7: That's right, yes.

Interviewer: I see exactly what you mean, if they have got a little bit of everything?
Mr. 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Product promotion, why is that really important to you?
Mr. 7: The company promotes products, ongoing and changes every two weeks, some of the products draw people into the store, a good wine promotion, buy 3 bottles for £6 or something. What else, we promote, we promote all kinds of things. There is the advertising as well, there is papers and outside the store and leaflets and obviously it is what comes in promotions, are probably going to walk around the rest of the store and buy or perhaps I best just have one of those or I just need some toilet rolls as well, so I buy those ... by the end of it, you hear people saying well I only came in for this and they land up buying a whole basket full. I hear that quite often, even in a store like this. So, promotions are good to people into stores to buy those products and hopefully go round and buy some other things as well.

Interviewer: So you find that promotions are one of the key ways of maybe increasing the turnover and maybe attracting loyal customers?
Mr. 7: Yes that is right.

Interviewer: Well we have done a bit about ... loyal customers, you are really concerned with the... what we were you concerned with We are talking about job satisfaction, happy customers for job satisfaction and for Head Office, a bit of both?
Mr. 7: Yes.

Interviewer: So it is a bit of financial and job satisfaction, is that correct?
Mr. 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Employee flexibility, why is that really important?
Mr. 7: A lot of people who work in a store like this, they only work part time and some of them, when we have a demand or when we have a demand in the store, I might say can you change your hours and do these hours. So most of my staff are quite flexible, especially the students, if someone is on holiday and you say can you come over that holiday, oh yes that is mine. Basically just people who can change their hours at quite short notice and either cover holidays or sickness or an unforeseen demand in the store, the customers or delivery problems.

Interviewer: So it is covering different hours, you see it as?
Mr. 7: Yes, they have got to be flexible.

Interviewer: What about flexibility within their jobs, so that they can do lots of different tasks, do you see that as a ...?
Mr. 7: Everybody in the store are what we call multi-skilled, everybody is trained on everything, so they work on the tills, they work on the shop floor, they do everything basically, throughout as well, they do everything.

Interviewer: Why is that really important to you, is it ...?
Mr. 7: It is part of the job.

Interviewer: Linking in with maybe your planning or, you have got a linked to planning certainly?
Mr. 7: Yes.

Interviewer: On your map, and you have got developing staff, see it is quite an important for you. Is this the correct way here, you have got flexibility leading to developing staff, does the flexibility lead, or does the developing staff lead to flexibility or is it a bit of both?
Mr. 7: I think it is probably a bit of both actually.

Interviewer: How does the flexibility lead to development?
Mr. 7: Certainly within management we have to be very flexible with our hours and do work un-socialable hours. So if you want to go on or develop into assistant manager or higher, you have got to be quite a flexible person. You might have to cancel your day off at short notice or change a day off in the week. Not so much for the ordinary for the general assistants, they sort of work generally they normal hours with a bit of variance, but the higher you go the more flexible you have got to be to deal with store demand.

Interviewer: So you are seeing this as more of an un-management type of thing rather than this one probably is the, is more the staff development leads to flexibility, more the multi-skilling sort of thing really?
Mr. 7: Yes.

Interviewer: So is it easier for you with your planning, is it nice and convenient for you, are these nice flexible people around, what is the really...
Mr. 7: With the management it is quite easy, because whatever I say goes!

(Laughter)
Mr. 7: Yes, they know that the management have to be flexible, because we do a rota system for every week for our hours and plus we are in the store ourselves we turn our hands to anything that needs doing, whether it is a quick go on the till or putting stock out or counting the money or anything else like that.

Interviewer: So that flexibility makes your job easier with staff but also the other managers you are talking about ...?
Mr. 7: Yes the management's way is, staff is not so easy, because always they do have commitments, hours. But I know that everybody is till trained in the way of their job flexibility and most of them will do like all the other, stores right, even the students who only work like 5 or 6 hours a week.

Interviewer: So why is that really important to you, is it ...?
Mr. 7: It makes life easier, I know that everybody can do virtually everything.

Interviewer: And presumably as you needed to planning, it is sort of ...?
Mr. 7: You can plan ahead.

Interviewer: What else have you got linked, have you linked it to a service quality as well, presumably that is ...?
Mr. 7: Service quality, it is like a demand on the checkout I know that everybody is till trained and they can just jump on the till and help clear the queue. In a bigger store, they have like, some sort of like delicatessen or rotisseries and you only have like perhaps 3 or 4 people who are deli trained, if you have a problem and you have got no staff you are stuck, because obviously half your staff can't use a deli and service customers, so your flexibility has gone down a bit. We are lucky, we haven't got one here, I mean our biggest here is checkouts, so everybody is till trained.

Interviewer: Lets look at some of these links then, oh can I ask you about this one, I see there is one missing here. Targeting growth market and large product variety, you have mentioned it though actually in here. You think if you have a large product variety you can target quote markets better, I think is what you were basically saying as a tie a few minutes ago, because they can have a little bit of pick and mix of different things.
Mr. 7: That's right.

Interviewer: How much does it lead to that, do you think, is it plus one, plus two, plus three.
Mr. 7: Probably plus two.

(Phone ringing)

Interviewer: OK thanks. From what I can see with some of the major links you have got support from Head Office, leading to your planning, that is really important, very important to you?
Mr. 7: Yes.

Interviewer: You have got this flexibility in developing staff is really, this is quite important to you, yes, very important to you and support from company branding. Can you explain about company branding as a link, extra support from Head Office to what, what do you mean by this company branding?
Mr. 7: Well the company branding, going towards more convenient stores, that is the way companies seem to be portraying themselves more these days, albeit we have all the products you might have like in a Sainsbury's like in the bigger stores and that is sort of being marketing by Head Office, the, like logo, the fresh friendly value, as a convenient store and that has to be marketed.

Interviewer: So you think that people getting to know this basically?
Mr. 7: That is the basic image. Yes.

Interviewer: And of course the Head Office have got the major flow in doing that?

Mr. 7: In doing that, because they are used to all roll it out as it were. But a few years ago Convenience Stores Ltd.'s was sort of known as the bungling company that couldn't get anything right, but that has changed over the last sort of 5 to 10 years, we are going towards being a sort of convenience store. London is sort of opened 24 hours a day which was the marketed to my Head Office, you know, to get with it.

Interviewer: You sort of see them as key, as far as product, you have talked about how product, is pretty important?
Mr. 7: Yes again, that is marketed from Head Office.

Interviewer: So these things are more outside your control, mind you?
Mr. 7: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you have a problem with that?
Mr. 7: Not really no, not at all. You can't really influence that much what, we can feed back information, but at the end of the day they decide what products go on promotion and how they are going to market them and how to market stores.

Interviewer: This one here too, is this slightly outside your control?
Mr. 7: That is what is out of store specific control to an extent.

Interviewer: Yes, what things do you think you can control in ...?
Mr. 7: What in the ...?

Interviewer: They are the things that are really important to you?
Mr. 7: What can I control?

(Laughter)
Mr. 7: I don't know, what can I control? Other than like store operations and replenishment and service.

Interviewer: So they are your key things you focus on?
Mr. 7: Yes, I mean everything that is stocked on the shelves to sell to the customers as well as being able to serve the customers and also maintain hygiene and all the other things that go within the store. I don't know that is about it really.

Interviewer: OK thanks a lot.

Interview with Respondent 8 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 19 March 2003, 12.00

- Interviewer: OK. Thank you Mr XXXX. First of all you put down geographic position of store as being really important to you. Can you tell me why that's important to you? What's the reason for that?
- Mr. 8: Basically, if you're stuck out in the middle of the Gobi Desert you're not going to sell a lot. So obviously it's crucial to actually, you know, what you sell.
- Interviewer: OK. So you think that's? It's sort of something outside your control a bit.
- Mr. 8: Within the company yeah.
- Interviewer: Within the company. How do you get around that, do you ...?
- Mr. 8: This company does have a lot of stores, so, I mean obviously you know, you can eventually maybe move to somewhere that will be.
- Interviewer: A little bit better position or something?
- Mr. 8: Yeah yeah.
- Interviewer: So you have worked for the company for 6 years, how many stores have you worked in 6 years?
- Mr. 8: I've been in about 4 or 5 stores.
- Interviewer: Uh huh. And you feel as if you've got no control over that or?
- Mr. 8: No, not at all no. I mean when I was asked to come here, you know I was asked, and I had a look at it. And it was a choice.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr. 8: So yeah, I mean I have control over what I do and don't do yeah. Up to a point.
- Interviewer: But do you feel as if your choice then reflects what you can do with a stores or something or? You come here, and you find out it's not in such a good position, geographical position is pretty important to you.
- Mr. 8: Yeah definitely. You mean what could I do about that?
- Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
- Mr. 8: Move on somewhere else.
- Interviewer: Right OK.
- (laughter)
- Mr. 8: Ask for a transfer pretty quickly?
Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. OK. Thank you very much. So you think it's very important for sales. OK. Why is the sales bit really important to you?
Mr. 8: Because it's obviously, that's what keeps the business going. So if the sales are good, and there's growth in sales, then obviously you're going upwards, forwards and upwards.

Interviewer: You mean the company, and you also mean yourself?
Mr. 8: Well both.

Interviewer: Uh huh. OK. And why is that sort of going upwards really important to you?
Mr. 8: Because it makes everybody successful. Within a unit.

Interviewer: So success OK. How do you define that success?
Mr. 8: Improvement in wages, improvement in living. Self-satisfaction within work.

Interviewer: OK. So you've got quite a few criteria that you think are associated with success. Do you, have you got a preference for any particular one of those or do you think that?
Mr. 8: They're all important, they're all in the same basket yeah.

Interviewer: OK. So that's sort of a bit of lifestyle. Reasonable wages. Satisfaction with the job type of thing. Why are those important to you do you think? I mean perhaps you're like me, working for a university you can get better wages outside some work perhaps, or is there a sort of balancing act here?
Mr. 8: Yeah. It's a very difficult question that. If I was to look at it again in that respect, I would say wages aren't really as important as maybe some of the other things.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr. 8: I mean quality of life is more important definitely, I would say.

Interviewer: Yeah. And why is that quality of life really such an important factor to you do you think personally?
Mr. 8: Well, because I've got 2 young children. A family.

Interviewer: A family thing yeah.
Mr. 8: So definitely yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, I know that.
Mr. 8: And obviously you want to come home most nights you know, in a good mood, spend a bit of quality time with your family.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 8: And not be pulling your hair out saying – I've had a horrible day at work! –

Interviewer: Yes indeed. I know people like that in my organisation. That's great yeah thanks. I have very much a similar attitude I must admit... Profitability you said is a really important issue as well. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?

Mr. 8: Because, unless you keep an eye on actually where the ball's going, and actually how you're controlling your money, then you don't know whether you're actually successful or not. So you've got to keep an eye on it.

Interviewer: So it's like a measure of success really?

Mr. 8: Definitely.

Interviewer: OK. Why is it important for you to measure that success? Why do you think?

Mr. 8: Because then you can plan then what are your next steps.

Interviewer: OK.

Mr. 8: And re-address things.

Interviewer: OK. So it's like.

Mr. 8: Well if there's issues or problems you can actually get stuck into it, actually find out where the issues and problems are and obviously, deal with them.

Interviewer: Yeah OK. So it's like a management role to measure these things and to keep on top of them sort of thing?

Mr. 8: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why is that, why is that sort of really important to you? To change things round and to keep on top of things? Is it something to do with you being a good manager, or thought of as a good manager? Is it extra profit you think you get from this process or what?

Mr. 8: It's because I want to be a good manager I think. I mean that's the truth of it.

Interviewer: And why do you think that's really important to you? To be thought of as a good manager?

Mr. 8: It's respect isn't it. Pride I suppose. I think we've all got it.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK. And you think that measuring sort of helps you in that respect? You think you keep on top of things and?

Mr. 8: 100% yeah, 100%. Without it you can't deal with anything I don't think, especially when you've got other people working for you, and you're within an organisation, because anything could happen.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 8: You could have stock missing, have people stealing. You have to keep an eye on things.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah OK. Do you feel as if you do a lot of that, or is some of that done by head office as well? Because I notice some people don't put this as an important criteria because, I suppose they think that head office is keeping an eye?

Mr. 8: Well they can't keep an eye on people from there can they?

Interviewer: Well no, I wouldn't have thought so but.

Mr. 8: No definitely not.

Interviewer: So, because, doesn't head office keep an eye on some profitable lines or whatever?

Mr. 8: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you feel as if you act on that, or do you feel as if you know it better because you're in the store and you're operating the store?

Mr. 8: Well no. I mean we're all part of a team, and the more people keeping an eye on things the better really I think.

Interviewer: Yeah. So what do you get from head office then? Just to tell you what's going well? What's not going well or? What do they do for you?

Mr. 8: Yeah. I mean we do get bulletins down. We get obviously promotional information down. They tell us what's stuff's going on promotion and then we deal with it. Put it on promotion and display it...

Interviewer: Yeah so they're keeping tabs on this detailed analysis bit as well aren't they really?

Mr. 8: Oh yeah, definitely we get paperwork down, and we get stock sheets down. Yeah so we get a lot of support from head office, a hell of a lot.

Interviewer: Right yeah. And you feel as if that helps in your analysis?

Mr. 8: Definitely.

Interviewer: Which is the best bit for your analysis then? Is it the stuff coming down from head office, or is it something that you do on your computer there and? Well you give them the figures in the first place anyway no doubt?

Mr. 8: When you say which is the best, what do you mean?

Interviewer: Which do you think is the most detailed, the most important?

Mr. 8: The most important to me is, I finalise my week, because I finalise it by the week on a Sunday.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 8: And when all my paperwork comes through clear, and no money has been lost, my stock-take's come out nicely.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 8: I walk away happy. I've had a good week.

Interviewer: Right. So it's your personal thing of, you going through everything in details, and then you presumably pass those figures on to head office?

Mr. 8: Yeah that's right, I send it all through to head office yeah.

Interviewer: OK great. Personal analysis. Personal motivation you've put down as really important as well. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Why that's really important to you?

Mr. 8: Well without that you may as well not bother.

Interviewer: What does it lead to? Why is it really important to you though?

Mr. 8: It's should be important to everybody I think.

Interviewer: Yes, no doubt that's true. But it's important to you for what? Your quality of life sort of thing, or is it important to you to motivate staff or, where's the link there sort of thing?

Mr. 8: Everything.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Mr. 8: Yeah. I mean if the manager isn't motivated then the business has no chance full stop I don't think. It's an uphill battle.

Interviewer: And what sort of things are you talking about here? The business?

Mr. 8: Everything. Every single thing from the start, from the running of the shop, to dealing with staff, customers. Discussing next steps, displaying products, working with other managers, working with reps, everything.

Interviewer: OK. So you feel as if that personal motivation is really important to the business. I think we can link that in to what we're talking about up here, because it's with similar sort of issues then, when we got to success and, whatever it is. OK fine. Last couple here, service quality. Can you tell me why you think that's very important?

Mr. 8: Because people have memories and they walk away from somewhere, and if they liked the place they'll come back. If they have a bad experience, they won't come back again.

Interviewer: So it's for repeat business basically.

Mr. 8: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. And repeat business is presumably pretty important to you for?

Mr. 8: Golden rule isn't it?

Interviewer: Can I ask you to say why you think it is important, although it might be pretty obvious?

Mr. 8: Because obviously each business wants to build its customers up, and we're in the market for doing that, and you know, basically, good customer service if part of Convenience Stores Ltd., you know, the way it wants to go.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 8: You know, it's a very very important part of what we do.

Interviewer: OK. So it's partially to build customer loyalty, customer base no doubt, and it's really important for Convenience Stores Ltd.. Why is that sort of important to you? Is it sort of, you want your career to go well in Convenience Stores Ltd. or?

Mr. 8: Well we all want to be successful together. You know it's all part of the success isn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah. And is that, what are your aims with Convenience Stores Ltd. do you think? Do you think it's to move on to a larger store, an area manager's job or? What's your aim?

Mr. 8: Keep an eye on the company... every day.

(laughter)

Interviewer: So is it sort of, it's part of your lifestyle basically is it, to make sure everything is?

Mr. 8: Yeah.

Interviewer: You seem to be quite, under that very important bit, I'm very similar myself, but some people are not of course, they're very motivated to get top of the ladder, career-wise and whatever. You don't feel as if you're too much like that then or do you think or?

Mr. 8: No. Not really no.

Interviewer: What sort of thing do you think you're looking for? Comfortable life. Nice lifestyle. Motivating job, really good quality life and that sort of thing?

Mr. 8: Yep.

Interviewer: OK. Knowledge of customers. Why is that really important to you?

Mr. 8: Because unless you know what sort of customers you're going to have within your area, you won't know what to sell. For instance here we've got the university on our doorstep, we've got 2 college, and because we know that we can adapt and deal with the type of customers we've got in the area.

Interviewer: Yeah OK. What's around here then? What sort of places are round here? Education places, big fancy college town?

Mr. 8: You've got Holloway, Holloway University that's just there.

Interviewer: Is it? Oh.

Mr. 8: And you've got a college just here, you must have drove by it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 8: Just there, there's another one up the road there.

Interviewer: Oh right.

Mr. 8: So it's all Mars Bars. 20 packets of them fags, and a can of coke.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Yeah, good healthy living students. Great eh. So you can identify your different types of customers and you can adapt accordingly, so it's an adaptive type of thing.

Mr. 8: Yeah.

Interviewer: Changing your stock presumably to that? Talking about stock there? I'll write Mars bars down, and cigs.

(laughter)

Mr. 8: Typical students. So why is that, sort of getting that right? That's presumably leading to? That's what we're here for, then it goes back to the beginning again.

Interviewer: OK. I think that's pretty good. Thank you very much on that. The next bit, the last bit in fact, is can you explain some of these relationships here? This might be a bit tricky. Geographical position of the store leads to motivation of staff? You think that you're motivated because of where you are or?

Mr. 8: Yeah I would be, depending on the location definitely yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, so if you were in a dump of an area then, you wouldn't like it very much?

Mr. 8: Exactly. No one would would they?

Interviewer: OK. So you've got that link. OK. Motivation of staff to planning ahead. You think there's a big link there as well?

Mr. 8: Not motivation of staff, but.

Interviewer: Sorry, personal motivation.

Mr. 8: Yeah yeah. Yeah definitely.

Interviewer: Can you sort of explain that?

Mr. 8: Yeah I'll try to. If you're personally motivated and you're feeling positive, then obviously you're going to be in a good position to plan in the right way, and in a positive way, and probably make some good decisions.

Interviewer: OK very good.

(Interruption)

Your planning ahead leading to detailed analysis probably not quite so important for you, but a little bit of a link there. This detailed analysis linked to knowledge of customers. I suppose that's a reasonably obviously one. Perhaps you could explain exactly what you mean there.

Analyse your different goods and what you've sold, and what's selling or whatever, and I suppose that, does that build up your knowledge of customers and what they want or whatever?

Mr. 8: Yeah.

Interviewer: So the analysis bit is quite strong here.

Mr. 8: Yeah.

Interviewer: Speed of response leading to service quality is quite a strong link as well. So what sort of link is there?

Mr. 8: Say, identifying changes in customers' needs and things like that and, you modify a service quality to match that sort of thing?

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. I would say so yeah. Definitely.

Mr. 8: And service quality to motivation and developing staff. I suppose they're interlinked really?

Interviewer: Yeah they're definitely interlinked, I mean they're nearly the same thing aren't they?

Mr. 8: Yeah right OK. So you sort of think that that's another sort of strong bit here that you've identified?

Interviewer: Yeah. Because you're only as strong as your weakest link aren't you?

Mr. 8: Yeah OK.

Interviewer: If you've got good staff and they're well education and well trained in what they're doing, then obviously that's going to help the business.

Mr. 8: Yeah OK. Do they link back then? Do they link back to service quality do you think?

Interviewer: Definitely yeah.

Mr. 8: They link in there, developing staff leading to service quality or?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 8: So we've got one there, and we've got another one up here. That seems to be what you're saying. Is that plus 1 plus 2 plus 3 or, developing staff, motivation of staff, what?

Interviewer: Plus 3. Yeah.

Mr. 8: So there's this little bit here that's quite important to you I think, by the looks of things and what you're saying.

Interviewer: Important to the business yeah.

Mr. 8: Success I should say. Then this analysis of profitability and personal motivation bit is really linked together as well. This analysis, knowledge of customers and, that seems to be quite important to you? Success as far as you're concerned?

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Interviewer: Anything else I've left out or?
Mr. 8: No. That's brilliant.

Interviewer: OK. That's very interesting I must admit. As you can see from the letter we're going to analyse things now, and we've got quite a few to analyse...
(laughter)

Interviewer: So you got taken in here because there were a few problems and stuff. What were the major problems?
Mr. 8: There was internal theft and a lot of external theft.

Interviewer: I see right. So that's the situation you came into. So would you do this automatically then, if you went to another store, or do you think it's just because you came to this store?
Mr. 8: I think it is quite a hard store to come to, so I had to learn a lot of things very fast.

Interviewer: I see right. You didn't have these problems quite so much in the places you'd been before presumably, you're quite an experienced guy and stuff?
Mr. 8: Yeah.

Interviewer: So do you feel as if, if you went to another store now, you'd take those things with you or?
Mr. 8: You always take skills with you, that you learn in other places, no matter where you learn them from.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 8: I mean when I come here I brought skills from other places that I'd learnt from there and brought them here. You just keep building on them don't you?

Interviewer: You do yeah. But what I was, for instance that's quite an interesting question, what happens when the skills that you learn somewhere else are not required quite so much here, but different skills are?
Mr. 8: You re-learn new skills. And then you just keep those skills that maybe you learnt from somewhere else for a time when you do need them.

Interviewer: Right I see yeah.
Mr. 8: I would say.

Interviewer: That's a good point. You don't just totally ignore them, you just maybe use them in different situations.
Mr. 8: No, because if they've worked before then they'll work again somewhere in the future.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, that was very interesting.

End of interview.

Interview with Respondent 9 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 11 October, 10am

- Interviewer: OK. Some of the issues that you raised. I've got down number one, is geographic position of the store. Can you tell me why that issue is really very important to you?
- Mr. 9: As a company, the sort of sites that we develop need to be correct. We basically try and go to an area where people have to travel 3, 4 or 5 miles or even further to their nearest Tescos or Sainsburys, and they might have a small Dillons or something on the corner, but they can't get their weekly shopping within that. So we basically try and stop people having to go to these big supermarkets. And in the past, when I opened a store at XXX; it's a very similar store to this. Same sort of size roughly. Same range etc. Exactly the same. That didn't take off and this place did.
- Interviewer: Right.
- Mr. 9: And it really is on location. And even to the extent of location within the village. When you come around here the corner in the main road, it's quite a good site. You can easily see it. Whereas the site in XXX, you can't see it from the main road very easily, and that makes a big difference as well I believe.
- Interviewer: Yeah. I could find it straight away. OK. So it's a competition thing. It's really important to get the store location right. Why is that issue really really important to you? Why is the main issue that you are in the right location?
- Mr. 9: Well if you haven't got the location you're not going to make a success of the store.
- Interviewer: OK. Success of the store. Why is that issue really important to you personally?
- Mr. 9: Because the more successful the store is, the more successful I am personally I suppose.
- Interviewer: And how do you think you measure that success? How would you personally measure your success?
- Mr. 9: Two ways really. On the profitability of the store. And on development of staff.
- Interviewer: OK. Let's take profitability of store first. Why is that really important to you? Is it to do with your career path? Is it to do with bonuses, financial reward?
- Mr. 9: It's partly financial. And I wouldn't say, I'm not the most ambitious person in Convenience Stores Ltd.. I'm not looking to go to Director level or anything like that.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr. 9: It's more of a, it's an incentive to see that the store is taking more money or it's making more profit. It's something to aim for.
- Interviewer: OK yeah.
- Mr. 9: If you come in a store that's in decline, it's very difficult to motivate yourself and to aim for targets etc.
- Interviewer: Is that for, because you want to do a good management job do you think? Or is it to do with reward?
- Mr. 9: It's financial reward. It's also personal pride.

Interviewer: And what about you as a manager. How your staff feel about you? Or the way you are thought of in the community and stuff. Is success important to you in that regard?

Mr. 9: That's important to me yes. Because I think that also breeds a successful store. My relationship with customers and with staff. If I have a poor relationship then we're not going to have a successful store.

Interviewer: Brilliant. OK. Personal motivation is behind these issues. Maybe differentiation from competitors? That's very probably similar to what we've just been talking about really because

Mr. 9: Again. If we were the same as Tesco's or Sainsbury's then people wouldn't come in here.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 9: Well I suppose some people would. But. The majority of people that come shopping in here that I talk to, the reason they shop with us is because we are different. We're more personal and more friendly. Not because particularly I employ everyone who is a ray of sunshine. I'm not saying my staff are any better than Tesco's or Sainsbury's. But because we're a smaller store, and we don't have billions of customers each week, we can talk to people. As we're going through the checkout, there isn't people constantly waiting, so people can take their time to pack. And even the layout of the store. They can come in here and they can do their shopping and be gone within half an hour.

Interviewer: Yeah. So there's that convenience bit that you're emphasising, as well as the communication and the friendly sort of atmosphere.

Mr. 9: Yes,

Interviewer: Yeah. I should think that presumably leads into all these other things we've talked about. Profitability and development or whatever?

Mr. 9: Yes.

Interviewer: OK. Current resources you put as a very key issue as well. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?

Mr. 9: You've got to have the resources within the store in order to have success. If your resources are wrong, if you haven't got enough staff, or if you haven't got enough equipment, then you're not going to, you're always going to struggle. You're never going to move forward.

Interviewer: Yeah. Very important I see. Is it important to you for the profitability success factor, or is it also to do with less hassle, less dragging you down or whatever?

Mr. 9: Yeah. I think, from a customer view it's important. So profitability yes. But also it's morale comes into that, and motivation. The biggest cost that we have in the store is wages. If you haven't got that right, then you're not going to build anything for the future.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you're constrained in any way because, some people that they would like to have..?

Mr. 9: Yes we are. Yeah. Without a doubt. It's probably my biggest bugbear within the organisation, wages. Not so much that I think I should be able to spend thousands and thousands of pounds more. But within Convenience Stores Ltd. there's a system that I don't particularly agree with. And I've argued my case several times. And again I think that's one of the barriers.

Interviewer: One of the main barriers yeah.

Mr. 9: I can understand that as a company we need to control wages. But I want a system where I can say – well look, if I spend this on wages, you're going to get this – best to not always be thinking – last year you spent that on wages, so we'll give you a little bit extra because everyone's had a pay rise, but that's all you can spend.

Interviewer: Yes. They give you a budget for the whole store then, rather than saying, you can't spend more than so much per employee or something?

Mr. 9: No. We have a budget for the store.

Interviewer: Do you feel as if you're paying comparative wages to the likes of your competitors?

Mr. 9: No we don't. So again we have to make sure that our staff are... the people that do work here are not getting over-stressed. They see it as a job. I'm not saying they have an easy time of it. But you've got to make it enjoyable for them to come to work. To compensate for the fact that they're getting that little bit less. And friendly atmosphere for the customers and make it a friendly atmosphere for the staff.

Interviewer: Maybe it's not worth them travelling because it's quite a distance or something. But then, if it was a really negative space here and...

Mr. 9: That's right.

Interviewer: I see what you're saying. Interesting. So enjoyable job important to you. Do you find our job enjoyable? Is that what you get out of it do you think?

Mr. 9: Yeah. It's the bottom line. I've been in retail since I left school. I wouldn't do anything else. I probably couldn't do anything else now, I'm too long in the tooth. But I enjoy it yeah.

Interviewer: What's the main buzz you get out of it do you think?

Mr. 9: I suppose really. Although having that experience knowing roughly what's going to happen from one day to the next. No 2 days are the same. Does that make sense? You know that, I never reach the target that I want for the store, because it always moves on and on and on?

Interviewer: It's a big challenge to you then?

Mr. 9: It's a challenge all the time yes.

Interviewer: And that's important for your interest in the job?

Mr. 9: Yes.

Interviewer: Building resources for the future as well, you say is an important one. Obviously you mentioned something about the staff being very important, and everyone getting something. Why is it really important do you think?

Mr. 9: Because I think if you're going to build a successful store, then you need to think short, medium and long term. You need to be aware of how you're going to move the store forward in more areas, and developing staff is a real key to that. Also, they improve as well. If you're developing the staff, they get more enjoyment out of it. And they might go on for financial gain etc, as well.

Interviewer: They get rewards out of it, and do you get enjoyment out of seeing people moving on, and fulfilling their potential I suppose is it?

Mr. 9: Yeah. For example if I'm doing a task on a regular basis and I can then pass that on to one of my assistant managers or to a member of staff, I know then that frees me up to go on and do something else.

Interviewer: And what does that freeing up mean you can do?

Mr. 9: Well a whole host of things really. I can then go and spend more time developing other staff. Which then has a knock-on effect. Again that gives me more time in the long run. It means that I can perhaps take on more outside interests within the company. I can sort of say to my seniors, well the store manages reasonably well, and at the moment I'm on several committees, and I can improve on that side of things, which again make it more interesting for myself.

Interviewer: And where does that lead do you think? Is it enjoyment. Job satisfaction sort of thing? Or is it a career type of thing or a mixture of both?

Mr. 9: A bit of both really.

Interviewer: OK. Last but not least. Barrier to change. We've mentioned a bit about wages. Why do you think that's really important to you?

Mr. 9: I think when you're working in a multiple organisation, you need two way communication. And all the time that, any barriers that exist that prevent that, can't be a good thing basically.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. 9: From all the things I've listed. From the point of view of development. Profitability. Customer satisfaction.

Interviewer: What are the barriers to you think? You already mentioned wages.

Mr. 9: A whole host really. Obviously I control the unit on a day-to-day basis, and I'm responsible for the profitability. I'm not responsible for the range we stock. I can suggest. But at the end of the day with something like that. Someone in head office has. As an example I've had Doris and say can you do such-and-such washing powder. Which might or might not be available to us anyway. So I can then recommend that to a buyer.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 9: And that's the system that we kind of have. That gets very diluted anyway. It's a very small voice by the time it gets to the buyer.

Interviewer: Yeah/.

Mr. 9: But then he has suppliers coming to him and saying – well if you stock this, we'll give you this – and so I can understand. But I think if there's a bit of a two-way communication. As to – well we can't to do, we're doing this because.... -

Interviewer: OK. How many of these things to you think you have got control over? Do you feel as though you've got control over most things, you've mentioned some things in here you haven't got control over. You've got a bit of a balance here really?

Mr. 9: Yeah. I think there's a balance. And the important thing from a manager's point of view, and I suppose we're all guilty of it, is that I've got to put into perspective what I can control and what I can't, and not spend too much time on worrying about the stuff that's out of my hands, and concentrate on the things that... It's very easy to get frustrated about things and, then miss things that you can sort out yourself.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think you're right there. How predictable do you think a lot of these things are? Because you've got some, presumably, data internally, so you've got a good feel for your customers, you speak to them all the time or whatever. Do you use your data to make a case for certain extra or ranges? How do you do that? What's going to work? As far as promotions are concerned for example? Do you know roughly? Maybe you do and maybe you don't, know how well promotions are going to go in the store? With your own experience, personal experience?

Mr. 9: It is more down to experience as opposed to fate.

Interviewer: OK yeah.

Mr. 9: We have got the resources to pull off data. Previous promotions etc. But I wouldn't say we use it. We probably don't use it enough to be honest.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 9: A lot of things go down to experience in the end.

Interviewer: Why do you think that? Because maybe you've had promotions maybe leading up to Christmas I suppose? Christmas is a prime example.

Mr. 9: That's right.

Interviewer: But you don't end to analyse things like that so much you think? Or you've just got a good feel for it?

Mr. 9: You go for the feel.

Interviewer: You individually?

Mr. 9: It's probably me individually, and it's also....I suppose. A lot of the time it will take time for me to get sales. I mean I know what we did on a store turnover by department. But I wouldn't be able to say how many Quality Street we sold last year. I'd be – Oh yeah I think I ordered 30 cases, let's get 40 in this year because we're much busier – it would be very much that sort of thing.

Interviewer: So you remember maybe the key things that did go well last year by experience and remembering, but you didn't go to the computer and say - well, we definitely sold -

Mr. 9: No. I mean head office do supply us with information as to company top sellers etc, and we then go and highlight those on the shelf labels so we're aware of what products we've got to watch for. And they update that, it comes up to Christmas and they'll send us a list of what products – Don't forget this, this and this – because you always forget something.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 9: You can imagine when you do your shopping so!

Interviewer: Yeah I can imagine, nightmare! Even if there's only 10 items, I always forget one at least. Right yeah. OK. Maybe some of things here that looks to me to come out of it from your perspective is that you've got a balance between lots of items, of things that you can't do very much about, such as geographical position, the store is a bit of a set thing.

Mr. 9: It's here and that's it.

Interviewer: That's right. And I think what you mentioned earlier on, just a minute ago, was very telling, is that you're aware of these things that you can't really control but have to try and categorise them or pigeonhole them in some way, not to concentrate on them. I think some people don't even consider them from what I've seen so far.

Mr. 9: Right right - I'm here to manage the unit – and that's it. They're told –I can spend that, or I have to stop that, that's it – they don't have any?

Interviewer: Yeah. They're either very..

(break in tape)

Interviewer: You mentioned planning ahead there. But don't give it too much emphasis.

Mr. 9: That's probably a personal fault.

Interviewer: Personal fault!

(laughter)

Mr. 9: Well it probably is. Because it's, I know it's a fault because obviously as a company we go on different courses or whatever you know. And it has been picked up on, you need to have all these plans in place. And as a company I mean, I don't know how we compare to others, but we love our plans.

Interviewer: That's right.

Mr. 9: If you've got an issue with.. there is our support. We have to do an action plan. We have to send that off to someone. We have to have set targets and measurements now. And I'm very much – Well OK, that's that. I know I've got to do this and this, because I'm an experienced person. I'll go and tell Mable she's got to do this, and let's sort it out and sending it on –

Interviewer: You think it's become too beaurocratic? It's just...

Mr. 9: Yeah it can do. And a lot of the time, our planning is to assist the stores, it's to cover someone..

Interviewer: Some else's back yeah.

Mr. 9: Oh well yeah, I've told so and so that's wrong, and that's what he's doing about it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 9: So that's a piece of paper and that keeps his boss off his back, and he can then pass it on to his boss and so on. And to me that's you know, if there's an issue then let's sort it out.

Interviewer: Just get it done now yes. That's right. I feel that you're saying, getting frustrated with working in beaurocratic organisations, and they're not beaurocratic organisations at the end of the day.

Mr. 9: Well planning ahead, especially on development and development of staff, I think that's a key that I should perhaps improve on. And emphasise a bit more. But again. The sort of organisation again we're in. It's very difficult to plan ahead.

Interviewer: Right. Why?
Mr. 9: Well. Because I can make business plans and action plans for the next 3 months. And I could say for example, to one of my assistant managers, I could sit down right, and yeah do this. And then in two weeks time she could be in another slot.

Interviewer: Yes right.
Mr. 9: And then think well. Done all that. With her doing this. And it's not a stable environment at times.

Interviewer: You don't feel as if it's that predictable? And do think some things are predictable and some things aren't? How do you feel on that one?
Mr. 9: Some things within retail are very predictable.

Interviewer: Such as.
Mr. 9: Well for example trends and times of the year, and certain things that you're going to need to do. But it's very unpredictable as to where we're going to be from a recruitment point of view in the future. From a management point of view in the future.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 9: The organisation I'm in. It's not very predictable who your bosses are going to be next week. It can change that quickly. And it does. So you haven't got that stability to..

Interviewer: So therefore do you somewhat de-emphasise it, because you feel as if it's not leading very far ahead?
Mr. 9: I don't think it's something that I'm going to have faith in.

Interviewer: What about planning ahead in a more functional sort of way, or tactical sort of way, where people are planning their staff, staffing levels and all that sort of stuff?
Mr. 9: Well we do a certain amount of that on a weekly basis, but we wouldn't go much beyond month.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr. 9: I mean obviously we know that for example we just lost a lot of staff because they've gone off to university, so obviously we knew that was going to happen, and we've probably known that for the past 6 months, so we put plans in place to make that as smooth as we could. Other than...

(tape paused)

Interviewer: And planning for stocking levels, presumably you've done that on a sort of field sort of basis, because as you said earlier, roughly you knew what happened this time last year. You knew. You planned a bit ahead because you knew what was coming up.
Mr. 9: Yeah. And you know we were very assisted by head office as well. So they send out communications. For example Halloween is now a big thing. I mean that really affects us being a smaller store. So I mean today I received something through from head office, I've never seen a Halloween pack before.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. 9: It's only a few pages, and they're saying don't forget to do this and, but ur.

Interviewer: Very good. I think this quite an interesting one for you because there are lots of issue. And I quite the idea of having the current turnover in the centre, and the way things link together to that. It's sort of..

Mr. 9: Yeah. Well I think that's clear. If the store's doing well and you're given more money in wages, or we've just had the store spruced well because it's doing well. If we weren't doing well, that wouldn't have happened. That wouldn't have been signed off so readily, to spend a bit of money on the store.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 9: So if you haven't got the turnover building, and the success there, then everything else really can fall by the wayside.

Interviewer: Very good. Thank you very much. How long have you been at this store?

Mr. 9: I've been here just over 3 years.

Interviewer: Well thank you very very much. That was very interesting and I enjoyed it very much. I hope you didn't find it too arduous.

Mr. 9: No not at all.

Interviewer: I find it so fascinating how different people have different ideas about managing. One of the reasons why we're sticking to stores is that it's the same sort of context in every case then, so it's not going off and interviewing people on different issues quite so much, and it's even surprising even within..

(end of recording)

Interview with Respondent 10 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 30 October, 11am

- Interviewer: OK. Thanks a lot. Great. You've put in geographical position of the store as very very important. Can you tell me why you consider that to be a really important factor?
- Mr. 10: Here, because we haven't got any immediate large competitors.
- Interviewer: Yes.
- Mr. 10: If we had a Tesco's next door then that would be an issue.
- Interviewer: Yes.
- Mr. 10: Also from the point of view whereby the store is on a main road as well.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr. 10: Which is obviously important.
- Interviewer: So is that to do with making sure customers return or is it to do with the turnover?
- Mr. 10: Our business is based pretty much on local people.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr. 10: Most of our customers would probably go to Tesco's once a week.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr. 10: Once a fortnight, once a month and buy a main shop, and then come out to us to buy daily goods really, like fresh bread, fresh milk, top up lines, as well as obviously your immediate customers that are local to the area as well.
- Interviewer: Right, and they would use you for everything then? Because you're just up the road?
- Mr. 10: Yeah. Maybe the older people possibly. They would come out to us fairly regularly throughout the week.
- Interviewer: OK. Why is that important to you? Why is it important to you to get these people keep on coming back and?
- Mr. 10: Obviously for turnover. You want the customers to be here, for turnover, which is why we're in business basically.
- Interviewer: Right. And you consider that, the major goal? Or do you think there's some other goals as well?
- Mr. 10: Well. Turnover is obviously very very important to the business.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr. 10: Extremely important. ... lots of other things but it's all about turnover.

Interviewer: OK such as?
Mr. 10: Spend the money on developing staff. Improving the business. Refits. Pricing. Service. Quality of staff.

Interviewer: OK. And why are these issues really important to you do you think? Why is it important to you to have a good business? Is it, I mean talk maybe about your personal motivations?
Mr. 10: As regards to why is it important to?

Interviewer: To you, to make sure your store's running well, and you talk about developing staff, improving things, gradually improving it?
Mr. 10: To keep the customers happy basically. To give the customers what they want. The service that they should expect.

Interviewer: And what about you personally? Do you think it's to do with you being regarded as a good manager? Those sort of issues?
Mr. 10: Yeah. I think so. Hopefully I'm regarded as good manager.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: The store had quite a lot of problems and I was asked to come in here to do a bit of troubleshooting.

Interviewer: Yeah. How long have you been in this particular store?
Mr. 10: I've been here since February. So, 8 or 9 months.

Interviewer: OK. So a good manager. Is it to do with your, also, maybe how people see you as a good manager? Your profile? From other peoples point of view?
Mr. 10: Possibly yeah.

Interviewer: And what about career things? Is it important to you to make an impact for your own personal satisfaction as well do you think?
Mr. 10: Yes. Yeah. Not because I definitely want massive changes at the moment.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: I've always obviously wanted to do very well and whatever anyway.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr. 10: It's important to me that the store is successful.

Interviewer: Yeah. Personal motivation type of?
Mr. 10: Yeah. And also from the fact whereby I was asked to come in to do a specific job. To try and make the store successful when it previously had problems.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. 10: So obviously that was one of my main objectives when I was asked to come into this store.

Interviewer: Great thank you. Service quality. Why do you think that's important? I know you can say for the things we've already mentioned about customers coming back and, turnover and whatever but?

Mr. 10: Yeah. One of the, we like to think from a company point of view... because we generally get visited quite regularly by our customers, they possibly come in on average maybe 3 times a week, we tend to get a bit of rapport between the staff and the customers, which is different to people that would go into a superstore every week.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 10: Or every fortnight whereby there's hundreds of different staff, you don't really build up any rapport with the customers, or don't recognise regular customers because of, obviously the body of people that come in here, in terms of the quality of staff working here. So we try and build business up from our point of view whereby we're local to the community, we're not in a business park miles away from anywhere.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. 10: We're generally in high streets and villages, which is the same for us here.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr. 10: We get regular customers and service quality is one of the things that we know we can do better than the big Tesco's or the big Sainsburys and so on, because we can provide a bit more of a personal service is you like. So, very important to us yes.

Interviewer: So this personal service? Do you like operating that way? Do you think it's?

Mr. 10: Absolutely yeah.

Interviewer: Is it to do with your, part of your job satisfaction, or is it to do with?

Mr. 10: Yeah definitely. I mean if people were to complement staff, or if people are generally happy doing their shopping here, have a bit of a chat, and have a good experience of shopping, then yeah, very much get satisfaction from that.

Interviewer: And presumably you feel that increases the turnover and makes them come back?

Mr. 10: Yeah. People will definitely come back with service. It's a major major factor. Particularly to a business like ours as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. Did you feel there was a problem in that area when you first came here?

Mr. 10: Yes there was. We've still got work to do but we've certainly made progress yeah. It was previously as though the customers were... to peoples' work, rather than the reason for their work.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr. 10: And also because we have quite high levels of theft. This was a kind of attitude from the customers as well. But genuine customers. So just a general attitude probably to all customers.

Interviewer: I see yes. Everybody was classified as a potential?
Mr. 10: Yeah yeah. Something was wrong with it yeah.

Interviewer: OK. So that's. It's this sort of staff aspect. And you've put developing staff actually as number 5 here. Can you tell me about that developing staff? It seems to lead on directly to your service quality and?
Mr. 10: Yeah. Obviously developing staff. Massively important to us as a business. To obviously keep people. To keep people motivated. And obviously to develop them through the business as a company, we're looking at opening maybe 20 to 25 stores a year so,

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: So as regards to developing people to a management position, that's very important for us because we need managers to go to these stores. Generally within the store anyway, because of the size of store we are, we generally like to make people as flexible as they possibly can be.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: As regards to the jobs that they actually do in store.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: So again. You know training them on different departments... it's again important to us.

Interviewer: Yeah. Is that? Why is that particularly important to you? Is it?
Mr. 10: Because of the fact whereby as I say we don't have a quantity of staff, we need to staff to be able to be flexible, unlike the Tesco's that employs 500 staff, and they've got you know, 20 staff that can work the deli.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr. 10: You know. We have a certain amount people that can do the deli, but they can also use the tills as well, and they can also maybe, cash up, and they can also... and that's what's different in a large store.

Interviewer: Is it, does that sort of thing improve the feel of the store. Does it improve the turnover..?
Mr. 10: It improves, I think if people are being looked after and developed they generally are more motivated. And they generally tend to work better. If they are developed as well they will generally tend to be more efficient.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: Which again, works right through the business, from the point of view of service to you know, everything really.

Interviewer: And what about you personally as the manager of these people? Does it help you. In what ways does it help you?
Mr. 10: It helps me whereby if, you know if we have any issues that, if we've got well-trained people, then it's a question of just asking somebody to do a job, just directing them, rather than having a training issue again..

Interviewer: Yes that's right. It's a bit of a planning ahead type of issue I suppose and?
Mr. 10: Yeah, and it can be fire fighting as well you know. If you suddenly have a problem, if you've got that sort of people, you've obviously got more people to call on to try and deal with the issue.

Interviewer: So does it, that lead to you having less hassle for yourself or?
Mr. 10: Absolutely absolutely. It certainly makes my life easier if the staff are well-trained.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. And do you, you have encouraged that since you've been here, to put them into different departments and?
Mr. 10: Yeah. We've had management that have gone through training, people that have been identified as potential, on training courses, to take on management positions as well.

Interviewer: These are your staff here?
Mr. 10: Yeah yeah. We've got that at the moment. And we also have a training schedule to get people through the training, because when they're actually past a particular area, some of them.... (blurred tape), for being here, and also... quite a lot of new staff since I've been here as well anyway, so naturally they would need to be trained to a level anyway.

(Interruption)

That's a guy from our head office actually.

Interviewer: Oh right.
Mr. 10: We don't see him very often, maybe every 6 months that they come in and just have a look around, make sure everything's in place.

Interviewer: He said the deli was superb?
Mr. 10: Yeah.

Interviewer: Very good. Excellent. Well. OK. You know I've had this issue raised with some people before that, the rewards for staff may be out of your control?
Mr. 10: No not necessarily no.

Interviewer: No?
Mr. 10: Which is a part whereby developing staff, motivation of staff and personnel turnover, are all connected. We have a 3 level grade for general assistants if you like.

Interviewer: Mm.
Mr. 10: And they move up grades when they pass a certain amount of sections within the store.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: On their training. So. They can actually, if they pass say 7 departments, get through the training for 7 departments, they'll actually go up to the top grade.

Interviewer: I see.
Mr. 10: Wage wise.

Interviewer: I see.
Mr. 10: So. That's obviously important as well, for people, where you have got a character down, you want to encourage people to do well.

Interviewer: Yeah. Encourages staff development from their angle, and of course it makes your job easier and, makes the store more efficient and more?
Mr. 10: Absolutely. Absolutely. And, obviously if people are getting on and they're earning more money, that would naturally reduce the turnover of staff as well.

Interviewer: Yes yes.
Mr. 10: And if people are earning more money, then obviously more money is created as well.

Interviewer: Yes. OK. You mentioned large product variety as being an important issue, can you tell me why you think that's important?
Mr. 10: It is to us. Again. In the stores that we generally operate, they are generally about this sort of size, about 5000 square foot, but as regards to range, Convenience Stores Ltd. has done as well as it has in the last few years, which is a lot down to the range that we can fit into a store this size.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr. 10: We sell a large proportion of fresh food which is delivered daily.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: And... products. You know, we may not sell 6 different sizes of certain things, but we do, we will have a range of most of the everyday items that people actually want. So. That has been a massive, particularly on the fresh food side, it's played a massive massive part in the success of Convenience Stores Ltd. really.

Interviewer: Yeah. And presumably you recognise this because you're an experienced guy here? The company tend to you know, so yeah, you're a very guy. You've noticed a difference since you've worked with Convenience Stores Ltd.? That maybe people aren't complaining about the lack of some range now, whereas in the past? Or they just go elsewhere and..?
Mr. 10: Yeah. I think that we've always been relatively strong on fresh foods.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: Like I say. That's really the backbone of the business for us really.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: I just think as time's gone on, it's just seemed to get better and better really.

Interviewer: Right right yeah.
Mr. 10: But certainly against the competitors, of a similar sized store, and also small stores. I mean we have stores that are down to 1500 square foot.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: That will still get a fresh delivery every day, bread, milk, cut meat, dairy products, fruit and veg, bakery, obviously we have...

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: They have the opportunity to have that every single day. You know your local Londis, One Stop, Kwik Save, all the convenience stores haven't got that sort of set up, and that's why we're so very good.

Interviewer: Yes right.
Mr. 10: ..The community, big, residential areas, potential of a lot of people, you stock a good range, open long hours, and that's what convenience stores are about really. Or that's why we do it so very well, because of the range and variety we sell.

Interviewer: OK great. Thank you. And knowledge of customers as an issue as well?
Mr. 10: Yeah. It's mega important. As an example as regards to myself. The last store I worked at was in Livewater. The profile of customers in Livewater is a massive massive difference to the customers that we have here.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: You know. They buy different products.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: So. Obviously what we concentrate on or what we highlight promotion-wise and so on would be different in here than it was in Livewater. So as regards to that knowledge, whereby we would be focussing on the products that the local people want particular to that area, obviously it helps as well.

Interviewer: Did you find that difficult when you got here. Did it take you quite a while to get into what the difference were or did it?
Mr. 10: I did work here about 8 or 9 years ago, so I knew the store, knew the type of profile of the customers.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: So it wasn't quite as difficult, but even so, when you're working on another store.. it's going to take you a bit of time to settle down and change. And know what the customers want.

Interviewer: Yeah. I suppose it helps that you've been very experienced and you've been around a fair bit, and it sounds as if you have. What, what other things do you think you had to change when you came here..?
Mr. 10: Here? Other things to change.. Staff attitude.

Interviewer: This is because of the problems you've had?
Mr. 10: Yeah. Taking new people on. That was a big thing as well. And the type of people that we targeted as well.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: Because we had lots of issues in the past to be honest, so that was quite important.

Interviewer: OK. Where do you think you're going to go next after you've made a success of managing these stores? Where do you think that you'd like to go?
Mr. 10: Myself?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: I'm not sure yet.

Interviewer: What do you think your motivation is, to do? Just to make a success of this one? Of course.
Mr. 10: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you think of any..?
Mr. 10: Possibly to do something similar in another store, that is possible, for whatever reason. To actually,

Interviewer: Do you see yourself as more of a troubleshooter sort of person and, somebody to sort things out?
Mr. 10: Yeah. I quite enjoy doing that. I quite enjoy that because I find that quite motivational. If you can see things moving forward, and there are different ways forward, and it's quite motivating.

Interviewer: So you like the sort of challenging type of things rather than, something, a nice cosy store, with a nice customer base, and?
Mr. 10: I don't know really, I honestly don't know. When I was at Livewater I never wanted to move from the store.

Interviewer: You liked the area and?
Mr. 10: I liked the area, the people were excellent, the staff were excellent, the customers were really nice, it was a nice environment to work in.

Interviewer: Yeah. How long were you there?
Mr. 10: 3 years.

Interviewer: Right OK.
Mr. 10: And I didn't want to leave there. Because it was nice, and I suppose I settled in. Obviously it takes a while to change things, and I really really didn't want to leave there. Especially not to come to a store like this which was known as a trouble spot.

Interviewer: Yeah. Trouble spot yeah.
Mr. 10: You know, different profile of customers, different profile of staff. Difficult. But, I quite enjoyed it.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you enjoyed the challenging bit.
Mr. 10: Yeah. So I'm not really sure where, or what I'd like to do yet. I haven't really decided as I'm still going through the mind of change, whereby because I was quite resentful about coming here initially. I've started to change my mind a little bit, and started to think well, you know, it's not so bad, and you know we've done alright, and the store's going in the direction it should be.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr. 10: And everything else, so from a motivation point of view, I've got a lot of motivation from that. Whereby, although I'd like to obviously still be there now, it would just be a question of plodding on.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah yeah.
Mr. 10: In a comfortable environment so..

Interviewer: You can make an impact here and, get yourself noticed and, as a manager I suppose? Is that really important to you?
Mr. 10: To get myself noticed?

Interviewer: To get yourself noticed and known as a manager for sorting things out?
Mr. 10: Yeah yeah certainly. I've got quite a bit of pride. I think that I am noticed as a manager anyway because of the length of time that I've worked for the company, I'm quite an experienced manager..

Interviewer: Yeah yeah of course.
Mr. 10: And, I was obviously asked to come here to sort it out.

Interviewer: Yeah they wouldn't do that otherwise.
Mr. 10: They wouldn't have given it to anybody.

Interviewer: No no.
Mr. 10: Without sounding too flash, they wouldn't have given it to anybody, they wanted somebody that was experienced and knew what was what. All the stores I've worked in before would have been very very profitable, and this wasn't. And that was the task really, to change it round, and make it profitable.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you've seen it as a decrease in turnover, and that's presumably before you turned up? How long do you think it's going to take you to change that round a bit?
Mr. 10: I would think, it's difficult to say. I would think within the next 3 or 4 months that we would be beating last year, against last year. That's what I... about 3% down, which has been quite a long time.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr. 10: And there's an awful lot of competition obviously.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr. 10: 3 Tescos, 2 stores within a 2 mile radius.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr. 10: We have a Lydle, a Kwik Save, An Audi, within a mile. It's a lot of stores, a lot of competition.

Interviewer: It is. And all ranges really.
Mr. 10: Yeah.

Interviewer: Up market and down market.
Mr. 10: Yeah. But saying that. We have the customer count in the store, and it's just encouraging them to spend a little bit more money. You know spend another £20, we'd be... So you know, it goes like that really. Initially the problems in store, the problems in store initially when I first came in was that the store wasn't really making any money, they had lots of staffing issues... security, and they had sales issues as well, albeit the immediate problems were to make the business more... There were some good staff. Training the staff. And then within all of that, once they actually start spending, naturally the sales will only increase anyway, they certainly won't decrease. If you're a bit more on the ball, it will naturally help sales, but concentrate on. A lot of them things will start to come into play, and then we'll really concentrate on sales then.

Interviewer: Yeah, because I noticed... sales turnover is as controversial as profitability of course, but what you seem to be suggesting is that although the turnover went down slightly, maybe the profitability went up a bit or, you?
Mr. 10: Yeah. Absolutely.

Interviewer: Whereas before you?
Mr. 10: Absolutely yeah. From the same turnover, we're making far more money. I think we've made in 5 periods this year, we've made more than they did in 13 periods last year.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr. 10: There's still another 8 periods to go. So, I've made promises against that as well. So the increase that people will be see by the end of the year is going to be huge.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: A huge increase against last year.

Interviewer: What's the major reason for that? You've talked about maybe some wastage.
Mr. 10: Security reasons. Wastage. Shrinkage was a real big thing. General stuff around the store really, or what I see as general with the store. Obviously keeping the, from a security point of view keeping that tight. Stock and order has probably been one of the biggest changes in the store.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: To help. And then the staff we employ as well.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: But yeah. Basically, the wastage, shrinkage that we were having before has massively massively reduced.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: The wage bill is certainly more efficient than it was last year. So we've saved money on that. Profitability, as regards to gross profit. One of the first things that I asked to change when I came into the store was, some of the pricing in store. Because of the profile of the customers. And the turnover.... in the store. So the changes were about all those things that made quite a big difference, profitability-wise.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: Whereby we were comfortably making a reasonable profit every month.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr. 10: Rather than last year. Sometimes it was making a profit, sometimes it wasn't, it was up and down. So, certainly.. a lot more control.

Interviewer: Very interesting. Very interesting indeed. Thank you very much. I think I've covered quite a lot of issues there. We're combining all these... Recording finished

Interview with Respondent 11 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 24th March 2003, 11am

- Interviewer: OK thank you for doing that very, very quickly, I can see you are top of everything that is pretty amazing. OK you would say this quality as your major key factor?
Mr 11: Yes.
- Interviewer: Can you tell me why that is really important to you?
Mr 11: Because we can't match the prices of the big supermarkets, so pretty much the one area we can beat them on is customer service, becoming friendly to the customers and draw them back that way.
- Interviewer: And why is that beating the competitors really important to you and ...?
Mr 11: So they can keep coming back here pretty much.
- Interviewer: So a repeat of business?
Mr 11: Yes.
- Interviewer: And why is that really important to you?
Mr 11: Because we are on a limited market if you like here of customer base, so pretty much we have got to keep what we have got!
- (Laughter)
Mr 11: If they complain about anything they are gone!
- Interviewer: So right, yes, it is very competitive, we know about that. OK why is that really important to you to keep on repeat business and what is your underlying ...?
Mr 11: Sales figures.
- Interviewer: OK and why are they really important to you personally?
Mr 11: To me personally?
- Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 11: To meet and beat targets pretty much and my own personal development effectively, pretty selfish, I want to be a success here; I will hopefully go on to somewhere bigger and better.
- Interviewer: Right so it is a career, promotion ... What sort of things you think you would like as far as this profession is concerned, larger store or area manager sort of thing?
Mr 11: Potentially yes.
- Interviewer: So it is quite career orientated.

Mr 11: Yes sure.

Interviewer: OK, you mentioned product promotions as being pretty key as well. Why is that? Is this a link here between developing staff and product promotions?
Mr 11: Yes it was

Interviewer: What do you think of it?
Mr 11: Yes it is very strong in here, because it makes up about 35% of our sales our promotions at the moment.

Interviewer: Ah right OK, so can I put down a ...?
Mr 11: A 2 again yes. So pretty much all our cashiers are trained to mention all the promotions to the customers and as I say they make up about 35% of our sales, so if they are not strong we have a bad week.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 11: We do promotions on the 2 week cycle, the sales difference you will notice on the worse promotions are no shopping and knock 5 or 6,000 off our weekly turnover.

Interviewer: Oh I see, so they are pretty important to you?
Mr 11: Yes, vital, yes.

Interviewer: So this increase in sales is this all to do with your, is this career progression or is there some other aspects to it, like the fact that you want to be known as a good manager or it was, what was it?
Mr 11: Yes it will all come under part of those, sort of make the shop a name and make me a name, hopefully within the company.

Interviewer: So is it to your reputation then you think is on the line?
Mr 11: Yes, both mine and the shop, yes.

Interviewer: OK, advertising, why is that really important to you?
Mr 11: That will highlight those promotions, we will have posters up everywhere, we have got leaflets in the door and advertising on the fixtures and, without it they just don't sell. Because we are in the convenient sector people are generally popping in for a basket shop, £5,6,7 worth, but with them, we can hopefully push it up above £10 per customer, so we do pick out one of the promotions at least.

Interviewer: You also mentioned developing staff as being important?
Mr 11: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell me why that is really important to you?
Mr 11: So as they can be basically left to do a job on their own without supervision, improve their section of the shop, if say they are in charge of a section it will hopefully go from strength to strength which again will lead to an increased turnover.

Interviewer: OK, and why is that developing staff really that key, is it so that it is less hassle to you or is it because it is really this increase in turnover or whatever?
Mr 11: Well we find that the more we develop the staff the lower the turnover.

Interviewer: Staff turnover?
Mr 11: Yes sure, as well as an increased sales turnover, they will get more and more efficient at their job.

Interviewer: And that sort of increase in efficiency, lower staff turnover, what is the really major benefits for you with that one?
Mr 11: I can't think of the words, it is a more predictable work force, we have got a constant work force, rather than having to constantly trained people up, it is all pretty much done and dusted.

Interviewer: So what are the major benefits of this constant work force for you personally do you think?
Mr 11: As you say, less hassle for me and they can get on and do their jobs, so less chasing and all that.

Interviewer: Less chasing?
Mr 11: Less chasing up of the staff and checking things done, you can rely on the jobs being done, once they are trained and been with you for a while.

Interviewer: So putting together these staff, these reasonably consistent staff, do they increase anything else, are they a benefit for other aspects?
Mr 11: No they will also get a better customer service in there, because they will get to know them, so customers will come in and they will say hello Wendy or whatever ...

Interviewer: So it is more of a personalised type of thing?
Mr 11: Yes very much so.

Interviewer: OK so increase in personal development needs to, maybe less hassle, less chasing around as a manager, but also more personalised service. What are all these things, what are the major benefits for you do you think? Less chasing, you can certainly see increase in turnover, you certainly...?
Mr 11: Yes, you do get a better shopping experience for the customers generally.

Interviewer: And what is the benefit for that?
Mr 11: Return custom and increased sales again.

Interviewer: I can see you are very increased sales orientated then really?
Mr 11: Pretty much, yes, anything that affects my bonus!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Ah there you are you see!

Mr 11: Very much!

Interviewer: And I must admit they must be pretty pleased with you, 31% that is a ...?
Mr 11: No, that is not good enough apparently.

Interviewer: It is the highest I have seen so far.
Mr 11: Yes.

Interviewer: Motivation of staff, why is that one really key?
Mr 11: Pretty much the same as the, happy staff and happy work force is a good work force, again it reflects on better customer service, they will be happier to the customers.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 11: And they are more likely to be flexible for you then as well if they are happier in their job.

Interviewer: And that flexibility is important for you?
Mr 11: Yes, very much so, obviously we are quite a round the clock business, if they can do some overtime for you or come in on their day off.

Interviewer: How about round the clock, what exactly ...?
Mr 11: We are open from 8 till 9.

Interviewer: OK, so that flexibility is pretty important for you and covering things. You have got planning ahead as quite important, although it is down your list here at No. 8, you have set it as quite key at the top here?
Mr 11: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you explain that?
Mr 11: I see it as very important it sort of brings it all together, so planning the staff and planning the promotions, but I don't know, I see the staff as the main, sort of the centre point of it all.

Interviewer: Right yes OK.
Mr 11: But it is vital obviously.

Interviewer: Would you say that you were more of a planner or more of a developing staff person? You mentioned this service quality as being key to these?
Mr 11: Yes.

Interviewer: And I noticed they are all linked together here in a nice neat sort of interrelationships here?
Mr 11: Planning is vital to meet the customer's needs, but it is a very close run thing, I say staff are absolutely vital for that and the quality of the staff.

Interviewer: What do you think you have done in the last two years here, you've focused on to get the results ...?
Mr 11: I've focused mainly on training and staff to be fair, we have got a little training wall outside, which you might have seen or not seen on the way in, it is just covered in certificates, because they can do internal certificates and, and we are pretty much 3 times over the company minimum or, they are quite well trained here.

Interviewer: What do you think the benefits for the staff are from this, they are presumably, well certainly more flexible, because they are multiskilled and stuff?
Mr 11: Yes.

Interviewer: Any other things that you find, they presumably stay longer ...?
Mr 11: Yes if they are happier in their jobs they will hopefully stay here and not move on somewhere else. We do pay a little bit less than the big supermarkets so we are under constant threat of losing them up the road. So hopefully they are happier and multiskilled and trained they will stay here. That is one of the main ones.

Interviewer: You have got these links here, there is a very nice link here and all linked together and everything and quite a lot of interrelationships. These ones are sort of, more of a bit of a, here. Can you explain that? They just don't fit into the other things quite so much and stuff, but they are very key?
Mr 11: They are, yes, certainly. The advertising is out of the staff hands generally, what we get, what is on promotion is not under store level control. So that all comes from Head Office, what we have got on promotion and the advertising again is sent to us by Head Office and we put it up. So I see that is out of the staff's control.

Interviewer: And this one over here, this is Head Office a bit again, isn't it, sort of like ...?
Mr 11: Yes.

Interviewer: Knowledge of customers, would you say knowledge of customers is really high ...?
Mr 11: Knowledge of customers comes in from the happy staff chatting to them as well, as well as keeping the staff a long time so they get to know the customers, that is why there is service quality, the friendlier cashier is to get to know their customers.

Interviewer: Yes. What about the support from Head Office, do you think they support this... ?
Mr 11: They send us figures on what we would expect people to buy in the shop and stuff, they don't do it too strong, we do get figures on you should sell this, because you will sell it in this area ...?

Interviewer: What do you do about this then, because it is, you have got a lot of information at store level and do you find that's obviously more, is it more important than the stuff that they send from Head Office or is it ...?
Mr 11: Yes I would say so, yes, I would say it is much stronger coming from our staff then from the Head Office, because obviously they just brand you by how much you take, not individually by the stores.

Interviewer: Right yes, and you get to know exactly where your customer's requirements are, down here, whereas perhaps you wouldn't quite so much ...?
Mr 11: Yes, just get a vague idea from Head Office.

Interviewer: Yes, that all links together. Disposable income of customers, do you think that is ...?

Mr 11: It affects our sales in terms of luxury items, in terms of just base line sales, but ...

Interviewer: Do you think that links in with what you said about this 35% of sales is to do with promotions and maybe that is why you think this is so important?

Mr 11: Yes very positive, because obviously everyone is looking for bargains in terms of buying their shopping, but in terms of very expensive items like the wines and stuff and champagnes, the minute there is a bit of trouble or towards the end of the month and it is not pay day we notice it very much!

Interviewer: Yes I know the feeling, OK, great I think that has covered everything, amazingly quickly, very snappy, thank you very, very much.

(Laughter)

Interview with Respondent 1 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 26 March 2003. 2pm

- Interviewer: You mentioned service quality as being an important key, pretty important; can you tell me why that is important to you?
Ms 12: Because I think that differentiates you from your competitors and that's, even though we can't compare to some competitors, compete with Tesco's prices, we can offer a better service. I think people are willing to pay a little bit more sometimes to get better service.
- Interviewer: Can I ask you why that differentiates you from competitors that service quality is really important to you personally? Is it to increase sales or is it to..?
Ms 12: Yes, to increase sales and to have happy customers.
- Interviewer: Why are those two important to you, why is it important to you to have happy customers and increasing sales?
Ms 12: Well that is what you strive for, isn't it, to increase the sales, that also means I get a bonus! If you can make a profit, sales with you know, but it is just more pleasant really all around. Also economically it makes sense.
- Interviewer: Makes sense economically and makes sense, in other ways, what other ways does it make sense, do you think, or is it if they are happy ...?
Ms 12: Well I think there is a happier atmosphere yes, more enjoyable to go to work, more enjoyable for staff to come in.
- Interviewer: Why is that important to you, particularly, do you think, what are your goals here, do you think it is to do with this personal enjoyment bit or is it to do with sales or are they both together.
Ms 12: Both together. Job satisfaction, I suppose.
- Interviewer: Fine. Management intuition you have put as very important, can you tell me why you think that is important?
Ms 12: Well I think gut instincts are a big part of it really, if you haven't got that, I think it is, you can't actually learn, there are certain things you can't learn.
- Interviewer: Such as what do you think?
Ms 12: I think the personality of staff, you know, and customers, when a customer walks in the door, you have usually got to go for your instincts, this is a genuine customer or is this a thief? Is this customer dodgy, same as staff, really, because staff theft is a much bigger problem than customer theft and just how to read people, I think, is important.
- Interviewer: Fine. Why is it important to you that you should read people, is it the fact that you think you are good second manager before that or what other things ...?
Ms 12: Well yes obviously, I mean I want to prevent theft, you want to motivate people, if you don't, can't read them, you can't, don't to get in, you know, people do respond to different things, don't they?
- Interviewer: Yes they do, why do you think that is important to you, particularly?
Ms 12: To get the best out of my staff really. I mean if I treat them better, hopefully they will support me.
- Interviewer: So that is like a team sort of thing really?

Ms 12: Yes, team spirit, yes.

Interviewer: Why is it important for you to have this sort of good team spirit and stuff?
Ms 12: Well, a) obviously there is a better atmosphere and it is also you are much more productive, I think it is more productive if they are happy and motivated.

Interviewer: Let's say it is for productivity, you have mentioned one of your aims, because presumably you are measured on that and it is a bonus and all this sort of thing?
Ms 12: Yes.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that is increasing productivity, or is it just team spirit sort of thing leads to ...?
Ms 12: Productivity?

Interviewer: Yes you said it leads to better productivity.
Ms 12: Yes, and it leads to better service, you know, it comes back to service.

Interviewer: And some of the things you have mentioned above there, basically there is enjoyable atmosphere, job satisfaction ...?
Ms 12: I think it ties in together doesn't it really, I mean if everybody enjoys coming to work, not everybody does, but if they do and people care about the store then you get a better looking store, you get a better turnover and you get a better profit.

Interviewer: You think this profit bit is the major aim or do you think it is one of the aims or either one of the aims?
Ms 12: Quite high on the agenda really, because that is, you have got to make money otherwise we wouldn't be here, you know, if sales was down. So you have got to make money, that is the name of the game really.

Interviewer: And you seem to suggest that you do this by focusing on this service quality bit, one issue?
Ms 12: Yes.

Interviewer: And maybe some team building?
Ms 12: Yes. And obviously you need promotions and all that as well from Head Office, but I haven't got any power over that, it is all outside my ...

Interviewer: Yes, you said this is outside your control?
Ms 12: Yes. Well you do need the right range in the end, the right prices and the right promotions, but as I say I haven't got any control over that.

Interviewer: And how do you identify with the right promotions or the best promotions for you?
Ms 12: Just see how they sell really, you know, you just, it is based on how they sell, if the customers like them then they are the right ones aren't they, if they don't then...

Interviewer: So how do you measure it, do you measure it or do you just kind of, gut instinct, do you think?
Ms 12: Well I guess, the promotions are laid down by Head Office, they come down and I just have to support what they say and put it up and obviously ...

Interviewer: Have you got some choice though of which ones to have or which ones not to have?
Ms 12: Not really, no, not much, no.

Interviewer: So how do you know, so you just try the promotions out and you haven't got much choice of it, but you presumably know your customers, which ones will sell and which ones don't sell or...?
Ms 12: I mean usually, our promotions are pretty, the prices are good and they do all sales sales. But, yes, I mean you get some odd promotions which you know they are to going to sell, but the majority of what they put on is pretty good in itself.

Interviewer: Do you think you order more numbers of the ones that you think are not really good or less than or sell less numbers of those ones that are not very good?
Ms 12: Yeah, yeah, I mean I get a leaflet which gives me a choice, a range, because we are such a small store our range is not as big as the bigger stores and I tend to order most things on it, because you want, you know, as much as possible? But you get, you think it is just not worth bothering with and half of the items is still going to be here and you are stuck with it. So I don't order them.

Interviewer: And you haven't got the store it?
Ms 12: No, that is right, afterwards.

Interviewer: What do these promotions are they, is it quite a large part of your turnover or...?
Ms 12: Yes.

Interviewer: You also mentioned fresh leadership style, perhaps you can, what do you think leadership style is for a start?
Ms 12: Lead by example.

Interviewer: Oh that is very definite.
Ms 12: Yes, it is easier in a small store, in a big store we get, you just pull all the strings, in a small store you are much more hands on and if you are seen to be working and not just sitting in the office then it has got ...

Interviewer: It has got positive connotations and stuff?
Ms 12: Yes.

Interviewer: OK, so leadership by example, it is important to you, why is that really important to you? Is it to do with, learning to improve, delegating staff, developing staff ...?
Ms 12: Motivating staff, I suppose really, I mean...

Interviewer: leadership, extra long in there perhaps is it?
Ms 12: Yes.

Interviewer: So you sort of lead by example, that motivates people you think.
Ms 12: I think so.

Interviewer: And that seems to lead to...?
Ms 12: Better motivated staff. I mean I have had lots of managers before I became a manager and it is very annoying!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Yes, so you want some sort of negative, negative?
Ms 12: Yes, well a lot of people think once they are management that is it.

Interviewer: Yes.
Ms 12: You don't do anything, and it is not so.

Interviewer: So these people have got a negative, they weren't leading by example of course, they were, they just maybe got parachuted in or they just... they...?
Ms 12: Well their attitude was, once you become management, that is it, you can stop working, you just tell other people what to do. You do have to tell other people what to do because you can't do all the sales, but you have got to be seen to be doing some of it yourself.

Interviewer: Do you think it was partly to do with this, bit, where people, some people, some managers thought this was..., you know I will just tell people and...?
Ms 12: It is the way you ask as well, isn't it, it is the way, you can ask people or you can tell them or... I mean sometimes, we have a lot of students working, you have to tell them, because they only come in for their pocket money, you have to be quite firm with them, quite, people who are here all the time, you are better off just saying, "would you mind", rather than "go and do that".

Interviewer: Do they pick on the fact that you have done something, you have done something in a particular way?
Ms 12: Yes, you set the standards as well, don't you?

Interviewer: And that of course doesn't happen with somebody who is just in the office?
Ms 12: No.

Interviewer: So previous experiences and maybe you are leading by example. Why are they really important, is it sort of, is it to do with this team building bit or is it to do with something else, you think is the best way to keep these profits or you be?
Ms 12: Yes, I think men and women are different, because I think women tend to not, they prefer to be liked, men don't necessarily care. Well a lot of my male colleagues don't care!

Interviewer: Really?
Ms 12: Yes, they don't care really, but I think women are slightly different, we prefer to be liked and to get on with things, rather than, it is just more pleasant all round. I don't think men think in the same way.

(Laughter)

Interviewer: So you think that this sort of leadership style is, the fact that you want to lead by example of course and the benefits of that and also to be liked and get on with people and have a nice supportive sort of team?

Ms 12: Yeah.

Interviewer: Support from Head Office consider as really important as well?

Ms 12: I do yes, because otherwise you feel like you are holding the ship on your own.

Interviewer: Yes and do you feel like a ship on your own?

Ms 12: Sometimes, yes!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: So why is it important to you, is it sort of ...?

Ms 12: Well you need the back up, you need the pat on the back sometimes, the recognition. What tends to happen, if you do a good job and your figures are OK and there is no problems in your store, they leave you alone ... and you don't see anyone, which is demoralising, long term, I think. I mean a lot of people say they are quite glad that there is no one coming in.

(Laughter)

Ms 12: No one is bugging them, but I think long term, it is, and to talk to someone else on a different level really to what staff are.

Interviewer: Yes, so the same sort of empathy with you and your problems and what you are doing and stuff?

Ms 12: Yes, as I say a lot of, I have got a lot of students and they come in, you can't talk to them, my assistant manager is not the brightest tool in the ...

Interviewer: Yes, so you have to get that sort of input from Head Office?

Ms 12: Yes or other managers

Interviewer: Do you often see other managers.

Ms 12: Yes, I am at a meeting tomorrow and they do have meetings fairly often, it is quite good, because you do feel like, you feel like you are on your own a lot of the time.

Interviewer: Yes, right, what does ...

(Somebody interrupts)

Interviewer: So this support is pretty important to you, why does it really, why does it really come up, it is just pretty lonely being a manager for a start of course ...?
 Ms 12: There is that, I mean you get, you come up against different problems and you know running issues and it is just, you need them resolved, don't you?

Interviewer: Yes. Ms 12: You see a lot of it, I haven't got any control, I need other people above me to sort it out. It is frustrating really, you feel like you have stepped into a vacuum ...

Interviewer: That is right, yes. So just lack of control, solve the problems and ... Do you feel as if you have got control over most things then or do you feel as if it is more like a lack of control in some respects?
 Ms 12: I have got control within the store, yes, they do let you...

Interviewer: Do what you want?
 Ms 12: Yeah, well not what you want, but ...

(Laughter)
 Ms 12: Yes, I have got a fair bit of control, I am allowed to manage, there are quite a lot of rules and regulations.

Interviewer: Last bit then, can you explain some of these links here. We have got quite a lot of issues here around motivation, staff, Improve, developing staff and this sort of stuff. These ones seem to lead to service quality as the important thing.
 Ms 12: Yes.

Interviewer: That you think is a...?
 Ms 12: Yes that is one of our main aims, because that is the only way we can compete with Tesco's really.

Interviewer: Right yes, so you said it is differentiating factor and a good deflection factor?
 Ms 12: Yes.

Interviewer: Staffing, you probably haven't got too much control have you or do you ...?
 Ms 12: No, I haven't any, well I can complain about my own.

(Laughter)
 Ms 12: I have done once or twice and they have put it up then.

Interviewer: So you see it as a big motivator or a motivator, but there is not much you can do about that really?
 Ms 12: No not really. But if you don't pay staff, if you pay peanuts you get monkeys.

Interviewer: Yes.
 Ms 12: So you to have some decent level of income otherwise you don't get business

Interviewer: Yes.
Ms 12: But, I mean I think you need, well intuition, you need that really.

Interviewer: You say that is quite an important one as well, because it feels as if you... So is this learning do you think, have you got this from learning? Is it like a personalised ...?
Ms 12: It is sort of, yeah part personality and part experience, I think yes.

Interviewer: Yes.
Ms 12: There is a mixture. When you first come in you tend to be too trusting really, I mean you learn and that, by when things happen and you, some of it is perhaps is in built, but some of it, you can learn.

Interviewer: You can learn a bit? Some of the problems you have had before and I made it. Suppose you have mentioned the fact that you had a bit of a negative experience with people, with managers that weren't really fully interested and stuff and maybe you have
Ms 12: Yes, I base my that I think probably.

Interviewer: Yes, sort of like, learning from their mistakes in some respects ...?
Ms 12: Yes I didn't want to be like that.

Interviewer: Yes that is right yes.
Ms 12: I think delegating is quite important, because I, and I tend not to do enough of that, but if you don't do it, then you just can't do it.

Interviewer: No indeed.
Ms 12: You would have to do that, because you have to be willing to improve otherwise you get nowhere and if you don't know mistakes and if you don't develop staff they are not motivated and then they are going to walk!

Interviewer: Any more problems you have got?
Ms 12: They do need money, a decent level, but it is not everything, you know some people are... businesses that are small, you know it is not as rigid as Tesco's, say, so you can bend a bit more, you can have a cup of tea.

Interviewer: Yes, so they are going to see benefits ...?
Ms 12: Yes, we are just a bit more flexible than a big organisation really.

Interviewer: Liking more liking to, they earn a bit less but they have a nicer time ...?
Ms 12: Yes.

Interviewer: Well I think that gives us a very good overview. Thank you very much

Interview with Respondent 13 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd:27th June 2003, 12.00

- Interviewer: OK you put that support from Head Office is really important to you, can you tell me why that is really important to you?
Ms 13: Well I think you need their support when you are coming into a store new, because they have got all the information that you need as regards sales and that sort of thing. I mean we have got area supervisors which sort of do that job, mine was on holiday when I took over.
- Interviewer: So you didn't get much help?
Ms 13: No.
- Interviewer: Why is that sort of support really need, what do you, who do you, you want support for sales you want some area manager help, why is that really important?
Ms 13: Because they know the store or they should know the store better than ..., because they do sort of regular visits and that and it would have been helpful for sort of information and that that I needed.
- Interviewer: Knowledge of, how do you do this then, instead of having this information you presumably had to go on sort of intuition and ...?
Ms 13: Yes, sort of dig around and find out what I can!
- (Laughter)
- Interviewer: You preferred to have this information but you survived without it.
Ms 13: It would have been helpful, yes.
- Interviewer: Knowledge of customers, you put as the next one, the 2nd most important. Why is that really important to you?
Ms 13: I think if you know what your customers need, you can sort of do your best to sort of supply with what they want. I mean well, with this store it is sort of thing like handy ..., and drinks, you know that it has got to be kept full. I mean I am just sort of learning that now, after a few hiccups. But, yes, if you know what your customer needs then hopefully you should be able to supply it.
- Interviewer: Why is that really important to you, why is this knowledge of customers with supplies really important?
Ms 13: Well hopefully it should increase your takings.
- Interviewer: Why is that important to you? Something to do with success with managing ...?
Ms 13: Well success of the store rather than, because it is not just one person that is doing it, it is team work.
- Interviewer: And success of team I suppose? And why is that, success of the team really important?
Ms 13: Well it gives them some motivation, I mean it, if they can see things are improving then hopefully it will give them the motivation to sort of try and get it to go just a little bit further, you know, with the sort of thinking, make them work a little bit harder to sort of improve the store.
- Interviewer: And why is this store improvement really important?

Ms 13: Well, once again, if the store is improving then hopefully sales will increase, I think most of it leads down to sales increase.

Interviewer: Financial difference really very important?
Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you feel that financial difference is important to you or to Head Office, to both, to everybody ...?
Ms 13: It's everyone I should think, mainly to Head Office, because that is what you get judged on I think!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Yes, if you are seen to be measured, you obviously think that is very important?
Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes, I understand it happens to me. So the sales base is really important for you. Do you feel as if to be more important to you than maybe, I don't know
....., your job, it is always an indicator that you are doing well or what do you feel about it?
Ms 13: I think it is an indicator that you are doing well, because if things start to slide then there is obviously something wrong.

Interviewer: OK, personal motivation why is that important to you?
Ms 13: Well, I mean, if I am motivated hopefully the staff will be motivated.

Interviewer: Why is that really important to you, linking it into service quality and knowledge of customers?
Ms 13: Well I think it all goes hand in hand, I mean if you are motivated and the staff are motivated then the quality of the service will improve and the customers hopefully will be satisfied.

Interviewer: OK, we have talked a bit about that, customer satisfaction, was it here somewhere, success of store, success of team, knowledge of customers. So you think that is ...?
Ms 13: It is all interlinked.

Interviewer: Into this financial bit again of getting sales and whatever?
Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: Developing staff, can you tell me a little bit about that?
Ms 13: Well I think of, if you get them a little bit of responsibility, it goes a long way. I mean if they are made responsible for, say a little section of the shop then they could take pride in what they are doing.

Interviewer: And why is that really important, where does it lead do you think?
Ms 13: Well I think ...

Interviewer: When you say it obviously leads to here, maybe, presumably you needn't ... Does that mean less if you delegate, you have less turnover, is that what that means or does it mean you have more turnover?

Ms 13: I think it would, if this satisfy, getting satisfaction out of the job, then the turnover is, finding this store is a little bit different because we have got students. But hopefully that you would be able to sort of keep the staff, because they are getting satisfaction out of the job.

Interviewer: I see OK, so an increase in that leads to a decrease in that? Shall I change this to a minus because I think that is what you mean there?

Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: It is difficult, some people think of course if you delegate more you sometimes, some people don't like it!

Ms 13: Yes, no I think if you give them a little bit of responsibility, it helps them..

Interviewer: And is this a problem to you, it is in a lot of places I know? Staff turnover is a problem in certain areas isn't it?

Ms 13: Well I don't know what, I can't really say at the moment, I mean if you have only been here for a couple of weeks, it is a bit difficult to judge at the moment but I suppose with them being university students their courses are quite long so hopefully we will be able to hang on to them until they sort of finish their course.

Interviewer: So you are aiming for a stable personnel of course?

Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: Why is that really important to you do you think?

Ms 13: Well I think the customers get to know them.

Interviewer: So it is like a relationship thing, is it?

Ms 13: Yes. And you tend to work together more as a team, if you have got people coming and going all the time it is very difficult to build up a relationship with them.

Interviewer: What does that team work do you think?

Ms 13: Enforce profits hopefully!

(Laughter)

Ms 13: Everything comes down to money!

Interviewer: You can see you are very profit orientated here! Relationship with customers, does that sort of lead to the same thing do you think or is there some other links in between ...?

Ms 13: If you can sort of build up a relationship with them, they will keep coming back and hopefully word of mouth will bring in more customers.

Interviewer: Where does that lead to, increased customers leads to, presumably increased profits?

Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: I thought you might say that!
Ms 13: I think I have had that drummed into me over the last few years!

Interviewer: I can see, I can see, I can see. If you could tell me some of the links here then, because you seem to, a lot of these seem to be, because here your figure, maybe because you are starting off ..., you feel that you need quite a lot of support from Head Office and stuff?
Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: So you have put personal motivation as key in this respect and to develop knowledge of customers. Planning, are you a planner do you think or do you think you are something else?
Ms 13: Well we are supposed to plan ahead but it is, sometimes it doesn't work out like that! It is sort of more instinct than anything else.

Interviewer: Yeah right, you don't feel as if, planning it doesn't work very well and all that or works for some things and not others?
Ms 13: Well I think it could do yes, it does for some things, I mean like next week we have got a stock take and you have sort of got to plan ahead for that.

Interviewer: What things do you think it doesn't work for? For some of the more unpredictable things or some of the ...?
Ms 13: Well this is it, I mean the weather is unpredictable, you can't predict sort of a level customer thing, because you have only got to have one bad day of weather and it knocks your sales down.

Interviewer: So you more feel as if your planning is more sort of an instinct type of thing?
Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: What do you think of how you really think about these things, you have got a lot of things about motivation of staff and developing staff in here and things like that. Do you feel as if you are maybe more of a team builder or a ...?
Ms 13: Well I think you have got to motivate the staff because otherwise they just won't do anything, you have got to give them something to work towards.

Interviewer: Do you do that by sort of setting objectives and things ... or are you sort of friendly banter or whatever, feedback?
Ms 13: Well no, because they, they are supposed to, you know, there are sort of company rules that, you know, things have to be done and if they don't get done then we end up with problems like this.

Interviewer: Yes, task orientated at the end of the day?
Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: Fine, fantastic. Can you tell me a little bit about this personal ... what do you think this really is?

(Laughter)
Ms 13: Well it is, as well!

Interviewer: So it is leading by example in some respects?
Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes I ran a small business myself and you sort of end up doing everything as much as everything else, so you have to get stuck in and do it.
Ms 13: Yes. Well this is it, that is why I am knackered!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Yes. So you feel as if you are ...?
Ms 13: If they can see me doing it then hopefully they will take sort of like my lead and sort of come over and say, you know, do you want me to do so and so?

Interviewer: I see. You sort of, so what you are saying is your sort of, by that you empower people to use their own initiatives or something like that?
Ms 13: Yes.

Interviewer: I think that just about covers everything, we have got an idea of ...

Interview with Respondent 14 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 7 March, 1pm

- Interviewer: OK. First of all you put service quality as the major key thing at the top here, number one, as you're important factor. Why is that so important to you?
Mr 14: That's important because that's repeat customers, go on our service quality we provide.
- Interviewer: Why is it important for you to have these repeat customers?
Mr 14: Because we can build our business like that.
- Interviewer: Yeah OK. Why is important to you? Does it depend on your success as a manager or is it?
Mr 14: The quality of our service is what it's all about. We're a service.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 14: So therefore, the better the service, the better your store will be.
- Interviewer: Yeah OK. So that increases the profile of the store.
Mr 14: Yeah.
- Interviewer: And why is that particularly important to you?
Mr 14: That builds success.
- Interviewer: Sorry?
Mr 14: That builds success.
- Interviewer: OK. Success for the store. And a reflection of the manager?
Mr 14: Yeah.
- Interviewer: And why is that success particularly important to you from your perspective as a manager? What are you looking for in reality?
Mr 14: You want the management to be successful don't you?
- Interviewer: Yeah but, maybe there are different things underpinning it? Why, is it for a career thing? Or it might be?
Mr 14: Well yeah. Success for your career. And obviously the more success you get, the better you feel. The better you feel, the more motivated you are.
- Interviewer: And is it important for you to feel really motivated? Because you've put personal leadership style in here? So is it really important to?
Mr 14: It's because being a manager you have a real knock-on effect to all the members of staff in the store.
- Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 14: So you need to be a good leader and well motivated to be able to get that to rub off on staff. Obviously that then builds their motivation. With their motivation increasing, their want increases. They want to develop. They want to do a good job. And they want to actually stay, which then means you have less staff turnover.

Interviewer: And that, staff turnover, is that less hassle for you?
Mr 14: Well obviously the lower the turnover the better it is for the store. It means you haven't got to spend a lot of time recruiting.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 14: Because obviously recruiting is hard.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 14: Low turnover means obviously a higher knowledge from the staff, because obviously they haven't got to be retrained. The more length of service they've got, the better quality service you provide.

Interviewer: Right OK. Linking in there. OK thank you very much. Very good. Advertising, you've said that's particularly important.
Mr 14: Important yes. It's advertising your brand and your store isn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah. Certainly important. Difficulty fitting it in here?
Mr 14: Yeah I did yeah. Because obviously, it's advertising your brand and your store, but that's as far as I got with that one really.

Interviewer: OK. We'll quickly move on then, to motivation of staff. We just mentioned motivation of staff. So knowledge of staff is important, less turnover, that sort of stuff, very important.
Mr 14: Yeah. Obviously, they give a better quality service. Good image, customers like that.

Interviewer: So the image of the store, the way it looks and everything.
Mr 14: Well not necessarily the way it looks. But you know, when a customer comes back. - I had a problem, but they sorted it out. - You know.

Interviewer: OK.
Mr 14: And you know, the old saying is the customer's last view of the store is the checkout service.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 14: So image. If they think - I had a quick exit from that store and was served really efficiently, and didn't have to queue for 10 minutes. - Then that's, they've got a good image in their mind, and they'll come back.

Interviewer: Yeah. I noticed your store is much busier than, I always walk up the road to see what the competition is like.
Mr 14: Yeah.

Interviewer: And they're not very busy up there.
Mr 14: No they're not.

Interviewer: Why is that do you think?
Mr 14: Convenience Stores Ltd. has been here for a long time, and they keep changing over the road, the Kwik Saves and the.

Interviewer: Oh right.
Mr 14: Their brand image isn't particularly, isn't as good as Convenience Stores Ltd..

Interviewer: No, I can understand that. OK. So motivation of staff is coming through here. You feel as if they should be motivated and you've got a part to play in that.
Mr 14: Why do you think that motivation, reflects on you as a manager or what is it?
What motivates the staff?

Interviewer: Yeah, or why do you think it's so important?
Mr 14: A well-motivated member of staff actually looks the part. If they're not well motivated they don't look professional, you need professional, and they do a more professional job.

Interviewer: So, you're quite keen obviously to have this professional image, and it seems to be quite important to you? And service quality, it's all about image really isn't it?
Mr 14: So why is that, that image thing, very important to you? Image of your store?
Because that's how customers, you've got so much competition. If I want to do my shopping, where am I going to go? You want Convenience Stores Ltd. to come out in their mind. So within 10 minutes, you've got 2 Sainsburys, 2 Tescos, Somerfield, Safeways, you need to match them, you're their number one when they think of going shopping.

Interviewer: And do you think that partly, this emphasis here is really important, especially if you've got a really high competition sort of feel to the business? And if you were in a less competitive store, I don't know where you've been before maybe you've found, it's slightly different before?
Mr 14: No. It's the same all around here. Too many superstores within travelling distance.

Interviewer: Yes. Good communications around here, so people can zip off, they're there in their cars and stuff.
Mr 14: That's right yeah. You jump in your car and within 10 minutes you can be at a dozen supermarkets.

Interviewer: That's true I suppose. It's very competitive. So you think that one of the ways around that is to go for the service quality, and go for good image and
Mr 14: Then if they've got to go shopping they'll come out and think – We'll go to Convenience Stores Ltd., it's convenient, it's got everything I need, staff are pleasant, didn't have to queue too long at the tills.-

Interviewer: Yeah. And this thing about the company or rather the store being very good, this reflects on you of course. What sort of image do you like to portray to your shop managers.. or whatever?
Mr 14: What in the store here today.

Interviewer: What do you feel as though you're giving over to them? Is this why you're trying to make sure the store is..?
Mr 14: Well yeah obviously you try to maintain the store to the standard that the company requires.

Interviewer: And why is that important to you?
Mr 14: It gives me an easy life doesn't it?

Interviewer: Certainly, if your area managers don't come down on you or anything.
Mr 14: Yeah, well he's downstairs now.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Is he? So it's an easier life, but I'm sure that's not the only reason?
Mr 14: Of course, the better job you do, the better your prospects.

Interviewer: Yeah OK. So how do you feel your prospects are, and how do you feel things are going?
Mr 14: All right. I've got no issue with how my career's going.

Interviewer: So you feel as if it's going, the way you're doing it now, you feel as if you're on the right track?
Mr 14: Yeah.

Interviewer: And where do you think that's going to lead? Do you think it's going to lead up to an area managership? Or a bigger store or?
Mr 14: Oh no, a bigger store.

Interviewer: Right. We've got planning ahead. That's a tricky one. Can you tell me why you think planning ahead's so important? It's been instilled into you in numerous training courses?
Mr 14: Yeah planning is important. If you don't plan you get the wrong product at the wrong time.

Interviewer: And have you had any experiences where you feel as if you didn't plan ahead? That was reasonably negative or?
Mr 14: Well I can't think of anything off the top of my head, but you know, if you miss like, pancake day for example has just been.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 14: And you need to make sure you build your stock with the right products at the right time so that everyone can come in and get what they want.... a very last minute thing, so if you don't plan that, you'd end up with no products and no sales generated from it.

Interviewer: And is that? You mentioned there that at the last minute it's because you feel as if people use your store as convenience, or last minute, and therefore you've got to be on top of things more?

Mr 14: Well you need to have it out. And we had it out for a good few weeks before. But. You know that pancake day's very last minute, people come in on the day itself, and.

Interviewer: Yeah, they might have noticed it before but they don't bother buying it until the last minute, and you've got to always make sure it's all there.

Mr 14: Yeah. But then planning ahead. Planning staff. Planning schedules, planning jobs.

Interviewer: And you've found that?

Mr 14: You have to think ahead, whether it be short, medium or long term. You have to have a set of plans for each. Short term being what you're going to do this week, medium what you're going to do in the next 3 months, and long term, what you going to try and achieve over the year.

Interviewer: Do you feel that planning is part of being a good manager?

Mr 14: Yeah.

Interviewer: And do you think that it maybe stops you doing things, maybe creatively or?

Mr 14: You can get a bit tied up with your plans, doing plans of plans and so on, but as long as you don't.

Interviewer: How do you deal with that problem?

Mr 14: Well don't build too much into it. Don't build a plan that you couldn't achieve. Keep it simple and achievable.

Interviewer: That's very good advice I should think. They were talking on the radio when I was coming down about planning in British Rail, and planning a new Virgin line. They just try to plan everything to minor detail, and of course it starts breaking down.

Mr 14: Yeah, you can't do it. You could have plans of 50 points, but you might only actually achieve 3, so why you don't just set yourself a plan with 3 achievable things in the first place. Because obviously out of planning comes your success, and if you achieve your plan, and you get your success, it makes you feel good.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 14: Whereas if you don't, it has the opposite effect. If you don't achieve your plan you feel a bit, a bit down about not achieving it. Obviously it's got to stretch you to a point, because otherwise there's no point in doing a plan if it doesn't stretch you? True?

Interviewer: True.

Mr 14: So it's got to be something that stretches you but is achievable.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think that's good advice. OK. Developing staff. You talked about that. Why is that sort of really important to you? You've mentioned quite a few of these I suppose. It's to do with developing quality and?

Mr 14: Yeah, if you develop your staff, the quality of your service is good. If you develop your staff, your motivation of your staff is good. If you develop your staff you've got to do less because they can do it all for you.

(laughter)

Interviewer: That's right. And they feel motivated no doubt by actually sort of doing a good job.
Mr 14: By doing a job that's just a little bit, and a little bit, and they think they're making the decisions, and... it snowballs, and they want more.

Interviewer: Yeah, and how do you do that? How do you operationalise that yourself? Do you sort of give them the feeling?
Mr 14: I generally do it by, you know, if they come to me with a question, I just fire it back at them. You know, - What would you do? – And if they give the right answer then they can go off and do it.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 14: If they don't, then perhaps just try and get them to tweak it themselves.

Interviewer: And you mentioned that one of the major things that you think is motivating by developing staff, and they can do work for you so you've got more... as a team or? Is it more of a team?
Mr 14: More team yes, more teamwork. They work for one another. If they've got a range of skills that help them, they will work with one another.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 14: Rather than as an individual.

Interviewer: Do you feel as if you have to build up this range of skills. How do you do you do that? How do you approach that problem?
Mr 14: Well sit down and speaking about what it is you'd like to achieve.

Interviewer: And you move them round do you?
Mr 14: I move them round yeah, sort of every 6 months if they're up to doing it.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 14: It depends on that person's capabilities. If they stay in one place too long they might achieve less.

Interviewer: Uh huh. So they're achieving, do you feel that's improves turnover and?
Mr 14: It does yeah. Increased turnover, improves the recruitment aspect as well. If staff are motivated, then people want to.... in the store. I think there's lots of opportunities as well for development.. as well.

Interviewer: And part of that is sort of wage levels and that, which you haven't got too much control over. Do you have a problem with things that you don't really have that much control over?
Mr 14: No I mean.

Interviewer: How do you approach these things that you haven't got too much control over?

Mr 14: Wages. You've just got what you've got. And you've just got to make the most of it. It's not about how much you pay people, it's about how much they enjoy it.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 14: How much they enjoy coming to work.

Interviewer: Yeah. And the recruitment problem is partly because there's..
Mr 14: You can get word of mouth from the staff that it's a good place to work.

Interviewer: Oh right yeah.
Mr 14: Your store has a, people know that it's a good place to work. Then they will come to you. Whereas if people think that it's not a particularly good place to work, it doesn't matter how much you pay, you know.

Interviewer: OK.... Thank you very much. Maybe quickly at the end, you could maybe think of some of these links together, and why you think that they are linked. Don't want to repeat ourselves but.
Mr 14: No.

Interviewer: Any things that you think are, developing staff, personal leadership style, motivation of staff... I can see that one we've talked about already. Future orientation bit? How do you play that, current versus the future?
Mr 14: Well resources-wise. If you bring it back to staff. You know that you've got management, and eventually, some of them will move on. So you've got to compensate, free someone.

Interviewer: That's planning ahead as well linking in to that.
Mr 14: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's very powerful.
Mr 14: So you don't want to be left with one of your assistant managers being promoted with nobody else to come in.

Interviewer: With nobody else to come in.
Mr 14: It's always good to have a backup plan, which you do well in advance. Just so you've got that person there.

Interviewer: Right. Personal leadership style. What do you think your personal leadership style is...? Developing staff is part of it?
Mr 14: Yeah, because how you lead people is important because, you give over an image of how you are. It's difficult but people want to work for you if you've got the right leadership style. And they'll be motivated because of the way you are.

Interviewer: What do you think that is then? Difficult question.

Mr 14: Leadership style. It's all on an individual level really. Everyone's different, everyone has a different style, and they just build their own style as something that works for them.

Interviewer: Uh huh. And what have you tried that maybe hasn't worked, hasn't worked in the past sort of thing. You know, sometimes it's just a telling sort of mentality that sometimes...

Mr 14: Try not to be too much. You obviously have to when the need arises.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 14: I don't have a style.

(laughter)

It's just what I do. I don't know. I don't really analyse it.

Interviewer: Do you think it's part of your personality or whatever it is?

Mr 14: Yeah.

Interviewer: Difficult one to delve into.

Mr 14: Yeah.

Interviewer: Any other things you'd like to mention, on how these are linked together.

Mr 14: I've put a lot onto speed of response haven't I?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 14: Again, as an example, your quality of service dips and you need to respond to it. If your training's not right, you need to respond to it. Things change.

Interviewer: So keep on the ball all the time really basically?

Mr 14: Yeah, you do need to change, and it's how quick you change or make those changes that have an effect.

Interviewer: Yeah, keeping all the balls up in the air at the same time, juggling them is a difficult job, I know about that.

Mr 14: Yeah.

Interviewer: Right. OK, thank you very much. I think that covers it.

Mr 14: This doesn't fit...

Interviewer: Do you think it does link to service quality or not?

Mr 14: No.

Interviewer: I'll cross that then.

Mr 14: It probably doesn't need to be number 2 either.

Interviewer: Put it somewhere else maybe?

Mr 14: It just doesn't fit with anything... I'd have to go through the whole list.

(laughter)

Interviewer: I was only going to demote it a bit if you were..?

Mr 14: I would say it needs to drop down, but where, without re-doing it all, I don't know.

Interviewer: So, just put it down to there, or there, or there?

Mr 14: Probably down to between 7 and 9 or something.

Interviewer: OK. I'll put it as number 8.

Thank you very much that's excellent. It's too early yet to give you a lot of feedback yet. But I will send you a pack out when all the analysis is done. But I've seen some...

(tape switched off)

Interviewer: You've got down here that you think things are going down a tiny bit. Can you tell us why you think the turnover is going down a bit? Is there some new competition or?

Mr 14: Yeah there's been a lot of competition, refurbishments with other stores....

End of tape, end of recording.

Interview with Respondent 15 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 26 March 2003, 5pm

Interviewer: So I guess you had a refit about a year or so ago?

Ms 15: Yes just about a year, last Easter.

Interviewer: OK so they have gone a tiny bit since then and then you have knocked up the turnover since then? So presumably they are pleased with you? Very good. You've said that analysis of profitability is a very important criteria, can you tell me why you think that, why is that important to you?

Ms 15: Because obviously we look at our profit and loss and we can see it is by analysing those figures that I would set the objectives for the store, obviously I am looking at my sales, are they above plan or above last year, which departments in particular, where do I think I can get more money. I would be looking at my costs as well, as in are my wages under control? My wastage, you know, which departments am I wasting a lot of money, how can I pull that down, which do I need to focus on.

Interviewer: Where are you talking from...?

Ms 15: It comes from Head Office, yes, we get a period result, which is 4 weeks, although we do a weekly stock account in store, so we can keep track of it ourselves anyway. We have plans that we work to.

Interviewer: Which do you think is the most important to you, is it the Head Office figures or do you get more of a feel from what is happening ...?

Ms 15: I need to have a feel what we go on week on week, there is no point in me waiting until the end of the period to be told by Head Office, because obviously the period results are two weeks after probably the period has finished. There is no point in looking at them, because I need to react, if my wastage is going whoosh, then I need to react as quickly as possible. So I need to be setting it weekly, daily even, do it.

Interviewer: Do you just get figures off of the computer for that?

Ms 15: Yes we do sales obviously on the computer and wastage all gets printed out on the computer and stuff and we keep a track of it everyday. Again, wages I will cost out every week, because I am wondering how we are doing on them. Obviously operational expenses, things like that, I don't really know what I have spent until the end of the month, as far as bills go and things like that. The other bit I am interested in is the management, what we call management controllable profit and then we have another bottom line, which obviously incurs like all the fixed costs and things. I can't affect that, so I am not really interested in that.

Interviewer: So why is it important with, to get a really good feel of costs and profits?

Ms 15: Yes I know where to channel my work really, what I need to be looking at, focusing on.

Interviewer: Why is that really important for you to do that, why is it really a key factor for you? Do you feel it is just more efficient or is it sort of something that you think every good manager should do or is it something that you are very concerned about costs because of other people thinking of, or what other people think of you?

Ms 15: Well, the way I believe is that that is my information about how the store is doing, my job as a manager is to make this store as profitable as possible. So I am looking at how I can make more profit. So that is my only tools in a way to say how I am doing.

Interviewer: Why is this making the store as profitable as possible really important to you personally?

- Ms 15: Because that is my job and obviously the better the store does, then that motivates me. I mean to walk in every week at the moment, the sales are just going like this, and of course, every day I will look at the sales and I will go round and I will tell the staff how much we were up yesterday and we have got a sales challenge that I done, just to get the store up to 55,000 and last week we did 54,000 something and this week we are already a thousand pounds up, so with any luck we will be doing our 55. So it just, that is really exciting to see your sales grow, obviously it is good for my career.
- Interviewer: What do you think is the major motivating factor, then do you think it is partly to do with your career, partly that everybody is happy because everything is going in the right direction...?
- Ms 15: Well it is not really, it is more about being able to come to work and enjoy it, rather than obviously if everything is doom and gloom, it is a bit, you feel like you are working your back off almost, with no success, and obviously if you get successful you would be better and it does motivate you. But obviously the benefits as far as the career goes then that is just added bonus. It is always nice to be recognised for doing a good job.
- Interviewer: Personal motivation, you say that is really a key as well, you mention some of these things, because of course I suppose, if you set these targets and stuff, it sort of motivates people and everybody is happy and everything is going in the right direction it motivates people. Why do you think it is really important?
- Ms 15: Well I believe that the key thing in this business is people. They are the ones that make the difference and the person making that, or the one person that will have a big effect on everyone in this store is me. If I walk in doom and gloom, that will very quickly knock on. I have seen it happen, if I am in a bad mood then, before I know it everyone is in a bad mood, because I have scratched and shouted at everyone. So I just feel that my motivation is really key and if I can be motivated, even though I might feel like, I don't want to be motivated today, but it is about getting them excited about the job and things like that, then I think that is really important.
- Interviewer: And where does that lead you, do you think, is it sort of, enjoying your job or is it profitability a bit again Effect?
- Ms 15: Well again, it helps me enjoy my job, it reflects on to the staff and so hopefully they enjoy their job, motivates staff, staff do a better job, better profits ultimately, which is what I am aiming for. If I thought being grumpy would make the more profits then I think I could be grumpy!
- (Laughter)
- Ms 15: But I don't think it does in general!
- Interviewer: No luckily it doesn't, presumably it sort of, oh my God!
- (Laughter)
- Interviewer: Learning to improve. I can see it is pretty key in this map as well. Can you tell me why you think that is really important?
- Ms 15: Well again it is about, I mean for instance, the way we look at our stock and order, our stock and order is different to what we do, or what Tesco's do, because theirs is all sales based, but my staff actually do their own orders. So everyday we are looking at those orders and seeing what is selling out and how can we make it so that we have got it, you know, spot on, we have got exactly what the customer wants, but we haven't got too much in for waste. So that improving, you know, what can I do to improve my management style everyday, what can I do to improve my AM3 and what she does. Everyone likes being developed and to do, you know, get success from their job as well. The only way we can move forward is by improving and improving the quality of service and that means

every single member of staff from this store improving, whether it be their ordering, their service, the way they work, their neatness and tidiness in the shelf, their cleaning, everything. We need to start, if we don't improve then we are not going to go forward really.

Interviewer: This is a continual sort of thing?

Ms 15: Yes, I mean yes, there is always room for improvement, unfortunately, I would like to think I had got there but I haven't! You know, we could always take more money, we could always, I don't know, have less waste or have better cleanliness.

Interviewer: Why do you think these things are important in that staff development is pretty different key and learning to improve continuously ...?

Ms 15: Because it motivates them and as I said they are the key people in this business, they all need to be motivated, they all need to feel that they are important and enjoy their job. I want them to come to work and enjoy what they are doing, as much as you can, it being a job.

Interviewer: Yes, then do you think of that as a knock on affect to profit or whatever?

Ms 15: Yes, I mean it does ...

Interviewer: You seem to be rather, you are very profit orientated. Do you feel as if most things are going towards that direction?

Ms 15: Yes, that is what I am here for!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: You seem very focused. Motivation of staff, we have already mentioned about that really, haven't we?

Ms 15: Yes.

Interviewer: Learning to improve motivation of staff so it would roll into the store. So it is quality then, is another key sort of factor.

Ms 15: Right, this is it, I feel this is important for us, because it is one thing that we can offer over and above Tesco's. I am going to use Tesco's because it is my main competitor. I can't offer a range that they can offer, I can't compete with their prices, what I can do is improve on the service that they get here. So that is why I feel that it is really important that our service is better than theirs.

Interviewer: So you felt it being a differentiation factor and why do you think that is really important?

Ms 15: Because obviously if I am going to poach customers from Tesco's, Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer's I need to what, you know, I need to differentiate myself in some way and I feel that is my strongest way that I can do it. I can't affect my prices that is Head Office and I know we can't compete with Tesco's because we don't have the buying power. I can't extend the store like that, you know, I might get an extension if I carry on, you never know! I had an extension in one store. So I can't improve my range or my quality, I can't improve the amount of products I stock, I can't compete with that but I can compete on the service. So that is how I differentiate myself and hopefully poach some customers from Tesco's.

Interviewer: That sounds really logical. Why do you need to poach these customers?

Ms 15: To grow my business!

(Laughter)

Ms 15: I mean business is growing, but obviously I want it to grow even more. I just feel that people were, they were getting fed up with the big. I mean especially a lot older people, I mean a lot of our customers are older, but the out of the town, the big shop once a month is beginning to, I think, as a fashion, go away really and

people are looking back to having quality and being able to pop down to their local store. I am very much a top up store, but the more I can make them buy here on their top up, they might not want to go back to Tesco's. So I am hoping to get people that way really.

Interviewer: Does this all lead to the bottom line again, is it sort of all focused on the bottom line?

Ms 15: Yes.

Interviewer: And what, this bottom line is obviously important to you and I understand why. Is it that you can see it as a major part of your job or you can see it as one aspect that you quality of life sort of things, are you reaching those or are you really focused on career and therefore you think this is the best way for your career especially. What is the personal motivations and the quite strong focus on profit?

Ms 15: Well, I mean quality of life is important, but whilst I am at work, you know, I feel that it is my job that my success would be measured on, profitability or my bottom line basically. I feel that as a manager that is my main job, is to make sure that this store makes as much profit as we can to be beating the targets set by Head Office, making money.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. OK a quick go, I don't want to keep you any longer. A quick go on some of these connections here. There is a bit missing here. Is this a double arrow or is it a single arrow. Learning to improve towards personal leadership style... what is personal leadership style...? Is this a plus one or a minus one or a plus two for a start or does it go both ways or ...?

Ms 15: Well I can say that I feel that, learning to improve is going to, hopefully, affect my leadership style, so it does affect it. I would say it is a plus one really, it is not mega.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what this personal leadership style is, do you think?

Ms 15: What are you asking me what I think my personal leadership style is?

Interviewer: Yes.

Ms 15: I am very people orientated, people key, so very motivated, strong in motivation and that has to come from me. I believe very strongly in team as well, that we need to support each other, you know, if you could see someone struggling, you don't just let them struggle, you actually offer help and you work together because there will be times when you need that help. I am very conscious, like you say, every single person in this business is important to me and what is going on in their life is important, as you were talking about lifestyle, you know? So I am very flexible and I believe that that is ...

Interviewer: Flexible in what sense, flexible in making the staff or what?

Ms 15: Yes, obviously I need to be flexible, they are flexible with me but in return they might say to me, you know, I need to take next week off or is that OK and 9 times out of 10 staff are actually really flexible with each other. I have got a lot of youngsters in the evening, they will swap shifts, one of them is going out tonight and so and so is covering for me, they will do all that, without even involving me, until they have finished and then they will say to me "oh Jenny is doing next Wednesday for me", fine no problem. Because everyone, the way lifestyles go, everyone needs that flexibility, they obviously juggle work and home. So that is very, I mean people are just the key, so I would say that is the main thing, team ...

Interviewer: I can see it is quite central to your way of thinking, is this sort of, does this really represent what they think of you, because it looks quite central?

Ms 15: Yes very people, I always look for the good in people, but I expect the best as well. I think the only way I can add value to my business is the people, really, they are the people that are going to make a difference, but they need the

(Background noise!)

Interviewer: ... major focus, you think the best way of doing it is all this...?

Ms 15: Yes, this to me, that decides what I am going to do, it tells me how, this is my tool to do it, they are my main, they are my tools, that is how I am going to do it, this is what I am going to do, have power to say what I am going to do.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Ms 15: Is that it?

Interviewer: That is it!

Interview with Respondent 16 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 24 June 2003

Interviewer: I am just going to ask you about these bits that you put as the most important factors. I notice that service quality is your most important factor?
Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: I can see several things leading into it, why is that really important to you, why is service quality the key factor?
Ms 16: If you haven't got service quality to start with then it grows your store, it is the most important thing in your store. But a lot of things lead into that, for example, if you are not motivated by it, if your staff are not motivated by it you won't get your service, you have got to have everybody thinking along the same lines, the service is really important to actually achieve it. If you are not seriously looking at your staff and developing them, they are not going to be motivated, you are not going to get them to achieve what you want to achieve. So it is really important to look at your staff development, give them the extra training they need. If you have got well trained staff that are happy motivated then they are going to give you service, it has all got to come from that. My motivation comes from seeing all that happen and seeing us deliver it.

Interviewer: So that is why your motivation is leading from motivation of staff type of thing really here is it?
Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: Because some people will say that it is really quite usual for you to be motivated then that would motivate the staff?
Ms 16: It can work both ways.

Interviewer: So if I put an arrow in here that would be more reflective of what you are thinking really?
Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: You motivate them, they motivate you?
Ms 16: Exactly, yes, it is an ongoing thing.

Interviewer: So you think that service quality is the key differentiator or something, why is it so important?
Ms 16: Because we rely on the people coming through the door, if people don't receive the quality of service when they come in here, they won't come back.

Interviewer: So it is a repeat of business type of thing?
Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: OK, and why is that repeat business type really important to you, is the nature of the store or what was it?
Ms 16: Because we are here to have sales aren't we, we are here to take money, and if we don't deliver that, if we don't deliver service, we won't take the money and we won't be able to, we just won't be able to move forward.

Interviewer: What does your moving forward, it entail for you, is it your career, is it the store, the staff, what is the meaning moving forward bit mean to you personally? I am looking at your personal motivations here.

- Ms 16: Moving the sales forward for a start, if you move your sales forward a lot of things come from that. You know, you could increase your staff, so you could even better your service. There is all sorts of different things come from sales, it makes... On my point of view on it, from my career, if you are delivering your sales it makes other things fall into line when you are looking at losses and wages and all that sort of stuff as well. So that is why, you know, sales coming from service is really important, and also it is a boost as well to everybody that, you know, if you are taking more money and your service is improving, you get a lot of good feedback from customers, it motivates everybody.
- Interviewer: Why is that boost, feedback from customers really, really important to you? Is it a personal thing or is it a sort of thing, I mean, is it partly to do with your career maybe or you don't really think like that?
- Ms 16: Yes it is my career, because I want to be good at what I do and obviously to run a successful store, yes you do look at certain things, you look at your sales, you look how the store is performing financially, but it is also about the staff under you as well, how you manage your people, how you develop your people, things like that.
- Interviewer: Personal motivation, you have ticked on it in here as well, why is that a key? You have mentioned to be motivated as well, what is your personal motivation do you think? What do you really ...?
- Ms 16: It comes from all sorts of things really, you have got, obviously people above me who motivate me, which is not in the store. You have got, when you can see a store that is doing well and performing, that is motivating and also, when you can see staff that are being developed, moving up, people who are doing well, that as well.
- Interviewer: OK so all those sort of things, which is like, people motivating you, you motivating your staff, they are motivating you, it is all sort of interlinked ...?
- Ms 16: Definitely.
- Interviewer: I think you mentioned some of these things, it sounds as if it is more to do with you being a good manager and getting it all fitting in correctly like in that regard.
- Ms 16: Yes.
- Interviewer: Can I ask you about motivation of staff then? Why is that a key, you mentioned it being very important for service quality. For example, what are the things you think it is related to, is your personal motivation is if everything is going well?
- Ms 16: Yes, as I have said my personal motivation, obviously the store which we have talked about. Also about, if they are not motivated, you want to be able to keep your staff, you don't want to keep taking on staff every 5 minutes, you want to keep your staff turnover to a minimum really.
- Interviewer: Is there a problem here?
- Ms 16: No, not really, I mean London is always higher staff turnover then when you sort of go out of London, just the nature of taking on students and things like that and they leave. You know, you do get a core of staff that will stay with you for a long while and I think that is what you need.
- Interviewer: So you are trying to build this core team or something I suppose?
- Ms 16: Yes.
- Interviewer: And why is that core team really important to you? Is it sort of happiness is work sort of thing or is it, is there a bottom line to it or is it a bit of both or what?

- Ms 16: The people have got to enjoy coming to work, if they don't enjoy coming to work then for one thing when they are actually here they are not going to deliver what you want them to deliver, because they are not enjoying their job. You might get it so that, you know, they start not turning up, which then affects, not just the business but affects other team members as well. I mean you might get people leaving, so you are taking people on, you are training them up, you know, then they go and then you have got to start that whole process again and the store is not getting settled in terms of running as a team and also for the customer.
- Interviewer: So it is the customers and the sort of like, non settling, not a very happy situation if it doesn't go very well?
Ms 16: Yes.
- Interviewer: And then that sort of happiness at work is very important to you?
Ms 16: Yes.
- Interviewer: What about the customer, why is that really important is it to do with the financial side of things, make sure everything is OK there or ...?
Ms 16: It always links together really. If you have got people that are coming in and are happy to be here and want to come in and do their job that is past then over to the customer. Because the last thing really you want to see when you go in a store is people that are obviously moaning and are not happy, you know, it just makes the whole experience a lot nicer for everybody.
- Interviewer: And why is that customer ... the happiness for the customer really important, is just to repeat business and ...?
Ms 16: It all goes back to service, yes.
- Interviewer: And the next one, which is a very similar one, is developing staff. Why is developing staff really key, so that leads to motivation of staff and leads to service quality, I can see those...?
Ms 16: That's right yes. To make sure as well, obviously there is legal aspects to do in the job as well. To make sure people are trained properly and developed properly, so as they move up into different positions they are fully trained to things, if things are done properly really. If they feel like they are having the time and attention spent on them, and also if you kept everybody in the same position, you know, you wouldn't be moving people up into different roles that perhaps need filling like people moving up into assistant managers or supervisors, you need to keep people moving all the time, so to cover the needs of the business.
- Interviewer: Well why is that, so moving up all the time important is it sort of, you know, that presumably motivates some people, but maybe some people aren't ...?
Ms 16: There is obviously staff that come in and do their job, for instance, whatever they may be, cashier, cleaner or whatever, they might come and just want to do that job and go home and that is no problem for them. But there might be staff that come in and yes they do want to progress up the line. It all depends on sort of dealing with that particular person, everybody personally on a one to one, finding out what their needs are and then going from there and everybody's needs are different. It is important to know that, so you are aware of what their needs are.
- Interviewer: OK so you are trying to develop the staff, well the ones that want to be developed at least, and that you think leads to increasing motivation, increasing service quality and that sort of stuff?
Ms 16: Yes so if you have got somebody who wants to be developed, nobody is asking them if they want to do it, nobody is taking any time to do it or, then obviously that person is going to get demotivated, will either sort of, well they will probably leave and you have lost a potential good member of staff.

Interviewer: And what about this sort of flexibility issue that you have motivated them and trained them up into doing what they are supposed to do properly, here you said. Do you find that is easier for you, do you find that is better for, how does it influence, if the people are more flexible they can do different types of jobs and that sort of thing. How does that really influence things do you think?

Ms 16: It is a lot easier for the business.

Interviewer: Does that mean you or does that mean ...?

Ms 16: For the store.

Interviewer: For the store generally?

Ms 16: Yes. Because in the kind of store we are in, you are always going to have people off, or you are going to have days when, everything is unpredictable really, you don't know whether one day is going to bring different things or somebody is going to be off or somebody is going to leave short term and you are going to need to have certain jobs that still need to be done. So to have somebody that is flexible and fully trained to move around between departments, you know some ... that is multi skilled who is really useful, because you can use them on different things.

Interviewer: And do you try to develop that in your staff, is that one of your aims is basically to try and do that?

Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: So you are covering sort of all angles or lots of angles as you possibly can in this unpredictable ...?

Ms 16: Yes. You can't do it with everybody but it is for instance like people who work on the shop floor who are like dealing with shelf filling or fresh foods or anything, we try and make sure that nearly everybody in the store is trained to be on the checkouts. So if you get a queue at the checkouts, you want to be able to get as many people on them tills as you can very quickly and to have people trained up for both is, you have got to have it.

Interviewer: Yes I can see it, it is a big issue there. So this flexibility training, it is sort of, it helps the service quality obviously, I think that is what you are trying to put over there.

Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: Service quality is improving, so you can get people to do different things and therefore you haven't got big queues or anything like that, so you can sort the problem really quickly if it arises?

Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you think it leads to, this sort of flexibility training and developing staff, you say it is really important for the store with obviously. It is at least a motivation of staff, so they stay more.

Ms 16: Yes, morale.

Interviewer: So we have got morale and we have got less turnover perhaps, you mentioned?

Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: And anything else you can think of, there is quite a few ...

Ms 16: I don't think so!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: And what about yourself, does it make your life easier if you have got all these people that ...?

Ms 16: Yes because if you have got people sort of in fixed positions that you can't move, obviously it might be, if you need a certain department cover, not necessarily just the check outs but anything, then if you haven't got people readily trained to step into those positions it then falls, because the management are normally trained in everything!

Interviewer: Yes!

Ms 16: It falls to us to go and jump in and if we have got to go and jump in we are not seeing, we are not overseeing the store, you know, it takes our time up when we could be doing better things.

Interviewer: Yes, and what are those better things you think, things you were doing before that you think ... I sort of get the point, it is sort of like fire fighting isn't it, you are basically trying to do all these different things, but something has gone wrong and you should be doing this other job which you think is, which should be done is more important as a managers job and you can't do it because you get sucked into doing other things. What is that job you think?

Ms 16: It is managing your people, I mean because, you know, if I need to organise like training and speaking to people and doing their reviews, so I can find out who, you know, who wants their needs, I need to have time to plan that and do it. If I am not taking time out to plan, not just training and everything, but obviously financial stuff, anything like that. If I am not taking time out to plan things properly then things won't happen and my job will fall behind.

Interviewer: You mentioned financial is there other things, organisation that you planning wise that are really important? You have got some planning in here ...

Ms 16: I have got planning here, yes.

Interviewer: You see it as internal efficiency you see it as mostly being leading to perhaps? Or do you see it leading to other things as well? What sort of things do you think you really plan for? Do you really plan for internal efficiency and ...

Ms 16: That comes really from doing that, efficiency comes when you are planning, if I am turning out the bread, for example, and taking somebody else's job, I am not planning, I am not planning cover for holidays, I am not looking at the, our targets, I am not knowing where we are on sales, you know all the stuff that I need to look at is being ignored. So that planning, this all comes from the planning and also comes from this.

Interviewer: You have got a bit of a split between these here and these here, can you sort of categorise these, I mean a lot of them are to do with staff. Can you categorise this sort of separation here do you think. Do you think there is two major things that you are juggling on here. You are juggling more than two things I know, but that is maybe two categories that you are juggling here, do you think that or does it ...?

Ms 16: Everything really links together in some way, it is not really ... It all links together in some way really.

Interviewer: I can see that it is very strong on this staff and leading towards service quality, it comes over very much?

Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: The last one is, from Head Office, why do you think that is sort of reasonably key or, I mean not so key as other things, but you have put it down as 5th important point?

Ms 16: Health is, I meant sort of people out of the store, like my sort of area manager, you have got people who support you with the paperwork side of it, some on the financial side of it, and you have also got the depot that deliver all your goods. So obviously if we didn't get the support from them we wouldn't be able to deliver the offer to the customer, so obviously that is vital to us. That is why I rated that quite important.

Interviewer: Right I see, so it is making sure everything is on the shelves. It is not only what you can do it is something that they can do as well?

Ms 16: Exactly, and they supply you with, when you have your promotions you get all your point of sale and, it is making sure that all that stuff is supplied to us, because if we haven't got all that stuff we can't do what we have got to do.

Interviewer: So you are reliant on others, impartially in anyway?

Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: I can understand why it is key, you need that before you can do all the other things really, to be truthful, can't you?

Ms 16: Exactly and if you have got good support it enables you to deliver that offer better for the customer, if you haven't got good support from Head Office, for instance, I don't know, if they weren't backing you up in things if you couldn't get certain equipment you needed or if people weren't visiting the store and seeing how the store is running. It all links back to this, because then your staff become sort of a bit fed up, because "oh we can't do anything and ... ", it all leads back to motivation, it all goes back to the service again. So you have got to have this back to be able to do this.

Interviewer: And maybe you could put an arrow in from here to, do you think it is motivation of staff or if you don't get it, it might be a negative one?

Ms 16: It would yes.

Interviewer: So is it internal efficiency, internal efficiency they don't like, because the affect of this lack of support would be like poor internal efficiency or because you can't put things where you want to put them or you won't get the promotions in that you would like to get or whatever?

Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: How does that relate do you think?

Ms 16: Well that would lead to that, if the store wasn't efficient then that would lead to ...

Interviewer: To lack of motivation?

Ms 16: Yes, because people would be fed up, they would be constantly moaning about things.

Interviewer: So let me put an arrow in here then. So that would increase in that, leading increase in that, decrease in that, lead to a decrease in that?

Ms 16: Yes, so it could work either way.

Interviewer: So it is plus or minus then isn't it, just to be awkward?

Ms 16: Yes.

Interviewer: A plus 2 or plus 3 or plus 1 or minus one?

Ms 16: Say 2.

Interviewer: I can understand your point there, very good, I think that covers everything, so we have linked an extra little one there. I think that is about it.
Ms 16: OK.

Interviewer: Thank you very much that is very kind of you.

Interview with Respondent 17 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 12 March 2003, 10.30

- Interviewer: OK. The first issue that you've got down here as being most important of course is planning ahead. Can you tell me why that's really important for you?
Mr 17: OK planning ahead, why is that important to me?
- Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 17: Planning ahead is important because I need to know where I'm going in the immediate future and further along in time. In relation to staff, deliveries, holidays, meetings. And all those sort of things basically.
- Interviewer: Yes. I understand. Now, that sort of organisation bit. Why is that really particularly important to you? Do you feel as if it's like part of a good manager's job or?
Mr 17: Say it again sorry.
- Interviewer: Planning ahead, and organising all these issues. It's quite a complex task. Why is that really important to you? Do you feel it's part of the manager's job?
Mr 17: It is yeah. If we don't do that, I could come unstuck with... being able to cope with the day-to-day running of the store.
- Interviewer: OK. Does it feel as if you're in more control if you do these? Or is it?
Mr 17: Yeah. I think if you're planning ahead you're certainly in more control.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: I operate a 4-week planner outside the door there.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: ... We just jot down the things that are going happen over the next 4 weeks.
- Interviewer: Yeah. How effective do you find that? Do you find that pretty good?
Mr 17: Yeah. Let's say if we get a phone call and the thing is, tomorrow, like I'm in... tomorrow, if I hadn't written that down, I'd probably forget about it!
- Interviewer: Yeah yeah. Of course, yeah I know, there's so many balls going up in the air at the same time, it's very difficult. OK. So you feel as if you're organised, you feel as if you're, if you didn't do it, you'd have more problems day-to-day?
Mr 17: I think so yeah.
- Interviewer: You've got more control?
Mr 17: Well. I think you know, if we had one of our key fresh food people just didn't turn up today because he'd booked a holiday and I hadn't planned it, I should have got somebody else in to cover his work. Then I'd have a catastrophe in the morning.
- Interviewer: Right yes. So you feel as if that's a major part of a manager's job? And why is that important to you as a manager do you think, or to you personally?

Mr 17: Well to me personally and I think to any manager. If you don't plan ahead you're not a manager.

Interviewer: Yeah right. So it's a major part of the management job?

Mr 17: Mm.

Interviewer: And would feel as if you would look as if you're not a very good manager if you didn't do this?

Mr 17: Yes.

Interviewer: OK. Personal leadership style. Maybe you can, it's quite a difficult one, but maybe identify what personal leadership style is?

Mr 17: What my style is?

Interviewer: Mm.

Mr 17: My own personal style is that I believe I wouldn't expect my staff to do anything I couldn't do myself.

Interviewer: OK yeah. So like leading from the front really basically?

Mr 17: Mm. And if they believe in what I'm doing, or what I can do, then they'll do it as well.

Interviewer: OK. So you show them basically, that you're getting stuck in as well?

Mr 17: Yeah.

Interviewer: Show by example I suppose.

Mr 17: Mm.

Interviewer: OK. And why do you do that particularly? Why do you think that's important?

Mr 17: I just think basically, you're not expecting people to do things that you can't be done yourself.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 17: And I think if you're working as part of a team, even though you're a manager of a team, you are part of that team. Especially probably here, with a smaller store, as against my old store, which... gets on well with the staff.

Interviewer: Right yeah.

Mr 17: Because I had 4 assistant managers below me before.

Interviewer: Right I understand yes. So you presumably found that by experience, that system has worked well in the past?

Mr 17: Yes yeah.

Interviewer: Why is this teamwork really important do you think?

Mr 17: I think it just, it creates team building as well, when you're working with people and doing things. The staff get to know you and you get to know the staff as well.

Interviewer: Right yeah. And that's important for what?

Mr 17: I think it's important for everything. It's important I think just for the way the staff feel about the job. It's important for how they do the job. And I think it, also important, it helps their performance.

Interviewer: OK. So you think that, by building this team up, you're going to get extra performance, they'll feel good about their job, and presumably more motivated?

Mr 17: Well that's right. I think if you've got staff that are feeling negative, it affects everything.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 17: If you can create positives with them all the time, it helps all the way along.

Interviewer: Yes. OK. So why is that really important to you do you think? Building up this team? Getting the performance together? Like I heard your area manager congratulate you on improving everything just a minute ago. Why is that, why do you think that's really really important to you?

Mr 17: It's important to me for my own self-esteem, I know the job's going to be done.

Interviewer: That's fine yeah. And why do you require this self-esteem do you think? Generally?

Mr 17: Well, I think we're all proud people and we like to know we do our jobs well. Obviously I can't do it all myself so I've got to be able to create the staff that can do it with me.

Interviewer: Yeah. Right brilliant. OK. Service quality is another really key issue here. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?

Mr 17: It's important to me, and it's important for the company too, that if we can create the right amount of service downstairs, then we will get customers back in the door.

Interviewer: Yeah. So it's repeat sort of customers really?

Mr 17: Yeah. You know, we're fighting against the likes of Tesco's and all the other competitors.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 17: If I can offer the service here, either on the checkouts, or by having the goods available, or just giving them assistance, people will come back and put the word out.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 17: That's really what it's about.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you think word of mouth is really quite important?

Mr 17: Yeah. I think so. You know. Even some of the things, I take somebody's shopping out to their car outside the front door. It can, you know.

Interviewer: Yes I can imagine. You don't get that service anywhere else.
Mr 17: In this particular store, it's quite a strange store in way. Probably 75% of my business is more older people.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: People that haven't got transport to go into Tesco's, which is 2 miles down the road. They come on the bus into the High Street. Or they have home deliveries. It's just that personal service really.

Interviewer: Yeah. So it's like a very big differentiation factor between you and your competitors?
Mr 17: Mm. I mean we gear our meat sales and all that sort of thing, I gear it up towards the smaller packets of meat as well and that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah yes.
Mr 17: Because I've found since I've been here, most of our sales are to smaller customers if you like.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 17: We're not getting 150 pound or 100 pound a week shoppers in here. We're probably getting the 10-15 pound a week shoppers who come in probably, 2 or 3 times a week.

Interviewer: Yes regular business, smaller amounts. OK fine. So why is this repeat customers, this word of mouth, building up the reputation of the store, I suppose it's reputation?
Mr 17: It is yeah. It's building up a reputation and what we have to offer. Even a small thing like when I'm on the shop floor, I always speak to the customers and say hello to them, - How are you? - They get to know you and you get to know them. And I just think that's something you don't get in the average Tesco's/Sainsbury's.

Interviewer: You certainly don't..... OK. All they want is your credit card. So that's personal contact you think is very important. Differentiation... the store, personal contact, ways of building that up. Why is this really important to you? Is it a bit like self-esteem again? Or is it to do with your income? Or is it?
Mr 17: It's income I suppose. At the end of the day, the more profit the store makes, the more I make out of it. But I think there's self-satisfaction that the customers are happy as well. You're not getting the aggravation.

Interviewer: And that's another issue I suppose. Is the aggravation sort of, you get less hassle, so it's helping you?
Mr 17: Well that's right. You do get customer problems from time to time, but if they know who to come and talk to, they're happy as well I think.

Interviewer: Yeah. Thank you very much. Learning to improve you've got this as a really important issue as well.
Mr 17: Yeah I think so. I think I've got a lot to learn like anybody has I think. There's always various things coming in, the way you do things you know. I've considered doing things, like Open University. There's things like NVQs coming out now and things like that. And also, it's learning to improve from if you like, my bosses, and what the company do as well. They send us on courses and things like that.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 17: And you know if I can learn that, then I can pass it on to others.

Interviewer: You're a very experienced guy. What made you change or think in this way? Do you think it's positive experiences in the past or negative experiences or?
Mr 17: It is, but I've had to learn to improve as well. Because obviously from 20 years... there's been a lot of changes, and I've had to improve my skills if you like to cope with that.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: I think that's the main factor.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you've sort of recognised it yourself and therefore think that it should be done throughout sort of thing?
Mr 17: I think so yeah. I've got people in the store who are on NVQs. The company, they have a contract with an educational organisation.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: Where they come in and they instruct staff on NVQ training in retail and this sort of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah. So. This learning bit is really important to. What's the major benefit from this learning do you think? Learning to improve?
Mr 17: Well from my point of view it's actually getting some extra knowledge of the retail side of it.

Interviewer: OK. What do you mean by retail? Do you mean customers or do you mean competitors or do you mean?
Mr 17: It's everything really. Because I'm going on a.. beers wines and spirits course next week. And no doubt I'm going to learn about, I'm going to learn probably more about wines and alcohol, which I can pass down to staff members, customers or whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah. Sounds like a nice course then?
Mr 17: Yeah.

(laughter)

I might go and see Courage brewery at Reading.

Interviewer: Right. OK. So. You think that this is improving the knowledge of the staff, and therefore, what's the impact of that do you think?
Mr 17: It will help them communicate with customers, and hopefully also increase the staff performance.

Interviewer: And how are you measuring staff performance? This is a tricky one.
Mr 17: We have periodic reviews with them where we talk about what they're doing, what they're achieving or what they're not achieving. Do it yearly.

Interviewer: So is it more of a feel of what's happening out there? Do you feel as though?

Mr 17: That's right. And we talk to them in-between. At the moment we monitor what they're doing. I monitor. The company requires from say grocery, that we put 60 cases.. on grocery, and we do monitor it from time to time to see how they're doing. And if they're not making it, we talk them through it and find out why they're not doing it.

Interviewer: I see right.
Mr 17: That sort of thing.

Interviewer: OK. And delegation of tasks to others. We've talked maybe about this I suppose. It's sort of learning bit. Issues, what other issues do you think you can bring up there?
Mr 17: Well delegation basically, that's probably most of my work, is to delegate. I would say really.

Interviewer: Yes yes.
Mr 17: (background noise on tape)... I delegate work to Andy, they delegate to section heads. And I just follow it through from there to make sure it's been done.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: There's obviously no way I could do everything...

Interviewer: No indeed. So why is that important to you? Is it mostly to do with? You certainly can't do everything. Is there any other reasons why you think that delegation is really important?
Mr 17: It frees me up to then check performance and check quality of work. Or that the work's carried out. Making sure that we're legal I suppose is one of the things.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: Make sure we're offering quality of service to quality to customers and this sort of thing, by doing that.

Interviewer: OK. Thank you very much. That's great. And maybe can I ask you to identify some of these, these relationships now. These strong ones especially. Personal leadership style, we've talked a tiny bit about that. And do you think that's?
Mr 17: That's right, because that's part of what I do. Delegating. Because my style and the way I delegate, lets people accept the orders I'm giving them if you like.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: If I've got a bad leadership style, they'd probably turn around and say – Get stuffed!- Under your breath.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: Well you know. That's what I think. And again, planning ahead is part of personal leadership so you can plan ahead, and that I think will help in terms of efficiency, what we're doing there.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 17: And again, if you plan ahead, I think it helps motivation with the staff from there.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 17: And again, that helps my personal motivation as well, going that way.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 17: That's my view anyway.

Interviewer: And presumably this would reduce personnel turnover?
Mr 17: That's what I'm hoping for yeah. Because if you've got staff that are well motivated, they're happy. They don't leave do they?

Interviewer: Yeah. So maybe I should put this at minus really. Because I think that's what you really mean?
Mr 17: Right OK.

Interviewer: An increase in motivation would lead to a decrease in personnel turnover, I think that's, presumably what you mean?
Mr 17: Yeah yeah.

Interviewer: OK excellent. So do you see the planning ahead as being sort of central to it, or do you see this personal leadership style as being central to it?
Mr 17: Well I think you head up with personal leadership don't you? And I think planning ahead goes as part of it.

Interviewer: Right I see. So you think they both sort of run together really.
Mr 17: Mm.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. That's great. End of interview.

Interview with Respondent 18 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 12 March, 2pm

- Interviewer: OK. You've put down of course service quality as being a key factor or one of the key factors, one of the main factors. Why is that important to you?
Mr 18: **If you don't offer a good service, most of our service is offered at the checkouts, unless the staff offer them a good service, a friendly smile, a please and a thank you, people tend to think they're miserable, and don't come back.**
- Interviewer: So it's mostly repeat business then?
Mr 18: Yeah.
- Interviewer: OK. Why is this you know, repeat business, well it's pretty obviously, but why is it important to you?
Mr 18: **To keep our turnover up and to stop them going to our competitors.**
- Interviewer: And what is the personal motivation behind that? What's in it for you?
Mr 18: Job satisfaction. A happy feelgood staff. Recognition from our senior management. Financially and morally.
- Interviewer: OK. So is it sort of, anything to do with you being the manager? Or is it anything to do with financial rewards for you and support from them?
Mr 18: It's my nature. I like to see a job well done.
- Interviewer: So it's more a personal thing than anything, than fringe benefits type of thing.
Mr 18: O yeah.
- Interviewer: OK. And support from head office you reckon is quite an important issue as well. You've mentioned bits here about them supporting you financially and morally. Why is this really important to you?
Mr 18: The head office support to keep the store standards up. I like to know that if I pick up the telephone and say, as I have done, had repaired today our doors, that I'm going to get something done.
- Interviewer: So sorting problems out and stuff like that?
Mr 18: Yeah.
- Interviewer: OK.
Mr 18: All the maintenance issues have to go through our head office.
- Interviewer: Right OK.
Mr 18: And I must admit they get response very quickly.
- Interviewer: Right. And why is that really important? This fast response to these problems?

Mr 18: If the store doesn't look right, people won't come in here. If it looks dirty. If they feel like something's going to fall on them, or they're going to fall over something.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: They won't bother to come in.

Interviewer: Right. So it's important to keep that look of the place. Keep everything looking good?

Mr 18: Yeah.

Interviewer: Fine, and that's presumably linked back to what we talked about earlier, sort of like service quality and all these things that make everything work, looking...

Mr 18: Very much so very much so. If I go into a store shopping, I won't go to the local competitor, mainly Tesco's, because of the.. attitude of the staff in there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: The quality doesn't seem to be in there, and definitely not the service. And a lot of our customers say that. They would rather come here than go to Tesco's.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. Very good. OK. So that's really quite key, that sort of, is it all to do with service quality? It's an attitude problem and?

Mr 18: Yeah. I think it is an attitude, and it's service.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: Customers, people come in here and they know that they're going to get decent service.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: And a smile.

Interviewer: Yeah. It does make a difference, I know about that.

Mr 18: O yes.

Interviewer: Very pleasant experience. Employee flexibility. You mention that as being pretty key, I can see it in the map as pretty...

Mr 18: Yeah. A small store, I have a limited wages budget. I need the staff to be flexible with their hours, and to be able to work overtime when requested.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: If I didn't have that I certainly wouldn't be able to run this store.

Interviewer: Is that something that you feel is slightly out of your control, because it's a very rich area round here, you're going to be paid a particular wage, and therefore trying to get people in?

Mr 18: Our stores are all banded into zones. And sizes. And turnover. They set the turnover target on the store, the turnover target for this store is 25,000 pound a week.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 18: And they set a wage bracket on that of approximately 10%.

Interviewer: I see.
Mr 18: Now that takes into account manager's wages, staff hourly wages, and it does limit you to the number of people you can employ.

Interviewer: Yeah. And it's linked to the size of the store really, and not necessarily.. because there's, like a very expensive property to live here, and the fact that you sometimes can't afford to work in here if you've got a mortgage around the corner and all that?
Mr 18: That's right. Yeah. That is one of the big problems, and I think that is mainly why most staff working here, in fact all the staff working here except myself, they will do 2 jobs, some of them do do 2 jobs. But it's not really. The staff wages are not based on the area they work in. On the size of the store and turnover.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you could be in the same sized store in maybe a poorer area, where the wage, where the cost of housing is a lot cheaper, and there's a lot less trouble presumably of recruiting staff.
Mr 18: That's it. We do have a store smaller than this, in a very very expensive area. I couldn't afford to live there.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 18: Taking more money, by the sales, the turnover. Still probably get paid the same wage.

Interviewer: Yeah. So this flexibility is very important to running the store, the fact that your restricted because of the size, of the number of people, therefore people have to do multi sort of jobs, and all the bits and bobs.
Mr 18: That's right.

Interviewer: So why is that really important to you as a manager? Is it, well obviously you have to run all these tasks, and this is a problem. But is it just less hassle for you? Or is it?
Mr 18: It's company policy that all staff members are multi-skilled. As much as the lady that was on the checkouts when you came in also looks after the dairy section.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 18: She also fills grocery.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 18: And all the staff in here are multi-skilled and can go and do other jobs, and know what they're doing in those other jobs.

Interviewer: Yeah, they've done them before, and they're quite experienced at that.
Mr 18: Yeah. The manager's job in a store this size is very much hands-on. It has to be. That's why I was out there on the shop floor doing...

Interviewer: Of course yes, I realise. I realise from running a small business myself that it's, you've got to do everything basically.

Mr 18: O yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Personal motivation. You've said that's a very important aspect of, you think it's important.
Mr 18: If I can't motivate myself to get here on time in the mornings, to open up the store. To go out and do jobs on the shop floor. Then how can I expect the staff to do it? And I'm very much a believer in not asking somebody to do something if I can't do it myself.

Interviewer: Right yourself yeah, that sort of hands-on approach.
Mr 18: Yeah.

Interviewer: Sure. And sort of leading by example.
Mr 18: Leading by example. I went on a course called Valuing People. It's all run by our head office and the whole course was designed by, I've forgotten his name now. But the whole course was designed by him and it was very good. And we had 1 to 1s at the end of it from the tutors.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 18: And in my 1 to 1 I was told, you may not be the perfect manager, but you're a born leader.

Interviewer: So. What did they mean by that? Did they mean leading by example or did they mean something else?
Mr 18: I lead by example. I will go out and do it, show other people how to do it. I won't expect them to do something that I.

Interviewer: Yes that you wouldn't do yourself. Why is that really important to you then? Why do you think that's a key aspect of your management style I suppose, or leadership style? What's underpinning that? Has it worked in the past for you or is it? Have you seen opposites?
Mr 18: Yeah. I've worked under people that wouldn't ask me to do something that they wouldn't do themselves. How can I expect the job to be done properly if I can't do the job properly myself?

Interviewer: Yeah. And have you seen the opposite of that there people have tried a different approach?
Mr 18: I've worked for managers who haven't had a clue if you like.

Interviewer: And you? What do you think about that?
Mr 18: I, at the time, was doing a job, and I wasn't doing it properly.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 18: I'd worked for a... I had 2 managers who couldn't show me how to do the job properly.

Interviewer: Right. But you knew how to do it yourself? Or did you find out later and?
Mr 18: I just muddled through until you know, somebody showed me exactly where I was going wrong.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. It's important isn't it?

Mr 18: It is. I think it's very important. And I'm a firm believer in you've got to know the job yourself before you can expect other people to know it. I've trained 2 assistant managers in here. And both are managers now.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: And both got to be managers far quicker than I did.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: The guy that sent me that (laughter). He's been skiing, he's home now, but he went skiing. I got that today. He's cheeky... He's manager in Chessington, which is quite a big store. Takes a turnover of 83, 85,000 pounds a week.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: And he was my AM3 when I came here first. And they took him off me and put him into Bayswater, well they put him into one of the flagship stores, like in town, as an AM3. And in 3 years, he got to be a manager.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: Another one I lost just before Christmas... He's now manager of Convenience Stores Ltd. garage in Kenton.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr 18: And he's only been with the company 3 years. And he's made manager already.

Interviewer: That's the trouble you see, you get them... and then they all bugger off!

(laughter)

Mr 18: I teach them how to do the job and they bugger off yeah!

(laughter)

Interviewer: And you're left with all these staff problems! Well, it's nice though.

Mr 18: It is nice, it gets to be recognised that they've found, put 2 managers, 2 assistant managers out as managers.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: And it happens, and I had a... they gave me a chap called Dave Simmons, just at Christmas time and new year. He's what they call an outside manager, he was. Store at, Convenience Stores Ltd.... because he didn't know the systems, they took him out, got another guy in there as manager, and they're training him up to be a Convenience Stores Ltd. manager, and they sent him here to learn his fresh foods training.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: His cash training, and other various odds n. They asked for me to give a report, and it won't be long before he's got his own store.

Interviewer: So you see this as development of individual staff of course.
Mr 18: Yeah.

Interviewer: And why is that so very satisfying to you?
Mr 18: It's satisfying for me, it's nice to know that I've taught people in the right way, you know. They've taken their opportunities, when I've tried to show them something. They've grasped it, and when the opportunity's come along for them, to be, you know, progress, move up another step on the ladder. They've taken it.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 18: And it's nice for me to know that I, you know, Dave Hammond's doing some good down there.

Interviewer: So you feel that's more important than, the fact that, in the short term you might have a bit of hassle because you've lost some good people of course.
Mr 18: Well that happens in every industry, you know. It's one of those things you have to put up with. It's like, when I was an AM3, in East Walllesly, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 18: My... walked in there one day and he said to my manager, Harry, whose still over there, - I'm taking David out for a short time, I need him to go and sort out Teddington. —I came across here and never went back.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 18: I was told — You're staying, you're the store manager. — So that's it, it goes round in circles, somebody else has had to put up with it. And it'll always be like that.

Interviewer: Mm. Motivation of staff, obviously we've talked about it, because personal motivation leads to motivation of staff I think we've got here or? Motivation of staff? Leadership style?
Mr 18: Yeah.

Interviewer: Very important for you, personal motivation leads into... can you tell me a bit about that link there?
Mr 18: If I can't motivate myself, I can't motivate my staff, but I do motivate myself and I do motivate the staff. Whether it be, not financially, unfortunately it's not the sort of thing that the store can do. That has to come from head office.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 18: But in other ways you know. Just saying to them — Please. Thank you. You've done a good job. — If they've done a bad job then, or made a mistake, then you tell them. You don't.. I don't believe in that anyway.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 18: But I think a please and a thank you motivates people. To me it's easier to say please and thank you than to order somebody to do something.

Interviewer: Yeah. Have you experienced the?
Mr 18: I mean an order is a last resort.

Interviewer: Yeah. Have you experienced that ordering or telling sort of?
Mr 18: I've.. myself yeah, put my back up straight away.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 18: It's true it does. I can motivate staff by saying please and thank you and being nice. And because I have a small store, it's more of a family atmosphere.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 18: They're not just a number. You know. You know them.

Interviewer: Yeah you..
Mr 18: A store with about 300 employees the manager can't know everybody. The turnover of staff here is very low. I only lost a couple of students obviously. But as far as full time staff go, 2 or 3 in 3 years.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 18: Where people have been promoted like I say.

Interviewer: Yeah that's..
Mr 18: I've had nobody walk out on me.

Interviewer: Yeah and as you say it's a rich area and quite difficult to find accommodation round here.
Mr 18: Yeah. Well nobody that works here can afford to live in Teddington. I certainly can't and I'm the manager!

Interviewer: No, I can understand it, it's very difficult isn't it.
Mr 18: Yeah. To rent a flat around here it's a thousand pound a month. That's for a flat.

Interviewer: Yeah I can see. I just sort of looked in the estate agents windows and thought – Oh my God! –
Mr 18: Oh yes. I live in Chessington. It's 6 or 7 miles away. I'm actually going to get a company flat, that belongs to the company I hope. And that's going to cost me 520 pound a month.

Interviewer: Yeah. I can see.
Mr 18: It's horrendous up here. But yeah, it is a nice area. But no, I'm very much a believer in treating staff properly. You get more out of them. If you scream and shout, they'll do the job slowly.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. Well that's the thing about working your way up, you know what's been done to you. You know what things have worked and things that don't work.

Mr 18: That's right, and when I joined Convenience Stores Ltd. I joined Convenience Stores Ltd. as head of produce section at Chessington. 8 years ago. And I got made up to assistant manager level 1. And I stayed there for about another year, 18 months. Then I was asked to go and help out at Cheam, and I stayed there, and got made up to AM2. And I moved from there to help out at East Molesly, and stayed there. Then I got made to an AM3, then I came here. So I've worked my way up.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 18: I started on the shop, basically as I say, I started on the shop floor.

Interviewer: Yeah. Quite a few people I've met have done, it's sort of policy..

Mr 18: Oh yeah, very much so in Convenience Stores Ltd.. Very much so. And I think it is the best way of learning a trade, is to start off at the bottom and work your way up. By far the best way.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. I think I've got quite a lot of details here.

Mr 18: I hope so. I hope it's useful.

End of interview.

Interview with Respondent 19 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 13 March 2003, 11.30am

(accent a little difficult to decipher in parts)

- Interviewer: OK. Thank you. You've noted that service quality is really key in your thinking. You really think it's very important. Can I ask you why you think that's very important to you?
- Mr 19: Right. If I am a customer walking into the store, I will go to a place that the service, the quality of the service is high. I won't shop any places that's a cheaper price, I rather go for the service.
- Interviewer: Right.
- Mr 19: That's a policy I like to have, if I don't want to buy something, then I don't want to sell it.
- Interviewer: Right.
- Mr 19: So again like that. If I get a better service, I will give the same service to the customers. To make the customers to come back again.
- Interviewer: OK. Why is this repeat customers, or customer loyalty I suppose in some respects, important to you?
- Mr 19: In the normal connection, there's no connection between the customer and the retailer, the customer is not going to come back here.
- Interviewer: Why is that important to you? Obviously for turnover yes.
- Mr 19: The customer come back here again and again and your turnover go up definitely.
- Interviewer: And why is this turnover sort of issue really important to you particularly. I know you've got quite a big increase in turnover here which is quite encouraging.
- Mr 19: Yeah. Sales goes up it's good for all of us. Jobs gets guaranteed. Bonus. Happy environment to work.
- Interviewer: Yeah. And this happy environment and all these extra benefits, are they sort of the end of the line, or are you looking for something after that?
- Mr 19: Personally or?
- Interviewer: Yeah personally.
- Mr 19: Yeah, I'm looking to go to the bigger store.
- Interviewer: OK. So career sort of thing.
- Mr 19: Yeah.... more into the bigger store.
- Interviewer: OK. And is this a personal goal for you?
- Mr 19: Yeah it's a personal goal yeah.
- Interviewer: What do you think? Do you see it like as a career path that's developing or?
- Mr 19: Yeah I like to be, I don't want to be, I like to be manager for the bigger store, which will be more challenging and more prove.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: And the knowledge in retail I've got, I think I can deliver that to more customers.

Interviewer: Right OK. So it's a challenging job for you really. Major thing in your?
Mr 19: One thing very very major is say, something the store got 8,000, between 7 to 9,000 Scarford (?) store.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: Will be, only for me.... that's to be... what I think.

Interviewer: OK. Where do you think this is leading then? Do you think that's one of your key goals is it? Where else do you think you would like to be after that?
Mr 19: After that?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: I don't know, because of certain things at that time, I don't know yet.

Interviewer: That's far enough to think ahead is it?
Mr 19: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK right.
Mr 19: Because the retail business, every day is not a happy day. And you go in one day, and you don't want to come back to work again.

(laughter)

So you can't think that far now. I don't want to. I could be wrong but I don't want to.

Interviewer: OK. Motivation of staff. You think that's important.
Mr 19: That's very important.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about that. Why is that important to you?
Mr 19: If there is no happy team, right, you won't achieve much. You won't. If everyone is willing to work and they're happy, more jobs will be get done with less people. And it cost less. And you can achieve what you want to achieve. More profitability.

Interviewer: And you're looking at it, that's your major concern is it? Profitability?
Mr 19: Yeah. Work as a team and you can achieve anything very easily.

Interviewer: And where does this profitability bit link in then? Is it?
Mr 19: Time concern.

Interviewer: Sorry?
Mr 19: Time concern.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that sorry?
Mr 19: Hours. Hours they put in.

Interviewer: Yes right.
Mr 19: Say, if you have unhappy staff, doing something. If it's taking 8 hours for it, but if the team is happy, then you get it done in 2 hours. So we are wasting time with someone who don't want to, with a negative attitude, working 8 hours.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 19: Someone with a positive attitude finish the job on time.

Interviewer: Yes. Is that? You see profitability as one of the... but it's also maybe less hassle for you?
Mr 19: Well it's less hassle for everyone. For the staff, the rest of the staff, for the customer. Have relationships with the whole community, including the staff. It has up and downs on that. It's just not, again it's not, every day is not going to be, you're not going to achieve everything every day.

Interviewer: No.
Mr 19: Sometimes difficult, but most of time, we have a happy team, and it's easy to, it's easy to achieve something you want to achieve.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what's the end goal as you see for this? Profitability you mentioned.
Mr 19: Is personal training for them. Personal development for them.

Interviewer: Why is that important do you think?
Mr 19: If they can improve themselves. Then they go and work with someone else. They will have a good background knowledge. Have a good positive attitude towards the job they've got to do. And it will create the other people to work with them. They will make themselves working easy with the other staff wherever they go.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: And if they, work as a team, and positive attitude, they can learn more.

Interviewer: Why is that really important?
Mr 19: To develop themselves.

Interviewer: And why is that important?
Mr 19: That will make my job easy.

Interviewer: Right OK.
Mr 19: I don't need to go and physically do everything, I can delegate. I have a, confident of them, that they can do the job, and they have confidence in themselves, they can do it.

Interviewer: OK great. Speed of response to change, this is obviously pretty important to you as well. Why is that do you think, it's important?
Mr 19: Yeah, it's on this, say seasonal things, for this Christmas.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: The thing is plan ahead, or look ahead. See the reports, what is going to happen..., plan yourself to get seasonal goods in. So that's added service to the customers. Including the price changes on petrol. That's a main thing for me.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 19: So, especially when the price is going up, if I definitely I know the price is going to go up, I get the delivery in.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 19: And if I get the delivery in the day before, then I can keep the same price, even where the other companies put the price up, I can go for at least 1 or 2 days.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 19: And that will bring more customers in. That will bring more money in my till. So this is like... is there in the front.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: They're late, you're late. The opportunity is missed is missed.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: You walk into a store and you want something. If I say it will come tomorrow morning it's no good to you, you want it on that night.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: So that's the thing.

Interviewer: OK. So you feel as if you're really quite responsive to changing needs and changing patterns out there, and that's really important to you.
Mr 19: It's important to me.

Interviewer: Why is that very important? Is this to do with profitability?
Mr 19: Increase the sales and give you, give your customer confidence that any time they go into this place, and they'll find what they want.

Interviewer: Very good. Thank you very much. Knowledge of customers, you've, it's just what we've been talking about really.

Mr 19: Yeah. So.

Interviewer: This is to increase turnover and? To keep people coming back all the time?
Mr 19: Yeah, have a bridge between the customers and the business. Give them confidence to come back here again.

Interviewer: OK. And we've got in some of the reasons why you think that's really important. Differentiation of product services from competitors. I looked down the road and saw that you've got quite a big competitor, a Tescos down the road there?
Mr 19: Personally, I don't have any control on that side. What I can do on that, give them that availability, for the customers. The reason I mentioned that is, I will think for the price increase/decrease on petrol.

Interviewer: Oh right. OK so. And this is quite an important part? Maybe not so much for other people, because I haven't seen another one that have got..
Mr 19: No. That is very rare. On this side of England, the other side of England, this is the one and only Convenience Stores Ltd. control petrol.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: The rest of them is.. and someone like BP or someone else control it. So.

Interviewer: OK. So you feel that's an increase in turnover.
Mr 19: Definitely.

Interviewer: You mentioned planning ahead although it's not your number 1, or 1-5, it's quite important on your map here. Do you feel that's an important task for you as a manager?
Mr 19: Yes. Definitely there's an important task. On this particular business, every 1 or 2 weeks we changing promotions right. So you got to plan ahead to get what are the things you think you can sell. Order early and get the availability for the customer.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: You'd better be safe rather than be sorry.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: Also. This business that is not like normal supermarket business. All the time you got to be on your toe. Someone got a petrol line, they gone, you lose the profit on that.

Interviewer: Yes yes.
Mr 19: Then you get a rosta, and you've got to match the people. You don't put just 4 people, you match people who can... All of us are not same. Maybe one is a good person. The other 2 is not good. So you better mix and match the staff.

Interviewer: Yeah. You've got to know your staff strengths and weaknesses basically is that?

Mr 19: That's right yeah. So if someone goes on holiday you know, you've got to think how you can plan ahead. Then if something goes wrong, then you want to rectify that.

Interviewer: Yeah. Why is all this important? Presumably of course it's less hassle for you of course?
Mr 19: Less hassle for me the first thing. Second thing is less loss.

Interviewer: Uh huh. Yeah.
Mr 19: That's the name of the game. You take as much as you can, and lose minimum you can.

Interviewer: Yeah. So this is about, is this about you being classed as a good manager because you've gone for extra profits, and you reduce losses right down?
Mr 19: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you see that as one of the major roles that you've, you're measured on that?
Mr 19: Yeah. Which we have achieved. We have achieved 3 years running, we have achieved bonus here.

Interviewer: Uh huh.
Mr 19: Not much stores have achieved. So we succeeded in that. Planning ahead is definitely there. And I have done a lot too, 1 or 2 managers have gone in 3 years too, I have developed 2 managers.

Interviewer: Yeah OK.
Mr 19: One is in Teddington and one is in Kenton. Two Convenience Stores Ltd. stores.

Interviewer: So that's, that's. You've got your bonuses, you've developed managers, and of course this planning ahead is linked with I suppose, maybe how you're thought of as a manager? Is planning a key role?
Mr 19: Planning is a key role. If you don't have a plan, what are you going to do? That's the thing. It's less hassle is the first thing. You spend 5 minutes and you save 5 hours.

Interviewer: Yes yes.
Mr 19: That's my view. And I've achieved it and succeeded in some ways.

Interviewer: OK great. Looking at some of these things now. Why are they linked together in different ways do you think? Can you just expand a tiny bit on? Planning ahead and motivation of staff. We've just maybe talked about that a bit.
Mr 19: Yeah. Developing staff then is good for everyone. It's good for themselves, it's good for the business, good for the customers. Learning to improve. If you're not working to certain... you're not going to learn anything.

Interviewer: No right.
Mr 19: If you're not learning you won't go up.

Interviewer: No.
Mr 19: So are you willing to learn? Then you can go up.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: If you don't want to listen to anybody, you won't get anywhere.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: That is my view. And that is why I mentioned for learning to improve, that's really important. The knowledge, you will know where are you standing, what you are doing, how you are doing it.

Interviewer: Does this? Where does this lead to do you think?
Mr 19: For the personal improvement.

Interviewer: Personal improvement OK. Yeah.
Mr 19: Personal improvement and then. Why they say, you can develop yourself, you can go up on the ladder. The second thing, you won't make the same mistake again.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: Other than that. Knowledge of the customers. This thing. This is seasonal things right.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 19: You know it's going to be good, this weekend. Do you order more green veg? More drinks because. Give the customers, tell them that we've got all these, the customer have the knowledge, and they'll come back if definitely they know where to go for that.

Interviewer: I see you link planning ahead to motivation of staff, the staff development bit, which is you know, relatively, we've just talked a lot about that.
Mr 19: Which Convenience Stores Ltd. do have a program for that.

Interviewer: Right yes. And then, planning ahead to the service quality and speed of response bit, is really quite important as well.
Mr 19: Yeah. Service and quality, this is something I was telling you. If you plan ahead, you can mix and match the staff who can be here at that time, at a busy time. That's the thing I use.

Interviewer: Uh huh.
Mr 19: That's the thing I mentioned in here. Here the speed of response for the planning changes, the promotions, availability and customer...

Interviewer: Like your role of ordering things in at particular times and stuff like that?
Mr 19: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then you link a lot of it down to product variety at the end here?
Mr 19: Yeah. That is my... because the bigger store... that's the thing in the retail in my view. You have more variety and you get more people in. And especially under one roof if you can, put petrol, to buy what you really want. And it stops you going to other stores.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you feel as if you're, well presumably the size of the store here that you've got is limiting you in that regard at the moment. But you don't mind that so much presumably?
Mr 19: We can't do much things because of the space. Right.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 19: We don't have a high ceiling, so we can't stack much high.... That's the thing, if you have large products, you bring more people in.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. I think that's covered quite a lot of ground there.

End of interview.

Interview with Respondent 20 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 22 March 2003, 11am

- Interviewer: First of all you haven't got some numbers of some of these. Are these presumably ones or? Or not so strong or something or?
Mr 20: Yeah. Plus 1, plus 1, plus 2, and I missed that.
- Interviewer: OK great. Thank you very much. OK first of all you've mentioned motivation of staff as being of key importance. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?
Mr 20: Because if they're motivated they'll do whatever's asked of them. As long as they know their objectives and what they're supposed to achieve, they'll want to come into work, and they'll be happy with the customers. Which is probably the most important thing actually.
- Interviewer: OK. Why is it important for you? You've got. That your staff are happy for the customers?
Mr 20: Because the customers will feel confident about coming to the store.
- Interviewer: So is it repeat business, they come back more because?
Mr 20: O yeah, it's repeat business yeah.
- Interviewer: OK. Why is that particularly important to you?
Mr 20: Because it's a local store. Although there is a lot of people that visit the area, there isn't, there's a lot of houses around here but it's not about density, it's not that great. The type of area it is, so it's important that we have a happy motivated staff, because the staff will improve the relationship themselves. I can only do a certain amount myself, and the majority of it, 99% of it comes from the staff.
- Interviewer: Yes OK. So it's a matter of trying not to cover everything, what you can and what you can't do. OK. So they have got, I suppose responsibility. OK. So they've got to build up this relationship with the customers and they take responsibility for this.
Mr 20: Yeah.
- Interviewer: Why is that really key to your personal motivation?
Mr 20: My personal motivation?
- Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: Because it improves the sales. And I know it improves the sales, it's key to improving the sales.
- Interviewer: OK. And why is that really important to you?
Mr 20: Because the customers will come back. And we get more custom.
- Interviewer: And is that good for your career? Is it good for you as a manager to be thought of as?
Mr 20: No. It's, it lets me know that I'm doing a good job.

Interviewer: OK. So is that important for you?
Mr 20: Yeah it is yeah.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?
Mr 20: Because everyone wants to come to work to do a good job. They don't want to come to work to do a bad job. That includes staff, and me and everybody really, in the store.

Interviewer: Is that a personal satisfaction type of thing with your job?
Mr 20: Yeah. And not only that, you get more acknowledgement and recognition if you do a good job, than if you do a poor job. And everybody will always say – Oh, you get paid more money down the road! - But it's all about recognition.

Interviewer: Right. So that's pretty important for you really?
Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: What sort of thing in that bundle, is really really important do you think?
Mr 20: For me, it's turnover against last year. In terms of recognition.

Interviewer: OK so it's turnover. OK. So, it's gone up quite a considerable amount already and you've only been here four and half months.
Mr 20: Four and half months yeah.

Interviewer: Was there a particular problem before you got your?
Mr 20: It's the Chairman's store. He visits, he shops here about 4 or 5 times a week.

Interviewer: OK.

(laughter)
Mr 20: So.

Interviewer: So, he lives in sort of Ascot area or whatever and.
Mr 20: 1.8 miles away from the store.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 20: It's his local store.

Interviewer: I see I see.
Mr 20: And since we've become a private company, that's recently, well I think it's about a year ago now, we were bought by XXXXX.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 20: He shops in here regularly. So obviously... it's, the area's a lovely area anyway, it deserves a better store than....

Interviewer: Yeah right yeah. This is, I mean, some Convenience Stores Ltd. stores, this is quite a good one. It's still probably one of their better ones here or?
Mr 20: No, not really no.

Interviewer: No?
Mr 20: It hasn't had any money spent on it for years and years and years.

Interviewer: It's a decent sort of size and location and?
Mr 20: Oh yeah, in terms of that kind of thing yeah.

Interviewer: It's quite a reasonable location and. Well, a very good location really.
Mr 20: Yeah yeah. So it's a case of.

Interviewer: So what were the problems before you got here?
Mr 20: You name it.

Interviewer: What it starting to slip and stuff? Slip and slide?
Mr 20: No. It had been run down for about 2 years, 3 years. They hadn't quite known what to do with it. How to improve it. It's like anything. It just gets put to one side doesn't it?

Interviewer: Yes yes.
Mr 20: And you focus of something else, and it gets put to one side. And all of a sudden, the Chairman buys the house next door and.

(laughter)

It's just like any company isn't it? You get Sainsburys, Tescos or whatever. They'll have a certain amount of stores which they do... their frontline stores I suppose. For want of a better word.

Interviewer: Yes yes.
Mr 20: Those stores will be, not see anybody, just tick over and that kind of thing. And other stores will be high profile and. Having the Chairman live locally. All of a sudden, the store's become very high profile.

Interviewer: Yeah. I bet it has. So, did he move here just before you came here or just after or?
Mr 20: He was a bit unhappy. There was a lot of noise around the store.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 20: Most of it, a lot of it created by him. Some of it created by government agencies. Defra and that type of people. Then, obviously he created a lot of noise, so.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: Better keep him quiet. He's been in this morning.

Interviewer: Oh really, right!
Mr 20: He's in about 4 or 5 times a week.

Interviewer: Right OK. So that's quite a pressure for you no doubt. OK. So turnover's pretty important for you. Is that how you measure your success do you think? Or is there other things?
Mr 20: That's a key measure of my success yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: Because like for like turnover is a key measure of whether you're improving the business or not isn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: There's only a certain amount you can do you know. You'll improve the business or you'll improve the like for like, 2 years maybe. In the 3rd year you might find it more difficult, unless there's an external influence.

Interviewer: Yes of course yes.
Mr 20: You've already.

Interviewer: You've already done your job basically by that stage yeah.
Mr 20: That's right. But, like for like turnover is the one that you can affect quickly. The same as, if you're talking about costs, you could affect the payroll quickly. Very quickly.

Interviewer: Yes yes.
Mr 20: Stock loss is another issue. You can't necessarily affect that as quickly because there might be underlying issues that you've got to resolve before you can get to that.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: But certainly like for like turnover. You can, you know. The hard part is always dealing with people isn't it?

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 20: Filling the baked beans up or filling the stock up isn't hard at all. It's the people.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: So you can actually improve.

Interviewer: Which people are you talking about, the customers and the staff or?
Mr 20: No, I'm talking about the staff.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 20: Yeah yeah.

Interviewer: OK. OK so it's a success factor, and you've got to try to motivate your staff and manage your staff.
Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you? What's underpinning all this? Is it your career thing? You've mentioned before that you weren't really interested in going for an area manager's job or anything like that? What's your main motivating factor do you think?
Mr 20: My main one is just having success. That's my main motivating factor. If I'm successful, and I'm growing, great!

Interviewer: You're growing?
Mr 20: I feel good. If I'm successful. And I try and make sure that everyone else who is working with me, they have some success. Even if it's only a tiny little bit.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 20: Because it's the most important thing that makes them then continue, to have success.

Interviewer: So it's not so much a career goal or whatever that you've got. Or an increase in wages? Or maybe even more a recognition as a good manager or?
Mr 20: Yeah. Being able to build a good team around me.

Interviewer: Yeah. And where does that lead you do you think? Does it lead anywhere or is it, you know, a factor in it's own right and therefore?
Mr 20: I think it's a factor in its own right. I'm happy doing that.

Interviewer: Yeah. Personnel turnover you've mentioned I see. Linking to motivation of staff here. Because of course presumably you mean by this, correct me if I'm wrong, that increase in motivation of staff reduces?
Mr 20: Personnel turnover.

Interviewer: Personnel turnover yeah OK. So why is that really important do you think?
Mr 20: Personnel turnover be kept low?

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 20: Confidence of the customers.

Interviewer: Confidence?
Mr 20: Of the customers.

Interviewer: Uh huh.
Mr 20: Because if they come in and they see the same people are here all the time, then they'll be happy. The store's running well, and the products they're buying are good. They can, they build up a little bit of a relationship with the staff.

Interviewer: OK. So it's relationships yeah. OK. And what does this lead to? Does it lead to these? Does it lead to anywhere here? Does it sort of link in to anything?
Mr 20: Not really. If you develop the staff and they're quite well motivated, and they're organised and that, you find that the turnover will stay fairly low anyway.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 20: Personnel turnover. But that in itself is a measure of, what I measure myself on.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 20: If I keep the turnover low, then it means that we are having success with the staff.

Interviewer: Yes yes.
Mr 20: If.. work, then they'd all be leaving wouldn't they?

Interviewer: Yeah certainly.
Mr 20: The grass is greener on the other side of the hill.

Interviewer: Yeah certainly. Especially in an area like this as well, where it's quite a rich area and whatever and people.
Mr 20: Yeah. But you have to, if you're looking at recruiting, you have to be quite selective. You can get a lot of, in areas like this you can get a lot of people applying for jobs. But you have to be really selected about the ones that you actually give jobs.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. So that, that success really. Is it success in relation to motivation, or motivation of staff, or?
Mr 20: Motivation of me really.

Interviewer: Yeah. And maybe developing is really quite key here as well isn't it? Because I suppose, if turnover's low it means that, it's a dilemma sometimes. Some people like being developed, some people don't like being developed. How do you stand on that one? How do you find?
Mr 20: You just move people round within the store, and develop them that way. If they want to be moved round within the store. If they want to have a plan, then you give them a plan. If they don't want a plan that's fine. I haven't got a problem with that.

Interviewer: Right OK. So. How do you find that out? Do they just tell you or do you just, at interview? Find out which ones want to move ahead, and which ones want to be deputy managers or whatever?

Mr 20: Yeah absolutely. You sit down and talk to them.

Interviewer: OK. So that's, presumably that developing of staff, does that lead to anywhere?
Mr 20: Again it leads to recognition that you build a good team around you.

Interviewer: So it's team building really?
Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. We've got another few issues in personal motivation. Can you tell me more about your personal motivation and how that links in? Why is personal motivation really really important?
Mr 20: If I feel I can affect things. If I don't feel like I can affect things, then my motivation will go down. And I have to then sit here, look at it, and think – Well what have I done wrong that I could have changed? How would I have done it differently so I can affect it? –

Interviewer: Uh huh. So it's important for you to, influence things? Control things?
Mr 20: Not so much, but certainly influence and change.

Interviewer: And do you feel as if you've got enough scope to do that? Or do you feel as if you've got sort of barriers to do that?
Mr 20: No no, they leave me pretty much alone to do it.

Interviewer: Yeah?
Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. So that personal motivation is important for you to influence and change things. And you don't feel as if you've got many barriers to that. What's your aim here? What's the goal in some respects?
Mr 20: What for me?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: To work 39 hours a week. And to go home and see my family.

(laughter)

Interviewer: OK. So it's sort of lifestyle bit really?
Mr 20: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Yeah. And it may be a little bit less hassle if you've got all these people managing out there? Or?
Mr 20: I shouldn't say this, but I'm quite good at getting underneath problems and resolving problems and finding out what they are. And if it does run too smoothly, I sometimes do tend to create problems, to...

(laughter)

But that's a personal thing that I'm aware of and. I can change that. But you know what it's like with some people. They sort it all out and it's running smoothly, and all of a sudden it's – What next? What can we do next? -

Interviewer: Yeah yeah, it's getting a bit too staid or. Do they move you around a bit?
Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: You've obviously moved to quite a key store here, and they wouldn't give this responsibility to anybody, by a long chalk, with the Chairman living a mile away!
Mr 20: Yeah, about every two, two and half years. My last store I stayed in three and half years. And I couldn't work out what was going wrong. And all of a sudden I looked at the diary. – I've been here three and a half years, that's it, got to go, got to go! – So yeah.

Interviewer: You just told them that you want to move or whatever or did they?
Mr 20: It was a mutual agreement. It wasn't working properly at that stage. You know. There's no point in getting all defensive and all that kind of stuff. If it's not working it's not working.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 20: So you sit down and say, - Well why is it not working, what's going wrong? – Get it resolved.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: It wasn't a disaster or anything like that. It just wasn't going as well as it could have been.

Interviewer: Right right. Can you tell me then about this personal leadership style? What do you think you've got as a personal leadership style? A lot of these things linking down here are, learning to improve, motivation type of things?
Mr 20: Yeah. I like to think that I can organise the people quite well, and they feel organised and they know exactly where they stand and what they're going to be doing over the next few weeks or months etc.

Interviewer: Yeah. So that's the sort of planning bit there is it?
Mr 20: Yeah. And I can lead them by example... customer service, saying hello to all the customers and making sure the customers are happy, and talking to the customers.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: You know, I have phone numbers of 5 customers and I phone them up every couple of weeks and ask them how their experience has been in the store, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Oh right right.

Mr 20: Also going round and shopping with the customers when they come in. If I get to know them. I don't walk up to them and say, - Can I walk round the store with you? - I tried that once, and it didn't work so well. But once you've seen a couple of people, and you've talked to them. Not built a relationship, but they know who you are.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 20: And then, go round and do their shopping with them. What they like, what they don't like, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Oh right.

Mr 20: That gives you an insight into what they actually want. ...Accompanied shops.. it works quite well.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what sort of things have you changed because of that do you think? What sort of products have you brought in that maybe you?

Mr 20: There's not a lot we can do about bringing products in. I'll be quite honest, I wouldn't want to bring much in here... Previous stores I've brought in different products and moved bits and pieces round but. It's like any company in food retail, it's pretty regimented what you can do and how you can do it.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 20: And it's mainly to give me an idea of what we can bring in when we're doing the re-fit... because then you want the sales to go up.

Interviewer: Yes right sure.

Mr 20: Looks easy doesn't it?

(laughter)

Interviewer: So, are you sort of, biting at the bit? Reigning back a bit to the 5%? And expecting it to go a bit later on?

Mr 20: Yeah, go up, yeah yeah.

Interviewer: Thank you. OK. So leading by example, and maybe getting this relationship, or knowing the customers very well is quite important I thin to you, seems to be?

Mr 20: Yes.

Interviewer: And you've also got this planning ahead bit, we've just talked about a minute ago, and staff know what they're doing.

Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then this sort of learning to improve. It all seems to come round into a bit of a circle here of inter-linked things?

Mr 20: Yeah it is very much so. Because once they start learning about what they're doing, and then they want to go and do other things. It's all about training as well isn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah right yes. And where does all that lead to do you think? Because we've talked about being a good manager and team builder. Does it lead to anything else? Leadership style?

Mr 20: Yeah but it helps them personally. They can grow can't they?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: If you're talking about youngsters, if you're talking about people that are more stable that are working here as a second career or a third career, it helps them enjoy their job. Feel they're being worthwhile and not just coming in to fill shelves or sit on the till.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, there's 2 types in some respects then. Is it sort of people who want to grow, want to develop, given the opportunity to do that? And there's other people who, maybe, want more of an interest type of aspect. They want an interest in their job.

Mr 20: That's right.

Interviewer: And they might not want to go ahead, but they want to have an interesting experience and stuff?

Mr 20: Yeah that sort of thing.

Interviewer: And service quality, you've also mentioned as being really important, and we have mentioned it in a few instances already.

Mr 20: I'm talking about customer service type thing there yeah?

Interviewer: Yes yes. Why is that really important?

Mr 20: Because it's so high profile nowadays. It's what the customers expect. They expect to come in and say hello and thank you or whatever, that's the norm. It's got to be the extra. The customer's an individual. And the extra bits. BUCKETS Convenience Stores Ltd. Uniform Clean Keen, the important one is Keen, it's the one over the top, it's the one quality that, you can measure if people are Clean, but top quality is Keen, trying to get that into them. Keen to serve the customers.

Interviewer: Yes yes.

Mr 20: The customers can tell the difference between somebody – Hello Bye – And somebody's whose actually!

Interviewer: Yes indeed.

Mr 20: It is quite important. It's very important actually. It's probably the biggest thing that can improve the service and the reputation in the area. Which then improves everything else doesn't it?

Interviewer: Yes yes.

Mr 20: Especially in a local store like this.

Interviewer: Yes, what do you call it, do you call it keenness? Keen's quite a good one. Just being more engaged basically I suppose is it? Rather than just running through the motions?

Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: I mean I tell this to my students. Really, you can tell everybody to say – Have a nice day – But of course they won't do it for a start. And also the customers don't actually believe them do they?

Mr 20: No. That's right. They've got to believe that you actually want to serve them. Got to be individuals. That's what I keep telling them. Because we do BUCKETS but we do it. The thing we've done ourselves here, is to raise everybody's awareness of customer service, and it's very simple. It's not about, it's nothing, how do you put it? We're not giving them extra things to do or anything like that. And the meeting, the first, the BUCKETS meeting, the first one is the motivational meeting.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 20: It's where you, it's like pantomime really. Every time you say BUCKETS of service they've got to shout BUCKETS of service back.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr 20: Again. And we do an icebreaker where, we do BUCKETS of service. And you split them into teams. And they have different coloured letters. And all they have to do is put all the coloured letters together then work out what it was.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: Again, it's all about giving them something to hang on about BUCKETS means service. You know. And being polite to customers and talking to them.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

(interruption)

Mr 20: And it's about making them. If you want to get the team to respond to something, you've got to give them lots of interaction with it haven't you?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: Otherwise they forget it. In 3 months. So during the meetings, BUCKETS of service. The way I do it, we do it, I do it with a lady. So I do one bit and she does the next. And I do another bit... works out very well actually.

Interviewer: And is this something you got going in here?

Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: And is it company policy or is it something you've?

Mr 20: Some of the other stores are doing it now. But it's something we started in here.

Interviewer: Oh right. OK. So this keenness and interaction. And relationship building which is all sort of linked together in some respects. And this is, you think is, really sort of one of the major things that's improved things here do you think? And why turnover is increasing and?

Mr 20: Yeah. Establishing standards really, just establishing standards. That's the standard we're going to work at.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: Because you go through different stages don't you?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: That's the standard we're going to work at, which is, which wasn't really in your stuff, but you set a standard, work at that, work to that standard for the first 3 months. And unfortunately if people don't want to work to that standard, if somebody leaves they leave in the end.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 20: A lot of store managers think – Oh they've left! - You know, it's not about that. If they don't want to be part of the team, they don't want to be part of the team. There's no point in worrying about it.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 20: It's about setting the standard, and then when you've achieved that standard, raising the standard, you go to the next level...

Interviewer: Yeah. You mentioned knowledge of customers being important?

Mr 20: Yeah, it's important for me. It's like the company... and phoning them up and all that kind of stuff. So that I know if we're achieving the standards that I want.

Interviewer: I see. So it's something that you think of. And I can see that you do extras that some other people probably don't do in that regard.

Mr 20: I don't know. That's the way I do it myself. The measurements that I've got. Because I can see if... the availability is there, or the store's (interference)... see what the customers think.

Interviewer: Right yeah. So their perspective is very important to you. It is very difficult to measure these things.

Mr 20: Yeah. So you need to do something where you can measure it. Then you can write a comment card, give the customer comment, all that kind of stuff. But you probably only get negative things on there.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 20: You don't get positive things that, you can go back to your people and say, - Oh by the way, I hear you were superb with that... thanks very much - You know.

Interviewer: Yeah. Tend to.. look at it as a customer complaint sort of thing, rather than anything else.

Mr 20: And yeah you want. Again if you're team are doing well, you want to be able to pat on the back. It's the old thing isn't it, you only criticise you don't praise. You've got to find vehicles or ways that you can get information about things they have done right.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 20: But not only that. They know that I'm talking to different customers. When the customers come in, it's quite a good motivater.

Interviewer: That's right yes. True. Difficult to predict. Yes you're right. Can I ask you about this personal management style and stuff that you've got here? Where do you think it comes from? Is it things that you've learnt in different places? Or is there one particular source do you think it comes from or? ... in the past for you?

Mr 20: I did 10 years is reserve forces, and some of that, and I've done quite a lot of sailing as well. And that's about team work. A lot of it. I spent 2 years in the Army and 8 years in the Royal Navy. And the Navy was more about team work, and working as a team. Being open and honest. If you've got a problem, tell everybody you've got a problem.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: Don't hide it. You know. And that's very much what they do. They don't hide it, if there's a problem they tell you, there's a problem. And I was lucky enough to go on a leadership course in the Wye Valley for about a week. And that was, probably about 12 or 13 years ago.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: And they had a lot of things you know, about, Loser's Loop. Being a victim and that kind of stuff. Getting yourself out of it. A lot about team building. Because I did that so long ago, it's one of those things that you don't believe it. Then all of a sudden, if you've moved from store to store, you can see it happening, and all of a sudden you realise how effective it can be. Making sure that you've got the right, you understand what's happening within a team and that.. kind of stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: And not getting upset. That's a normal thing that would happen. There's no point in getting upset about it. That's what normally happens.

Interviewer: What normally happens sorry?

Mr 20: Well in terms of team building. If you're talking about teams. It's like first of all they start working really well don't they. And then the next stage is, you might get a couple of people that fall out, but they worked together so well. And you wonder – What's going on? - And you might over-react to that, but that's just part of the normal formation of the team isn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 20: So you've just got to understand that. And as long as you're aware of it. Just make sure that they do get on.

Interviewer: Have you experienced different forms of management when you were maybe further down in your career and stuff?

Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: And found that they did work or didn't work or?

Mr 20: Yeah. It's quite interesting. If you're talking about line managing for me.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: Line managers who work really close to you and, control what you're doing. Nowadays, it doesn't seem to work as well as. You need to give people the ability to make decisions for themselves. Because if they've got to make decisions, then they'll actually, they might not make good decisions at first, but they will make good decisions eventually.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 20: And when I've had people who've tried to make decisions for me all the time..... it's like.. over that...

Interviewer: You don't like it yourself?

Mr 20: No no. But that's personal for me. Somebody who is a bit younger. Less experienced, might need that kind of support. A different manager, some that aren't learning, some that are learning, some that think they're doing a good job, but aren't necessarily doing a good job...

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 20: And don't seem to be aware of it. And you know, there's times that I haven't done a good job.

Interviewer: And how do you recognise these people? Do you implement different strategies to deal with them do you think or? To recognise them?

Mr 20: Yeah you have to adapt your style.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you think you've got one style here particularly? Or do you think you've got, to different people, different?

Mr 20: No. Different types of people, different styles. It depends on how much they respond in the first place... If they respond really well to a certain level of management, if you say, talking about uniforms for example, really basic, name badge and uniform. If somebody responds to, like they bring in their uniform, they've got pride in their uniforms, their shirt's always tucked in etc. You know that generally the stuff, the rest of the stuff, is going to be pretty OK.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: If you just want to measure it like that. Somebody who forgets that uniform and doesn't bring their name badge in, you know that probably, there is other issues that you're not picking up on yet.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: So you'd have to measure them more closely than you would the person who has. As an example. You know. That's one way I'd measure people, and I do measure people, whether they've got their uniform on.

Interviewer: Yes right. And in different goals they've got and different?

Mr 20: Yeah. Yeah. Because people then are responding to me, or to the way I'm managing them. Then I can give them more responsibility if they want it. If they don't want it that's fine.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: But they have to take a certain amount of responsibility. If I let them get away with – I only do this bit and I don't do anything else! – There has to be a certain amount of multi-skilling. And I had somebody, he left a little while ago. But we did a lot of training. And one of the things was, we really got into multi-skilling. And he – It's not for me! I want to come here and I just want to do this thing! - Well that's fine, but it's not really what the store's about. It's not really what we're about.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 20: And again. It's like raising the standards isn't it?

Interviewer: It is yeah. Is that flexibility pretty important for you? And presumably it's less hassle for you if you get multi-skilled people?
Mr 20: Yeah not only that. How do you put it? If you're open with people and you've got people trained, and they're flexible and.. stuff, then they do, they work really well together, because they know they're doing a good job.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 20: And it's very easy for me, here it was very easy for me. My last job was fairly easy as well. Because the standard, the base for that kind of thing was low, and the managers perhaps thought, it was more important to keep the shelves filled up. But to worry about the people, sort the people out, and they will fill the shelves!

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 20: You know, it's that type of thing.

Interviewer: Yes it is yeah. So you think, if you get the people right, if you get the team right, then you can do all these other things that you maybe have got as a goal at the end of the day or whatever it is?
Mr 20: Yeah.

Interviewer: Right. Thank you very much. I think we've covered.

End of interview

Interview with Respondent 21 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 26 June 2003

- Interviewer: OK, you say that personal motivation is the, one of the key factors?
Mr 21: Yes.
- Interviewer: Can you tell me why that is important to you?
Mr 21: It is important because my personal motivation obviously has an effect on how I achieve my job and how I manage the store. So it is the key to me achieving that in the store and obviously me achieving in the store is through the staff, which is why I have gone on to the motivation of staff next.
- Interviewer: OK, why is motivation of staff really important to you?
Mr 21: As I say the personal motivation of myself trickles down to the staff, yes, also obviously I have got to encourage their motivation and of course you get much more out of people if they are motivated for the job they are doing and they are more willing to actually, to give more to the business and to their job.
- Interviewer: Why is that really key, why is giving more to business then what your job really key, what is the sort of end result to this:
Mr 21: Well at the end of the day the happier they are at work the more productive they are going to be and also, as I have put down here, leads into these other things that are key to making the business a better place, a better place for the customer and more profitable at the end of the day.
- Interviewer: So you see profitability as the sort of end result of ...?
Mr 21: Yes exactly yes, obviously it is gradual, but at the end of the day it is profitability that will improve, yes.
- Interviewer: And why is this profitability really key, why is it really important to you personally?
Mr 21: Well it is the measure of success isn't it, for the store and for myself, my job really. Obviously the company will want to see nice happy people in their stores and stores running nicely but they are also looking for the profit and it is partially what motivates myself as well, because it is about achieving at the end of the day.
- Interviewer: You sort of set this goal for yourself as, what sort of goals do you set?
Mr 21: At the moment I am more concentrating on getting the store right and people motivated and all that, but yes, the end result is profitability and I will be happy when I reach the profitability that I want.
- Interviewer: Would you see that as, it is a goal for you, but is there something behind it, like you know, career orientation or is it, what exactly is ...?
Mr 21: Yes, I mean I am very ambitious and what drives me is challenges basically and me succeeding and getting through them and going on to the next challenge and as I say I am very ambitious so I want to get ahead in the company and do well.
- Interviewer: Can I ask you, roughly what do you think you are aiming at in that direction, what would you, what would you consider your ideal achievement to be in the company?
Mr 21: I would be happy if I make it to Head Office before I am 30, would be nice!

Interviewer: Oh I see you have got quite, a good strong goal?

Mr 21: A hefty goal, yes!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Very good, excellent. You also talk about planning ahead as being important to you?

Mr 21: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about that, why is that important to you?

Mr 21: Yes sure. Basically planning ahead is the key to actually achieving what you want to achieve, because if you don't actually sit down and decide what you want to achieve and when you want to achieve it by and with who and all that, then you very often find it doesn't get done and it is forgotten about and you know things don't get done. So planning really is the key to actually achieving.

Interviewer: Do you believe that things are predictable enough to plan for them or do you think that is...?

Mr 21: It is an ongoing process in a store manager's role it is an ongoing process of actually analysing data and information to actually come up with some plans.

(Mr H takes a telephone call)

Interviewer: Planning, you said that you thought it was an ongoing process analysing data and information.

Mr 21: That's right, so you can make an accurate plan for the future.

Interviewer: And do you think you find things predictable enough to do that?

Mr 21: Well no, changes are happening all the time but the only way really to plan ahead in this sort of business is by your previous 4 to 8 weeks data on customers and sales and so to speak. That is how you, it is the only way we really can plan ahead. I mean obviously with certain things like new promotions and new products and things you can use your initiative and predict how you think things will go, but in terms of actually just general operations of the store you have just got to predict using data that you have already got for the last, you know few weeks.

Interviewer: So what is the data that you usually analyse and what do you think are the main results of this planning are?

Mr 21: I mainly analyse sales data and what we call productivity, about when the sales are going through the tills and you know, how much we have taken and all that and wastage figures, wages ...

Interviewer: And where do you think, why is all this stuff really important to you? You are planning, I can see you have got lots of data coming in here, you are planning ahead, what do you think the main benefit is from this planning?

Mr 21: It is control of the business really it makes you able to actually control, because if you don't plan basically you end up just kind of running around like a headless chicken, you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 21: Where as it prioritises your time and you can give out jobs to staff accordingly, you know, so it prioritises their time really, makes them more efficient.

Interviewer: So it is an efficiency type of thing?

Mr 21: That's right.

Interviewer: Staff development or developing staff, do you think that is really ...?

(Announcement)

Mr 21: Really that goes both ways because developing staff also motivates them.

Interviewer: Yes right, yes OK, yes I can understand that, for some people presumably?

Mr 21: Yes, I suppose not all yes!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Also motivation of staff to personnel turnover, how are they related?

Mr 21: It is more likely that they are going to do a better job for you and therefore satisfy what I want from them, but also satisfy themselves and actually be happy in their job, so they are less likely to leave or I am less likely to sack them!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: So presumably, it is an increase in motivation of staff leads to a decrease in turnover, if I am correct in that, is that what you are saying?

Mr 21: No, no, no, sorry have I made a mistake there? Yes an increase in both, that is what I should be saying, an increase in motivation of staff in ... No, no, no, just a minute, yes, so it is a decrease to turnover, sorry yes that is different, yes, sorry.

Interviewer: OK, that is fine, great. We don't get many minus' I was quite intrigued by that one. So you see that is a key and you see also linking into service quality?

Mr 21: That's right. A key to me is if you have got motivated happy staff, they are going to actually, you know, without actually you being up their back and telling them things, they are going to automatically be friendlier to the customers and serve those better and be more flexible for me and be more willing to do jobs for me and do overtime, so to speak, and you know, once they are delegated a task they are going to be more receptive to me delegating tasks to them.

Interviewer: And presumably your, is to get, as well?

Mr 21: That's right.

Interviewer: Personnel we have talked about a tiny bit. Why is that key is it mostly key because you have just intimated that it is, you are sort of building a team, or it is easier for you if you get, staff?

Mr 21: That's right.

Interviewer: What is the major benefit to you, do you think?
Mr 21: Well at the end of the day, if you have got staff that have been with you a long time, again they are generally going to be happier, but also you can, when you are developing them and training them you use them as a resource and they have got a lot of kind of time and training in there that they are using for you. There is nothing worse then trying to build a team of staff to do what you want and they keep leaving because you are having to constantly train up new people and that obviously takes time and effort and money from the company in man hours.

Interviewer: So do you think that is why that is really important to you is because of this profitability or is it because?
Mr 21: Yes.

Interviewer: You are sucked into retraining people or your deputies are or whatever?
Mr 21: That's right.

Interviewer: And also it is profitability because you have to spend time and effort to do that and ...?
Mr 21: That's right and not spending time on other things, yes.

Interviewer: What sort of other things would you spend time on that you get sucked into retraining people, what sort of things do you basically have to, do you miss out on if you were doing that?
Mr 21: Specifically, I don't know, just spending less time with the rest of the staff and keeping the store running really, yes.

Interviewer: So just managing basically?
Mr 21: Yes, just managing and monitoring, you know, what is going on. Because that is what a manager's job really is, is monitoring how things are working and how improvements can be made.

Interviewer: OK that is fine, I think, I have got quite a bits of information there and just sum up what you think about these things. So you see, that your personal motivation feeds into motivation of staff and the staff are the key things to get all these things right that are required to operate the store?
Mr 21: That's right yes.

Interviewer: You see mostly the end result because being, you know, happy customers, happy staff and the profit side going well as well?
Mr 21: That's right, yes.

Interviewer: And you are an ambitious sort of person and you have got some, and you like challenges and you try to meet those challenges and hope to get good career development because of that sort of thing?
Mr 21: Yes.

Interviewer: Anything I have missed out of that?
Mr 21: No.

Interviewer: So that sort of sums it up really?
Mr 21: No, I think that does sum it up, yes.
Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Interview with Respondent 22 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 4 October 2002, 1pm

- Interviewer: OK. The first item you mentioned that was really important was service quality. Can you tell me why you think that is really important to you?
Mr 22: Obviously being a smaller local shop, we like to give the customers a good service, and like to keep them coming back really.
- Interviewer: OK. So repeat customers. So why is that, repeat customers bit, important to you?
Mr 22: Because it's a fairly sort of local smallish community, obviously if we lose some of the customers we've got, there's not really a sort of mass influx behind them to make a replacement.
- Interviewer: True. OK. Why is that issue really important to you personally?
Mr 22: Well. To maintain the standards, sales, and general outlook of the store.
- Interviewer: And why is that important to you?
Mr 22: To keep us in business here.
- Interviewer: OK. You're referring to your job, or everybody's job or?
Mr 22: Just the shop in general really.
- Interviewer: Yeah. OK and why is it important to you that the shop maintains its good turnover, good feel to it?
Mr 22: To keep a profitable shop for the company.
- Interviewer: OK. And why is that really important to you? Is it for your career or is it..?
Mr 22: Yeah partly for my career, and just for the company in general.
- Interviewer: And you feel committed to the company?
Mr 22: Yeah. Well I've been with them for the vast majority of time since I left school so..
- Interviewer: OK yeah. You're a very experienced guy I can see. Right. So you're committed to the company and you think, are you trying to go for a bigger store or, are you trying to develop your career in a particular way or?
Mr 22: Well I'm just concentrating on developing this store at the moment because chances are I'll probably be at this store for at least another 18 months.
- Interviewer: Yes OK. So I can see you've been at this store for...?
Mr 22: I've only been in this store six months, and you tend to be in a store, unless anything unforeseen happens or whatever, for a couple of years at least.
- Interviewer: OK yeah. So you want to build it up, trying to make a good job of it. And what's the payback for you do you think? What are you looking for?
Mr 22: Well obviously if I'm successful in making a go of this one then in a couple of years time I should get moved on to a bigger one somewhere yeah.

Interviewer: OK. And so that's important for your career, you want to be promoted, you want to do good or whatever. Why is that really important to you do you think?
What reasons are there for that?

Mr 22: Just general commitment to the work really.

Interviewer: OK. You enjoy your job?

Mr 22: Yeah most of the time yeah.

Interviewer: OK. And maybe sort of, your wellbeing, you feel good about it and...?

Mr 22: Yeah well obviously the happier you are with something, the better you're making of it so..

Interviewer: OK. Thank you very much. You also mention planning ahead as being important to you. Can you tell me the reasons behind that.

Mr 22: Well obviously a need for forward planning with up and coming promotions. Like if when I get the sheets I don't act on it, then when the promotion starts and I haven't planned it then I'm not going to have the stock, or I'll have some stock but it will sell out very quickly.

Interviewer: OK. Stock. OK.

Mr 22: And staffing obviously. Because it's a fairly small store and we haven't got a huge number of staff, so when holidays are happening we need to change people's hours and that a bit.

Interviewer: And have you tried without planning ahead very much?

Mr 22: I did when I first got here yeah. Because I'd been an assistant manager of a large Convenience Stores Ltd. store for about 2 years, and so I'd never worked at all in a store of this size. So yeah I did fall a flat when I first got here, I just wasn't planning.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 22: I mean I'd been doing it in the store I was at before. Then I came here and I think everything sort of...

Interviewer: It was so small you didn't have to sort of thing?

Mr 22: I think that was probably it. I thought this will be easy sort of thing. Got 3 sort of promotion areas as opposed to sort of 10. But yeah just did nothing at all. At all.

(laughter)

Interviewer: OK. So as far as stock and staff, is that because... do these fit into making sure the sales are OK and all that sort of stuff?

Mr 22: Yeah.

Interviewer: But also. Are there aspects about hassle that you get? Or? You're the manager and you should plan ahead and...?

Mr 22: No, I just generally think that to avoid any hassle you need to plan ahead as much as possible really.

Interviewer: OK. What things do you think you can plan for and what things do you think you can't plan for? Some things presumably are reasonably predictable and some things are not predictable. Which things do you think they are predictable then, and what things do you think aren't predictable?

Mr 22: Well obviously a lot of our trade is weather orientated which isn't always very predictable.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr 22: They can tell you one thing but there's no guarantee you're going to get it.

Interviewer: Yeah. They don't seem to look out the window very often do they?

Mr 22: No no.

(laughter)

Interviewer: OK. So the weather's pretty unpredictable. What other things really knock you off course? Can you predict the success of a new product, or promotions or...?

Mr 22: A lot of the promotions you can fairly well ascertain how they're going to go yeah. New products is obviously a bit of a different one because obviously, if you've never actually sold it before, you're not really too sure on how that one's going to go.

Interviewer: OK. So you plan for staff and stock, that seems reasonable OK. What sort of data do you get? Do you use a lot of data here to plan for stock or whatever? Do you do that or does head office do it?

Mr 22: Head office just sort of send us lists of what is on promotion and that. Then we order it, order in for what we need, that sort of thing.

Interviewer: OK. So you feel as though you can plan for quite a few of these things that are really quite important to you?

Mr 22: Yeah. Most of the key things you can plan for.

Interviewer: And that makes it less hassle for you, and a profitable store and so on?

Mr 22: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Next one you've got is control of input costs. Why do you think that's important to you?

Mr 22: Obviously the more control I've got of what I'm buying in, the less waste I'm going to incur. Better availability.

Interviewer: OK. Availability in what sense? Incurring the costs and...?

Mr 22: Well. If I try to cut back too much to save money, then I'm going to end up out of stock I think.

Interviewer: OK. Less waste. So that's maybe a criteria measure on is it?

Mr 22: Yeah. It has come up a bit, company focus on sales and wastage and that so.

Interviewer: OK. So you feel as if... ur well... Does this affect bonuses or does it affect your career in the future or?

Mr 22: Just keeps head office off my back really.

Interviewer: Less hassle then.

(laughter)

Mr 22: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK.

Mr 22: It can slightly affect your bonuses but mainly it just to give yourself less grief.

Interviewer: So if you have less hassle, why is that important to you as a manager do you think, what's your view of management that takes that view?

Mr 22: I think it's always best to have a sort of good rapport with your boss. You don't see them that often but. I suppose if you're not doing very well I could probably see them quite regular but, on average I don't see them very often. So if you can keep a better relationship with them then, it just keeps you feeling more motivated as opposed to them coming down or phoning you up and ur, giving you what for.

Interviewer: Yeah. I can imagine. Thank you. Product promotions you actually mentioned this as really important to you. Why are they really key do you think?

Mr 22: Just a good money winner.

Interviewer: Yeah. So they increase turnover and..?

Mr 22: Yeah increase people coming in. Sales. Obviously we don't actually pick the promotions in the store so, it does depend on how good the promotions are as to whether it works so.

Interviewer: What sort of data have you got on your customers that you feel as if you can predict those, just a general feel or do you use your sales and....

Mr 22: Obviously on all the fresh foods we've got stock and order books so we know exactly what we're selling all the time. Grocery ones are reasonably easy to predict to start with, then obviously once you've had a few days sales you can sort of monitor from there and then either wrap it or cut it back.

Interviewer: OK. So you'd know roughly by just doing a trial and error as well?

Mr 22: Yeah. Certainly gauge it for the first sort of half the promotion, and then sort of cut it or raise it after that.

Interviewer: OK brilliant. And I think we've sort of covered those issues because it's sorts of dealing with profitability and everything right...

Mr 22: Yeah.

Interviewer: Personal motivation is next. Why is that really of key importance to you?

Mr 22: I just feel as if I don't come to work feeling motivated or wanting to get this done or that done, then if I haven't got the motivation, people just... you know I'll probably end up sitting out the way OK, and people will just do their own things and nothing's actually going to get achieved really.

Interviewer: Yeah OK. So it's influence on staff really. OK and why is that important to you? Is it partly... I can understand it feeding into a lot of the other things we've been talking about. Are there other things that you feel as if...

Mr 22: I think if you're motivated your happier.

Interviewer: And that's important to you?

Mr 22: Yeah. Basically if you're happier, chances are your staff are going to be happier, and it'll probably keep your customers happier.

Interviewer: Yeah. And I noticed you put in staff development there as sort of, in the same sort of mode, because you're making sure they're happy as well aren't you?

Mr 22: That's it. I mean if I'm not motivated to get something done then I'm probably less likely to get them developed and get something done as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. And do they like this development sort of view?

Mr 22: Yeah I think so. A couple of them have sort of said that they're learning more and getting on better now so...

Interviewer: Right. And presumably as you've got experience of working in quite a big store, you can bring that to bear on what they might see for the future...

Mr 22: That's right. Yeah yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Thank you very much that's great. Can you tell a little bit about some of these links that you consider to be very important?

Mr 22: Yeah right. Obviously the more support we have from head office then internally the more efficient we'll be. If head office aren't communicating information with us then, a lot of the time we're not going to know what's going on within different respects of the company. So that's fairly important. Because one time we were lacking a bit on communication and that from head office but, things have got a lot better now.

Interviewer: What sort of things are you thinking about that they were not telling you?

Mr 22: Just.... We always seemed to be expected to know a lot of the things that were going on, I can't remember particular instances but I know everybody throughout the company at one time was thinking that nobody knows anything. But now you are getting better support. Any problems you get in store you just phone up and it's dealt with within a very short space of time. Whether it be something on the PC, tills, building.... So I mean yeah, the more support you get the more effective you can be.

Interviewer: Yeah. And do they give you any sort of information about promotions that are going to come up, and things that they're planning for the future and this sort of stuff?

Mr 22: Yeah all that sort of thing yeah.

Interviewer: So that improves....

Mr 22: Yeah you 've got a sort of hint of what you're doing before you need to be doing it so...

Interviewer: So, and presumably that helps with a bit of planning?

Mr 22: That's right yeah. If they tell us what's going to be happening then we can start planning for it.

Interviewer: OK great. What are the key themes do you think that you can make links with... planning ahead, control of input costs. How do you think they're linked? With the waste bit of it you were talking about?

Mr 22: Yeah that's right. I mean if I can plan sort of say a week's orders and that in advance, obviously I could review it later on in the week, but it's me with more of an idea of what I'm ordering in. Like if I plan it out for the week, work it out that it's going cost... so I'm buying 6 thousand pounds, and I'm only going to sell like 3 on that department, then I know I've made a bit of an error so, Whereas if you like tend to just rush in and do it every day, you might well end up ordering that 6 thousand.

Interviewer: OK I see. Right OK. And targeting and growth markets? What growth markets do you think are important there? Any lines recently or?
Mr 22: Yeah. Since I've been here I've concentrated a lot on the fresh foods which as a company is the way we're pushing at the moment. And the percentage increase of fresh foods this year has been quite big yeah.

Interviewer: Bigger than this 2% as an overall figure?
Mr 22: As an overall figure yeah.

Interviewer: Very good yeah.
Mr 22: Yeah. So it's targeting specific areas of the shop. Again promotional lines, keeping them.

Interviewer: Do you think it's because you've experienced a big store before that you maybe would know more about sales...?
Mr 22: I think so. I've also. I've spent a lot of time in a store before the last one I was at, on fresh food departments so...

Interviewer: OK. So you feel that you're specialist in that area then?
Mr 22: Yeah. That's probably one of my key areas yeah.

Interviewer: OK right. I see what you're saying. And then you link in to product promotions. Because... presumably you know more about the product than most or..?
Mr 22: Yeah I mean you do find that you get the same sort of promotions come round every now and then, so you can relate back to how the last one went. Generally yeah, if you know your market trends then you can get better promotion deals going.

Interviewer: OK great. And personal motivation I think we've mentioned. Linking with promotions and brand image. How do you feel that's linked together?
Mr 22: I think if we can promote our brands as on the promotions of quality products, then people sort of buy them and say, yeah Convenience Stores Ltd. has got some good brands going and, pick it up from there. Because obviously they're the profit lines, our own label. They're obviously not expensive so you're not making quite so much turnover, but you're making more profit so..

Interviewer: Uh huh. You're relating this to you... the own label type of stuff that Convenience Stores Ltd. do?
Mr 22: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK great. I think that covers a lot. It's given me an idea of how you're thinking and how you relate things together and everything.
Thank you.

Interview with Respondent 23 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 13 June 2003, 2pm

- Interviewer: You've put down service quality as the most important factor. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?
Mr 23: Because our main point is our customers. And service towards our customers. If you don't give good service to the customers then you don't get them to come back.
- Interviewer: OK. Why is this repeat business really important to you do you think?
Mr 23: Because if we didn't have the repeat clientele, you'd actually take no money.
- Interviewer: So it's profitability is really quite important?
Mr 23: It is yeah. If you're not getting the customers then in the end, there's only one thing that would happen, your store would close down.
- Interviewer: OK.
Mr 23: Because they don't just simply chuck money for the sake of chucking money.
- Interviewer: Yeah. Why is this sort of, to maintain this really important to you? Is it to do with your career structure, or to your goals or?
Mr 23: Yeah because for instance, you are based on what you do within a store. So say for instance, if I had 10 customer complaints a week, against my name all the time. Or poor service when people come in, well that would go against yourself, go against your record, go against your store.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: So it's pride really as well, and it's where you want to progress yourself. So it's all about progression as well.
- Interviewer: OK. Planning ahead. Why is that really important to you?
Mr 23: Well. I feel planning ahead's like, very important. If you don't plan ahead and look into the future. Say for instance, if you don't plan for say Easter.
- Interviewer: Uh huh.
Mr 23: If you don't plan ahead for that, it'll come to then and you'll have an uplift of 30% in customers, but you'll only have the same staff in here. So there's only one thing what will happen there. You'll have empty shelves and poor service, straight away. Because you haven't actually planned ahead for the events.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: Or planned ahead for rotas and things like that. To make sure you've got the staff in the business.
- Interviewer: Is it to? So it's partly this one we just talked about. Service quality and profitability and, backing up your career?
Mr 23: Yeah. It's all about planning to make sure that everything runs smoothly. One to make your job easier. Two to make it better for the customers. Three to make it easier for the staff as well. So if you've planned it that they've all got, there's always people there to do the job. So they haven't got to do their job and 2 other peoples' jobs. So in the end it makes for a happier environment.

Interviewer: Uh huh certainly. Why is that happiness really very important?

Mr 23: Well it's always. I think people work better in a happy environment. So it increases then productivity with the store. If you've got someone whose really unhappy, and doesn't want to be here, turning up for their shift, they're not going to work for you. Which then again pushes onto other people. They've got to do twice as much, so then that will make them unhappy. So in the end, it will have the old domino effect.

Interviewer: What do you think the end result would be? Is it sort of? How does it influence you personally do you think?

Mr 23: It just. Yeah. Everything falls apart. It could be anything from the customers then being unhappy, to yourself being unhappy. In the end it will all come back to me.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 23: Which then makes me unhappy. Which. I don't come to work to be unhappy really. I like a nice friendly environment. Where everyone's doing their work and gets on with it. I think you have a happy environment, people will work for you anyway, you don't need to keep, I would say like, nagging at people.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 23: If they all know, and it's all planned in what they're going to do. They'll do the jobs, and everyone is then a lot happier. And it's a nice environment to actually work in. Which reflects, it can reflect in your sales. And the customers do like a happy environment I must admit. They don't want to be coming in and listening to everyone.

Interviewer: Yeah true.

Mr 23: Their moans. I'm sure a lot of people have their own.

Interviewer: Little moans here and there.

Mr 23: No moans! They don't want to come in listening to that while they're out doing their shopping really.

Interviewer: And your personal motivation. Why is that really important to you do you think? You mentioned some of it here.

Mr 23: I do. Like you need personal motivation. If I'm not motivated, I don't see why people below me should be motivated to do the work. I've got to be motivated. I've got to show people. Because people, like for instance look at me and think – No chance, if he ain't doing it, I ain't doing it! – It's a bit like, you are, say like the image they're looking at.

Interviewer: It's the leadership bit really is it?

Mr 23: Yeah. You are the leader yeah. You've got to lead by example really. That's what I always think. If you lead by example. Say for instance I go out there and help them do certain things, they think well, - He does that – or – He does that, I'll go and do something else. - I can do it so.

Interviewer: Have you found people not doing that? Other managers when you were a deputy manager, and it didnt really work very well, and it's obviously something you've?

Mr 23: I've actually learnt always, the people I've always been under have taught me well, because of their leadership qualities. I always say I've learnt off the best 3 managers who used to be around about 5 years ago.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 23: And now 2 of them are actually higher up, and one of them's like, around in my area, so that's good. I have respect for what he. Because I know he's been there and done that.

Interviewer: Did they have different leadership styles do you think, these 3 people or do you think?
Mr 23: Yeah they did. Like 2 of them were more aggressive, and one of them was more, just totally planning. Focused on planning. So I sort of learnt, - I'll be friendly with you but, you know you've still got to get the work done. - There's a difference between being friendly and not doing anything. And being friendly and get the work done. I always know. This one. He now actually works for Morrisons. He used to be really really friendly, but there again, if the work weren't being done, you'd soon know about it. Because he'd be the most like - You should be doing it like this! - Like - This is how to do it, if you do it like this! - He'd come out. And he'd show you. He'd say - This is how I want it. - Or - Well you're not going 'til this is done! - Because you know, on another day, you could have done it.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: So you can learn a lot from. I think it's all about who you've been under, say, when you were assistant manager. Because you learn off the people above you.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: I learnt that there's a lot of different techniques. You can have the calm nicely nicely approach, or you can have the - Oh come on, get on and do it! - In other words you can then change from being his mate, to being his boss. You've got to split the two.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: Which I feel, well I think is very important. Because sometimes they'll say, - God you're grumpy! - But it's not you being grumpy, it's like you're saying - Well no, the work ain't being done, this has now got to be done! - It's being friendly, friendly when things are going smooth, it's when it's going, can you change it when it's not going so well? That's the.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 23: I think I learnt well off, I find off the people, I had good teachers.

Interviewer: Have you taken bits of all of them do you think or, mostly from one approach that you thought was?
Mr 23: Well, my first manager was a good manager, but I found that he was a bit aggressive. The second one had an aggressive streak but didn't use it a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: And he was more of a grafter so. It's just learning the different. So yeah. Really, I'd say I've taken a bit and, the last one, was just constant planning. I've never seen anyone plan so much.

Interviewer: And did it work?

Mr 23: Yeah. Absolutely. He was so precise like. He'd walk around, like the littlest fiddly things, you'd think. But that's what he'd put you on, and he'd have a brilliant memory. But then he'd go back and he'd plan. You go up and you just see all his planning, and he'd love it. PC mad as well so.

(laughter)

You'd get loads of planning. It was good to work for him.

Interviewer: It worked yeah.
Mr 23: He's now higher up in the company, and it just shows. His planning was good.

Interviewer: Yeah right.
Mr 23: You wouldn't see him out, I always thought, doing a lot. But. Then you looked at what he was doing.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: And see his plans. And you wouldn't have to worry about well. Who is doing that in 2 weeks time? Already done. Already know who is doing that. Christmas would be sorted out at the end of October or something.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 23: Things like that.

Interviewer: Yeah right yeah.
Mr 23: Which when you look at it. The earlier you plan things, is better for yourselves and better for, for instance, all your staff, they all know what they're doing in 6 weeks time.

Interviewer: So do you plan now do you think?
Mr 23: I do try and. If I know an event's coming up, I try and get it organised as soon as possible. Like when we had to count all our grocery. Like this time, I told them 8 weeks before it was happening. To let them all know that weekend, that Sunday, they have to come into work. It's part of their contract. I like to let them know. As soon as I know.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 23: It's like anything. Everyone likes to do stuff when they're not at work, just like to tell them early you know, so. It's interesting. It's working under different people.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: I think if people only work under one person.

Interviewer: Yeah that's I suppose more problematic yeah.

Mr 23: Yeah, they need to. Like I had someone here, assistant manager. Because he'd been in here 3 years, he'd worked in here before and then come up to an assistant manager. He'd never work in another store. So within 3 months I got him transferred out to Stoney Stratford. Which is only up the road. I said – You need to go into a different environment. A different sort of store, different people. - And he's learned loads now.

Interviewer: Yeah.

(laughter)

Mr 23: But yeah I think. Definitely personal motivation. You've got to be so. If you're not motivated, so much below you can go wrong.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 23: Because in the end, they look at you, you are the manager. What I always say – You should know everything. - So you've got to be motivated by it I think.

Interviewer: What do you think your personal leadership style is then? Your leadership style?

Mr 23: I would say, I would try and be friendly but then, also like, I can get quite, I would say, aggressive if need to be, but not like aggressive as in grabbing them and things like that. Just in the speech. More aggressive speech. Just so they know. You don't need to say a lot more sometimes. You raise that vocal chord a little bit more. Instead of just speaking normally.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 23: They know. They know, they just get on with it. Including people like students.... That, you raise your voice, have a chat with them or something. The next 2 hours you don't even need to go and speak to them, they just know. Which is good. Even like, I've got an AM who's been here a couple of months. She's really getting that with them now. She says – Yeah! – Because she's their age as well. Which is a problem. A lot of them were her mates or are her mates.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 23: And she gets that problem with them. But now. She's jumped above the level, and she gets no problem with it now. So. It's good to see.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. I see. Very good. So your personal motivation is key to make sure that other people are motivated.

Mr 23: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why is that motivation really important? You mentioned service quality as one issue. Any other issues that really, motivation of staff is really key?

Mr 23: Well it's more like, we've got motivation of staff haven't we... I think you've got to have your staff motivated to get the work up in the end.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 23: If someone's not motivated, they'll just do the basics. They, just enough. Yeah? Which, if everyone done that, a lot of jobs wouldn't get done. So they do need to have that high motivation. I think it's satisfaction as well come with that, like within it. Because I think. Say for instance, I get motivated more, sometimes, like, if we've got like, say this weekend, quite... it's going to be a busy weekend so.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 23: So you've got to get all your staff motivated and say – Come on! –

Interviewer: Keyed up for it.

Mr 23: Yeah. You're going to take a lot of money, you're going to take this amount of money. Like. And you've got to get them motivated for that. If you don't, they'll only do their minimum.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 23: Like they have been for say, the last 2 weeks, when like, the weather's been poor or something. But yeah, they can all go along, but they've got to then raise, raise the game really and say – Yeah, I can work an extra 20% if I wanted. - You've got to get them raised to that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 23: Because, not everyone can, day in day out, can give that extra 20%. But when you need it, you've got to motivate it towards. Yes.

Interviewer: So, you think it's very important for the profitability when, when there's a chance to improve it quite... because... extra on conditions really.

Mr 23: Yeah, the opportunity from events or like you said, the conditions outside really. That's when you've got to really. That's when, you've got to use your personal motivation to really get a, like benefit really. Say for instance you're playing a cup final tomorrow.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah right.

Mr 23: That's when you're motivation is. You've just got to think of it in the same way. It's like – Come one! - And including, because within areas, or your region, you always like to be, there's 5 areas within a region, and you always want to be, say, ours to be the top area. So you really, - Come on, let's be, let's really push for it! - Everybody likes to be the top lad as they say, within it. So it's always nice.

Interviewer: Right. Great. Thank you. Next one we had is motivation of staff. Motivation of staff we've just talked about basically. But developing staff.

Mr 23: Yeah. Well we find it very important. As a store as a company really. To develop staff. Because if you don't develop your staff, or train your staff for instance, you just won't keep up really. There's always something new. Obviously they're all general assistants really.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 23: So the more you give them, the more development of them. We use TTS which is technical training. If you can develop them for instance, you've got a really, you've got. It's actually better for yourself in the end, and better for the business. Because the more that one individual can do.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 23: The more. Like it goes back near enough to flexibility. The more he can actually or she, I shouldn't keep saying he all the time, the more the person can actually then go and do within your business. So it is looking at your business needs again.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 23: So that the more you develop the individual or the staff members, the more it will actually help your business to move forward.

Interviewer: So there's flexibility, they can do lots of different things, they can help the business in that way.
Mr 23: Yeah, you're developing their knowledge within the store like. So. And it can even be just pointing out customers. Like, - That customer likes this, that customer likes that, that customer does this! - That can be developing staff. Or, like I like working with different members of staff for instance. Because I find that develops them. If you work. Say you've got an individual and you work with him for an hour, or she for an hour.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: Then they can see how you work. And they can just pick it up. Like - Oh, but he does it like that! - For instance he must know..

Interviewer: So they reflect basically on what they're doing, and comparing what you're doing and that sort of thing?
Mr 23: Yeah. You'll say to them - Yeah but. - I like to say for instance, if they... the store open, half an hour before they go home, I'll walk them round. And say, - Well if I was doing it, I would do it like this. - Or do it like that. I find, actually personal development is a lot better than giving them say, a bit of paper. Three bits of paper. And saying - Answer all these questions on grocery! - Which they know. But how is that going to help them when they go to...

Interviewer: No.
Mr 23: But if you actually personally take them out there, or any manager can take them out there, or you double them up with someone else, and say - Go and see how they work. -

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: - And see if it's different to how you actually deal with that. Or go and watch them for 5 or 10 minutes, go and compare the difference. - I find that a really good developing technique of staff. There's a lot of people might have been here 3, 4, 5, 6 years or whatever. You've got somebody who has been here a year. Whose been doing their thing, but, - You go and have a look how they work. -

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: And I like that. Because they always go in, they'll always learn a lot more.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: They're developed a lot more than you saying - You should be doing it like this. - If you show an individual, or get someone to show them, it's much better than, I think it's a really good technique.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. And it leads to flexibility. Why is it really important for you personally? It's important for the business you can see.
Mr 23: For me personally. So I don't have to do it.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Yeah. I thought you might say that actually.
Mr 23: No. I think you develop them more, it then goes to like, delegation really.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: Because you can delegate them 3 more jobs than what they used to be able to do.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: Instead of say for instance, me or management having to do the job. They can say, - There you go, you can go and do that job! -

Interviewer: So it gives you time to do other things or?
Mr 23: To focus on other things with in the store, like within the business really. Instead of doing something where someone else could be doing it.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 23: Which you know they can do. Given the opportunity. Or you've trained them how to do it. You can then go and do your jobs.. Because there's always something we can do, that then, if you have to train them, there's only certain jobs they can do.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 23: The more you develop them, the more jobs they can do within the business side. Then instead of knowing 2 jobs, they know 6.... In the morning you can say – Done that, done that, but you can do that now can't you, so you can go and do that for me. –

End of tape.

Interview with Respondent 24 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 27 September 2002, 1pm

- Interviewer: Can I ask you first of all before we go into the specific linkages between them can I ask you about your important topics? First of all Planning Ahead was topic no. 1, the most important you think. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?
- Mr 24: It's always easier to manage when you know what's coming. A term that we often used in the past was firefighting. If you're planning ahead then you can tackle most things as far as I'm concerned.
- Interviewer: Is it because you find certain things predictable and you can plan on the basis of that or...?
- Mr 24: There are various things that cause problems, or opportunities should I say. If you know that there are going to be staff on holiday and certain week, you know there's a big promotion that means a lot of preparation that's going to start at a certain time. You know if you leave it until the last minute and try and cope then it's going to be a struggle. If you can arrange to start the work early, get extra people in or whatever, then you know that you'll be able to get through it easier.
- Interviewer: Fine right. So it's an organisation type of thing, you want to make sure you're organised and look organised. Why is that issue really important to you personally?
- Mr 24: It's a challenge for myself because in the past I haven't been too good at forward planning, and so it is nice to see the benefits of it so that, as I say there's none of this firefighting. Nothing's predictable in retail as I'm sure is the case in a lot of fields, but the more that you can predict what is going to happen then the easier it is to overcome any surprises.
- Interviewer: OK. So you can predict some of these issues, thinking ahead is good for your organisation. Why is that really important to you personally? Why is that type of issue... you mentioned that you thought you weren't so good at it in the past? What's happened there?
- Mr 24: By getting it right we're more likely to see success from it. Obviously I want to see success. That's what I'm here for.
- Interviewer: Right. How do you measure success? What sort of criteria do you use for success?
- Mr 24: Money in the tills mainly. Profit on the bottom line.
- Interviewer: OK. And why is the bottom line so important to you personally? What do you get out of it?
- Mr 24: That is the way the company measures us. And if you're making money in the store then there's an opportunity of a cash bonus for the manager as well which all helps.
- Interviewer: Yep. And maybe something to do with your career. And what your aspirations are. What would they be? Would they be to go to a bigger store or?
- Mr 24: Yeah. At the moment it's to progress to a bigger store with higher turnover. And again that comes down to the way the company perceives your performance in the current store.
- Interviewer: OK yep. At the end of this then, you'll get a bigger store or whatever, and why is that really important to you?
- Mr 24: It's the feel good factor I think, to know that you've achieved something, and progressed to a higher salary as well, always helps.

Interviewer: Any other things? Maybe your personal standing, or other things that are important to you?
Mr 24: Yeah. It's nice to be able to.... As I say it's a feel good factor to get a promotion in a bigger store, and it's a new challenge. You can get very stale being a store for too long a period of time.

Interviewer: Do you get moved around quite regularly?
Mr 24: No. In the six years I've been a store manager this has only been my second store.

Interviewer: O that's unusual then isn't it?
Mr 24: Yeah. And I've been here for about 18 months now. So it's time to start impressing people and start shouting.

Interviewer: So you want the responsibility... I can see you use the word challenge quite a lot. Obviously your personal challenges themselves..... I notice some of these things are developmental in that respect, you're thinking in that way... what do you think that is? What do you think you're achieving out of that?
Mr 24: Development of myself or other people?

Interviewer: Both I suppose.
Mr 24: Yeah. Development of other people.... Again if you're promoting a lot of people from underneath as it were, then it's another way of getting recognition in this company, and it's nice to get motivation out of them as well because you find, you know you give someone extra responsibility and a lot of the time it improves motivation, which you need. When you're dealing with 30 people to run a supermarket you need to be motivated and you need them to go in the same direction as you. So any tools I can use to increase that, I will do. And as I say the strongest one that I found is development of people.

Interviewer: OK good. So you have this developmental view because you find it works and.. you use it on yourself as well because you say you set challenges all the time. Why do you think that's really important to you personally?
Mr 24: You can get very dragged in to a mundane day-to-day routine which is not enjoyable for anyone. I don't want to come to work and have to do that sort of thing. So it's to make the job more interesting I think.

Interviewer: And do you think that fits in to a sort of lifestyle thing, that you wanted an interesting job, or you are keen to have a very interesting job in the future? I'm interested in this balance between an interesting job and the money. How do you square that one?
Mr 24: The job that I do originally isn't the job that I wanted to do. I actually started working for the company until I could find a proper job. And until you start getting into the management side of things, you don't realise that it's a lot different to filling shelves in a supermarket. You know I could have gone out and got a job earning more money but... You get bad days, but most of the time I really enjoy doing this job. So in that respect it really is more important than the money sometimes.

Interviewer: Is it an interesting balance, in terms of making it, guys going into the city earning a fortune, but they've got to sit on the train all the time, and they've got to work until they drop....
Mr 24: Yeah, I mean I've got a family at home, and I want to spend time with them as well as do my job.

Interviewer: Brilliant thank you. Personal motivation then. Is there any difference here, or would I be talking about the same sort of issues, or why is personal motivation really important to you?

Mr 24: I think it's what I've said. I want recognition within the company. By motivating myself I will perform better. It's the same as if I was motivating a member of staff.

Interviewer: You think there's a link there? Between your personal motivation and the staff motivation?

Mr 24: Yeah. If I'm not motivated it will follow through to everyone else I think. Even if you're not motivated I think sometimes you have to try and put on a bit of an act.

Interviewer: Yeah so you're motivation feeds through to performance generally and motivating staff. How, or what is on the steps beyond that do you think? Why is motivation of staff and that sort of issue really important to you?

Mr 24: It filters through to the way that the customers perceive it as well. We do quite often get comments that people come in here instead of going to Tesco because of the atmosphere in the place, which boils down to how happy the staff are at the end of the day. They need to enjoy their work, and it helps on staff turnover.

Interviewer: Is that a major problem to you? Recruiting staff? It's an area of low unemployment let's face it.

Mr 24: Yeah. It's difficult getting good people, which is why I like to try and keep the people that I've got. We've got some people that have been here for 25 years so, it's pretty good in that respect.

Interviewer: OK. So that's somewhat less hassle to you I suppose as well as all the other benefits. OK. So how does that fit in then? You have a nice atmosphere and it turns into profitability because customers like it. You also get less staff turnover because everybody's enjoying work, and it's a good atmosphere generally. Why is it that that sort of issue is important to you? I think we've covered some of these sort of issues before but....

Mr 24: Yeah. I'm the sort of person that likes to see people happy I think. I like to think if people are unhappy about something that they can approach me. Again, I like customers to come in and see or sense a nice atmosphere in the store. I think it all boils down to trying to run a successful shop at the end of the day.

Interviewer: Do you see that as part of your style of management? Why do you feel like that?

Mr 24: Yeah. It is my style of management. I'm not one of those that will go in ranting and raving and shouting at people. I get results in other ways.

Interviewer: Can you outline... I know you've mentioned some things before... could you be very specific?

Mr 24: Let me break it down into the selling or telling approach to management. Obviously there are times when you have to use both, but I will go more towards the sell approach. You know, tell people why things need to be done and if they're not doing it properly how it affects other people.

Interviewer: OK. So we're talking about decent communication as a way of explaining things to people?

Mr 24: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK great. So that's mostly about management style. And why have you developed that style do you think? Is it something you had in the past and it's worked very well, or....?

Mr 24: I think it's my personal style, it's the way that I am rather than having to learn it. I've been lucky that I've seen success through having that approach.

Interviewer: So it has been successful but it was a natural thing you would do anyway?
Mr 24: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you think are the main benefits of that? Rather than being the stickler for telling people minute detail about things? What advantages do you think you get from that?
Mr 24: I think people are more likely to think for themselves and use their own initiative. And it takes pressure off, in fact in some respects it takes pressure off me.

Interviewer: So you've got more empowered staff or whatever you like to call it, and they can help out in different ways. Do you find them maybe a bit more flexible? A bit more....
Mr 24: Yeah. If you're approaching them in the right way then you will get more out of them in terms of if you need any favours shall we say.

Interviewer: Yeah. So flexible staff and, that's very important to you because it reduces hassle, any other issues that it's really important to you for?
Mr 24: Not really. I mean it does cut both ways if staff are flexible for us they know that if they have any issues then we can help them out.

Interviewer: OK brilliant. Excellent. Third one was motivation of staff. We've mentioned motivation of staff several times so maybe I should go on to another one then.
Mr 24: Yeah I think we've covered it.

Interviewer: And learning to improve, this is like you say, it's a personal philosophy you've got, you set challenges and they aim to improve. Why is this really important to you? We've probably covered that already to be truthful.
Mr 24: Yeah. I think there's always something you can learn, and you may find something that works but there's nothing to say it's going to carry on working.

Interviewer: Yeah so it's... maybe the point is that past experience is fine but there may be new ball games or whatever.
Mr 24: Yeah particularly when you do move to a different store. Different staff. They may have experienced different types of management in the past and not know how to accept this approach or...

Interviewer: Yes right so have you come up against that sort of problem in the past or when you moved here for example do you think?
Mr 24: No. It was actually... I had a really nice reception when I came here because I used to talk to people

Interviewer: Right yeah..
Mr 24: .. and the previous manager didn't. But whether I was shouting or explaining or what... I was talking to them which was a step forward anyway.

(laughter)

so yes. I had quite a strange picture painted of the previous manager when I got here.

Interviewer: Right. So they didn't see him very much.

Mr 24: No.

Interviewer: I see OK. So you've found that it's helped and improved a new situation that this is this moving around a bit. I suppose a career sort of thing again I suppose.
Mr 24: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's important that you put yourself in new situations all the time and that's going to be important to you for the future because it's...
Mr 24: Yeah. It's all experience isn't it.

Interviewer: It certainly is. OK and the last one, there are five of these, was um.. it was developing staff. Well we have mentioned a lot of that actually haven't we.
Developing staff we have mentioned yes in the first session especially.
Mr 24: Yeah I think we've talked about it in conjunction with motivation.

Interviewer: OK. That's great. Thank you very much that's brilliant. OK. So some issues in relation to this year. Can you maybe talk me through a few bit or the major links that you've got here?
Mr 24: Right. Knowledge, it's down here, knowledge of your customers and knowledge of competitors. It doesn't so much. It's not anything that I can have input with. But I realise that it is important for product promotions and the range that we are stocking.

Interviewer: You've presumably got data on especially....
Mr 24: Yeah knowledge of customers, we know that from what we see out there anyway...

Interviewer: Yeah yeah..
Mr 24: Um we don't have a great deal of control over promotions but we do have control over what we order on the promotions, so we get told what's going on with a promotion and what price it's going to be, but then we have to decide how we're going to display it and which ones to really go for and so on..

Interviewer: Is there really quite a decent choice for you or is it somewhat restricted or...
Mr 24: It is.. there are lines that we have to stock during a promotion, we give out a flyer which is A2 size with all the colour promotions on it. So obviously we need to have everything that's on there but we need to know particularly with fresh foods, something may be on promotion that may well sell in a store in Norfolk but in here it would sell a limited amount, so if we fill our cabinet with it we end up throwing it in the bin.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah..
Mr 24: That sort of thing. So to know what our customers are going to be buying does help us in that respect. Again a knowledge of competitors. We look at what they have on special offer, if they have a similar offer to us but at a lower price again, that's going to affect, or vice versa, if they've got it on offer and we've got it better than them then we'll shout about it, and get plenty of it in.

Interviewer: I see yes. Right yeah.
Mr 24: And that can be at a local level or sort of thing because.. you've got presumably competitors too, other people and different stores.

Interviewer: OK fine. Do you feel as if you've got a fair bit of knowledge of your competitors? You did mention that you know something of their special offers and whatever?

Mr 24: Yeah. We don't find out what their special offers are until they're on, and they're giving out their flyers and...

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 24: Because obviously we've got staff that live locally and they get it through their door.

Interviewer: I see so it's more of an informal thing rather than anything else.

Mr 24: Yeah yeah. I mean obviously all retail companies will keep it pretty close until it's actually launched so, yeah. And it's not just promotions it's um, I'll pop into the store at least once a week to see what their standards are and how the store is managed.

Interviewer: OK so you do that specifically as a management task?

Mr 24: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK.

Mr 24: So that helps. And knowing Tesco as we know them we know the ways that they mess up. We don't always know when it's going to be but we know how they mess up because of the way that they order things...

Interviewer: I see...

Mr 24: .. and we can take advantage of that.

Interviewer: Very good that's very detailed. Um. With regards to planning ahead?

Mr 24: Yes that's quite an interesting one. I think um planning ahead I'd put at the top because all of the things that I put underneath I would plan ahead to do them.

Interviewer: Yeah right.

Mr 24: I mean you can do them without planning ahead but the way I do it is to plan it in advance and I know where I am with it. So personal motivation and learning to improve I think we've covered that a lot.

Interviewer: Yep.

Mr 24: So I mean I've put quite high numbers on there as very important. And again developing staff and by developing staff it leads to me being able to delegate tasks to them.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 24: That in turn leads to motivation and just development itself leads to motivation as well. And again we won't have the service for the customers if the staff aren't motivated so again that's a very important link, the link there.

Interviewer: Very good yeah. That's a very clear picture and it's quite consistent with what you've been saying as well.

Mr 24: Yeah.

Interviewer: How much planning... I can see the sort of issues you're planning ahead there. How much control have you got of other issues like the fact that you're in the High Street or very close to the High Street or in the High Street? What sort of things do you feel as though you've got control over and what sort of things do you feel you haven't got control over as far as it is concerned?

Mr 24: Right. Prime example of that was last week, they dug up the road in front of the shop without warning us. So ur, I couldn't plan for that and it threw us with all our orders. The sales went down, wastage went up, and it created mayhem as far as we are concerned. You didn't see it on the shop floor because there was nobody out there obviously.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr 24: But that, that was something that was out of my control and it wasn't a pleasant experience to deal with that. Back to the firefighting again and getting the orders back, and shouting at the council down the phone...

(laughter)

Interviewer: Right.

Mr 24: Other things. Every month or so they have a farmers market in town. The first time it came to town we thought it was going to have an adverse affect on our sales but it was quite the opposite. It attracted people to town and they saw the prices on the farmer's market and then came in here and spent their money in here.

(laughter)

So we know now that every time there's a farmer's market coming in that we have to have an extra girl on the tills and extra stock in the shop.

Interviewer: That's amazing. That's certainly.. you wouldn't really expect it.

Mr 24: That's right.

Interviewer: Well. So yes, there's some bits that you couldn't control and you've learnt through that in the past that it's a benefit to you that you can, you can't particularly control the farmer's market but you can control how you deal with it.

Mr 24: How you deal with it yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah interesting. What other things would you like to control do you think, that you.... You talk about head office doing promotions or whatever. What are the things that you feel you would be able to improve your turnover and profitability plus, let's say you're going in the right direction in decent way...

Mr 24: Yeah. My main bugbear as far as that's concerned is my wage cost. I believe you have to speculate a bit on wages to create the service to get the people in. We've got a very tight wage budget and it's fixed and you can't exceed it.

Interviewer: Yeah I see. And you feel slightly uncompetitive compared to maybe what you can get elsewhere or?

Mr 24: Yeah. And it's certainly, certainly very competitive compared with what we've had in the past. You meet your targets and then they cut them a bit more so...

Interviewer: Yeah. That seems to be..

Mr 24: I mean I know they want to make as much money as they can and the easiest way they can see of doing it is to cut the wage bills. But then other things get affected. You can't do the job properly. Wastage goes up. Stock loss goes up.

Interviewer: OK right. So that's really one of the major things you would like to have more control over and, not so much maybe on some of the product ranges then. Do you think this is more of a major issue?

Mr 24: We do have a fair bit of flexibility with that. If something's taken off the range in this store but not in the company, and customers will say hang on I've been buying that for years you're the only place I can get it, then we can get it in again. Or if we sell something that just doesn't sell, it's on the shelf until it goes out of the date. I can not have that. But the buyers obviously have to deal with 200 stores, then there are certain products that they take off the range and that's it, the company just doesn't stock them anymore.

Interviewer: Yep. You put success on new product lines as varied, you basically xxx to go. Have you managed to predict any of those in the past? Have you been shocked by how some have and some things. Knowledge is a very unpredictable issue.

Mr 24: Yeah. A big example last year. I don't know if you anything about the Hyamms pet food that was launched? Big promotion on it. And you know loads of stock brought into the stores, and we had a special offer on it running for 6 weeks. And then there was a bit of bad publicity about it because of the way they tested it. And nobody wanted any of it. Things like that just take you by surprise.

Interviewer: Yeah. A bit of shock again. A bit like the council digging up the road outside, there's nothing you can do about it.

Mr 24: No. That's right.

Interviewer: Bad publicity. Right very interesting thank you. The nature of customer's complaints is very predictable, so you think they're predictable, so then is it a certain quality issue or what sort of?

Mr 24: Yeah. You know by looking at your shop is there's something wrong. You may not necessarily be able to do anything about it but you can see. We've got queues at the tills. We're out of stock of half of our fruit and veg. lines whatever. If you're going to get complaints that's what it's going to be about. Obviously by the time complaints go through it's been magnified and it's 10 times worse than it actually is.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Yes. So it's mostly queues and stock really?

Mr 24: Yeah. As far as complaints that actually get written off to head office, in the last 18 months since I've been there we've had 2. So I'm quite proud of that.

Interviewer: That's fine. You're the one person who will take the rap like that and ur... what were they about, were they about these sort of things or?

Mr 24: This was actually the same person that did both of them. And the first one was because some beer that he bought was too warm. And there's not a lot you can do about that.

(laughter)

And the second one was when the company de-listed the beer that he liked buying so he wasn't very happy at all.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Oh well. There's the odd Victor Meldrew I suppose.

Interviewer: Well yeah. Every store's got one.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Well thank you very much. I think I've found out a heck of a lot out of it and everything seems to pin together. And it's different to what I've done in the past in some respects. So you've got a different way of doing it and different concerns as well I think because.....

Interview with Respondent 25 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: June 10 2003, 10.30am

- Interviewer: OK. First of all you've got personal leadership style as very important. Personal motivation excuse me as being important. And we can see it on the map as well. Everything seems to lead in and out of it. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?
- Mr 25: Because if I'm motivated, then I can pass that down to the team. If I'm motivated I'm doing my job properly.
- Interviewer: Do you see it then as a distinction as a good manager? A good manager is really one that is personally motivated very highly?
- Mr 25: I believe most things that happen in the store should come from management. The managers will set the standard. The manager will set the goals. So the manager is focused on going in one direction and the team, hopefully, will follow.
- Interviewer: OK. Why is that focus and the team following really important to you personally? That motivates you?
- Mr 25: Sorry can you repeat that?
- Interviewer: Why is that getting a focused approach and getting the team to be on your side, why is that really important to you?
- Mr 25: Because then we're all going in the same direction.
- Interviewer: Uh huh.
- Mr 25: We all know the end goal. We're all working together as one team.
- Interviewer: And why is that sort of team work really important?
- Mr 25: Because it is like one big wheel. Everyone needs to work together for the system to work. Yeah. And that increases your productivity, if you come to work, you enjoy yourself. If you create a nice atmosphere by people getting on with each other, and everyone enjoying what they do. Obviously it improves everything.
- Interviewer: And what does it improve do you think? What are you really looking at here? What are your key success factors? Building the team up, yeah, getting them in a working direction. Getting the system to work together. People being productive. Where is it all going do you think?
- Mr 25: To basically provide the service that we're here to try and achieve. And to produce good store standards. To produce good quality service for the customer.
- Interviewer: And why is that good quality service and good standards really important?
- Mr 25: Because that's what makes the tills go 'Chink ! ' No that is. If we can provide good service and good goods, then that at the end of the day is what the customer comes here for.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 25: So if we can keep the customer happy, then, I think that should slot into place.
- Interviewer: OK. So the till's going 'Chink ! ' and you've got increase in turnover and stuff like that, why is that really important to you? Why are you personally motivated?
- Mr 25: Because that makes me successful.

Interviewer: Uh huh. In what ways do you think you're measured in that respect?

Mr 25: I'm measured financially. And obviously on store standards when people do come in to see the store standards. So. If I'm producing them standards, I've got a good steam around me, and financial results are in place, then that's.

Interviewer: OK yeah. So you're regarded as a successful manager if your turnover is increased. Is there any other motivation do you think that's really important to you there?

Mr 25: To myself?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: Feeling that I've achieved, or feeling that I'm successful myself. Obviously recognition from my superiors is motivation as well. If I'm noticed and seen to be doing a good job. Customer feedback. A lot of times there's quite a lot of motivation.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK great. Motivation of staff. This is probably interlinked with your personal motivation as we can see from this map. It's sort of quite strong arrows between the 2. Why is motivation of staff really really important to you?

Mr 25: Basically because I, or my management team, we cannot provide what we're aiming to provide between us, just us. So we need a good strong team around us. We need a good happy team around us. Obviously we try and provide a good service to the customer. They need efficient, productive, polite staff to serve them. Also if your team are motivated and they feel part of the team, and they enjoy working here, obviously the retention of that team is then, longer. Which leads to them being more aware, more skilful, more knowledgeable, more efficient. And that makes our job easier once again. And improves the service to the customer.

Interviewer: OK. So it's partly if your customers are happy, it presumably leads into your turnover again which we've mentioned before. Also it's easier to manager, because everything is much easier from your angle, if you've got knowledgeable staff and.

Mr 25: Yeah yeah.

Interviewer: OK great. Do you think that leads to anywhere? Leads you to manage? What are you really looking for then, do you think? An easy life or?

Mr 25: Well yeah.

(laughter)

I mean, I like to come into work and do as little as possible. So I mean yes. I mean obviously that's not my goal in life. To work as little as possible. But no it does make life easier. And it allows you more time for the frills, to do the little bit extra. To try and go that little bit further. To be more diligent. Do extra... To be ahead of the game if you like.

Interviewer: And is that sort of like, you know, recognition as a good manager. Because you're sort of well sorted out, and you're ahead of the game?

Mr 25: Organised yeah.

Interviewer: Organisation is a, so that's a personal type of? What you think represents a good manager in some respects?

Mr 25: I believe so yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Now we've got personal leadership style. Perhaps you could maybe comment exactly what your personal leadership style is do you think? And we could ask you questions about that.

Mr 25: My personal leadership style. I'd say firstly I'm probably driven by results. And success. Due to the size of the shop and the numbers of staff, I'm often there leading the staff from the front. Leading by example.

Interviewer: Does that suggest that maybe you've had a different approach in the past where you might have been in a big store or whatever it is? Have you experienced maybe, that it's not possible to do that in a larger store? Because you did mention, because of the size of the store?

Mr 25: Yeah. Because this is a small store. It's got a high turnover.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: Other stores I have worked in the past have had a smaller turnover, but considerably larger store. Or I've actually worked in other stores that take roughly the same money as we take here, but store wise it's a lot larger.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: There's also different levels of staffing through the stores. The level of staffing here, knowledge-wise, is still being developed at the moment. So the more hands-on approach if you like, is needed here.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr 25: I do make a point of sitting down and planning on a regular basis. And I do make a point of, theres myself plus 3 assistant managers. We all converse quite regularly and, basically we try and operate it as one unit between the 4 of us.

Interviewer: And why is personal leadership style really key then? To?

Mr 25: I'm not too sure really. I mean. 9 years ago I went on a management training scheme for Convenience Stores Ltd.. In that year, I basically learnt technical skills. I don't think anyone can actually teach you to be a manager or a leader. I think it's down to you, basically trial and error. See what works for you. See how to handle difficult situations see how to talk to different people. So basically, I've just basically developed that over the last few years.

Interviewer: And you find things have worked for you that you've maybe found from, I don't know, your experiences obviously. What sort of things work for you do you think? Or you've seen, maybe experienced when you were an assistant manager or whatever, that really worked?

Mr 25: I haven't actually, a lot of people do actually look at it. I know it's not exactly, it's probably not the great manager, the trade of the manager, but leading from the front, and leading by example here, is the way it works. If you're working efficiently with the team, then they'll work efficiently.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr 25: Obviously not all the time, but a lot of the time, that's what it takes sometimes.

Interviewer: And do you think it's because it's a smaller store? Or do you think you can do that on a larger scale?

Mr 25: It possibly wouldn't work on a larger scale, but this is very, it's quite a fast pace of life, it's very transient this shop.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: And that's possibly what's needed. Yeah.

Interviewer: So you've seen that hands-on approach of leading by example when you were maybe assistant manager or whatever?

Mr 25: Yeah I have seen it work yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. And things you see that worked, and maybe things that didn't work? Things you've maybe not tried because it didn't work in your past experience?

Mr 25: I haven't seen anything that hasn't worked, or tried anything. I mean we do. The leadership style that also works most here is if possible involving the team in everything. Or nearly everything. And then it goes back to motivation.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: We try and make the team as aware as physically possible of what's going on around them and what's required.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: If there are any changes then they're pretty soon to know.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you sort of give them the information and then, and then you can think, they become motivated, because they know what the score is basically.

Mr 25: Yes yeah. I'd say I'm a very fair leader.

Interviewer: Uh huh. Do you think the staff would say that?

Mr 25: I'm also quite firm when needed. That sounds.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Yeah. And when do you think you're firm with them? When you think efficiency or tidiness drops down or? Or when the turnover's gone a bit awry or?

Mr 25: I mean, we determine, the only way we can determine the turnover is by the standards that we produce on the shop floor. So the if standards reduce, or not, the standards that we're used to accepting, then that's possibly when I'll be a little bit firmer.

Interviewer: OK. So that, your personal leadership style is really maybe trying to set these standards?

Mr 25: Driving them.

Interviewer: Driving these standards up or maintaining them at least, and driving them up if possible and. Making sure, that leads into the turnover or whatever else.

Mr 25: Yeah.

Interviewer: Very good. And delegating tasks to others you say is quite important as well.

Mr 25: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about that? Why you think that's very important? Although we did mention it over here, you can delegate to maybe experienced staff and skilled staff, and you have a bit less hassle, and you have time to manage properly perhaps? Is there any other things that you think are important there?

Mr 25: Well firstly for assistant managers, it's important that they have goals, and they have measurements, that I can actually judge their performance. I think it's quite important that everyone within the store has goals that they can be measured on.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: So you can actually see how successful they are actually doing in their job.

Interviewer: Is it possible to have strict measurements of these things do you think? What sort of thing do you use do you think?

Mr 25: Sorry?

Interviewer: Is it possible to have strict measurements, and what sort of things do you use?

Mr 25: With my assistant managers it is. Because obviously they are responsible for different departments within the store. And obviously team members are underneath them.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: With the store team, we would certainly use more shorter measurements. IE you've got to put 50 boxes out in an hour, well that's what's needed. Can you achieve that?

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr 25: But I mean everyone in the store has some input into how successful the store is.

Interviewer: Uh huh. And do you measure the departmental bits like, turnover for this department is possibly feeding in, do you do that?

Mr 25: Yes.

Interviewer: So you do that on a?

Mr 25: That's done on a weekly basis. Or even a daily basis sometimes.

Interviewer: So you can tell if something's not right reasonably quickly. Because you've got the figures?

Mr 25: Yes. Yeah. So I believe delegating tasks also motivates people.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: Because they know they've got a purpose. If you delegate more responsibility, again that improves motivation, and people feel that they have more worth.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what's the major effect of that do you think? There's quite a few no doubt but. If they're very motivated, you then presumably lose less staff. You get sort of turnover down or? Is there any problem here or?

Mr 25: No. I mean the only slight problem here is that it's quite an affluent area, and unfortunately, for the amount of money we pay, it's not a great attraction for a lot of the people that live around here. But obviously. Well. We always manage to find people. But then what we try and do is, the people that we do get, is hang onto those, and make it.

Interviewer: And you feel that by motivating them, they're more likely to stay, because, with you moving up.. to assistant manager?

Mr 25: Yeah. Well it gives everybody more purpose to stay.

Interviewer: Uh huh. So you get best.. staff turnover comes down. And they're motivated presumably to keep things tidy. Increase service quality and those sort of things? You can feel the tills going 'Chink!'

Mr 25: 'Chink!' yeah.

Interviewer: Any other things that you think motivates your staff?

Mr 25: Motivates staff?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: Feedback from us and the management team. Again they're probably results-driven, they quite...

Interviewer: What sort of feedback are you talking about? So you get some positive feedback from the staff and?

Mr 25: No sorry, I was on about feedback from the management to the team. Just keeping them aware of what's going on.

Interviewer: Right OK.

Mr 25: But obviously, if we're providing a good service and good standards on the shop floor, then the team will receive feedback from customers.

Interviewer: Yeah. Positive feedback. Uh huh. And that leads into presumably?

Mr 25: Just a more enjoyable working life yeah.

Interviewer: Current resources you think are important as well. You've obviously basically, I don't know. When you come in to a new store you get the resources you've got. You can't really invent them. How do you think your current resources are here, and how would you like to change them?

Mr 25: The store is very good, the situation is very good. The team we have now are strong. But there's always room for improvement. There's always a little bit more you can team people. There's a little bit more that people can do for your sales. I mean ultimately, everyone would know how to do absolutely everything in the store. So there is always something to be working on, or some training to be given. And again the current resources turns in to the future resources. So you're always constantly building for that. Any eventuality might be round the corner.

Interviewer: Uh huh. Why is that really important to you? To build up for the future? Maybe you? Do you think you're going to stay here for a while or?

Mr 25: I should be here for a while but, basically, I think you've got to look for the next problem if you like. You know. If you've got a first class person do a job, and she's the only person that knows how to do that job. Then she up-sticks and leaves. That leaves you quite exposed.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 25: So there's always, you always need to have one or two people following on behind. So multi-skilling is the goal really.

Interviewer: OK. So that's obviously really important to you, just to make sure that you do your management job correctly?

Mr 25: Basically yes. To plan for any eventuality as it were.

Interviewer: OK. Thank you very much. I think I've got quite a lot of data here. I think these ones between your motivation of staff and personal motivation come over very very strongly. I've found I suppose...

Tape turned off and on again.

Mr 25: ...What are your personal ambitions in a way, how you'd like see yourself going in the future?
My boss doesn't.. this does he?

Interviewer: No no!

Mr 25: No. I'm just happy at the moment. Financially I'm like, I'm just happy to continue to do what I'm doing. Just to try and be successful in what I do at the moment.

Interviewer: Do you think. Are you aiming for a bigger store? Are you aiming for a? What's your sort of ultimate goal here?

Mr 25: At the moment. Just to basically. To remain here to do produce the sales growth we're producing at the moment. To make the store more financially profitable.

Interviewer: See this is quite a good store isn't it?

Mr 25: This is a little cash... yeah. And basically it's to stay here and possibly make a name for myself.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 25: Because it is a very good store to make a name for yourself in. And then possibly to move on to a bigger store. At this moment in time I've got no desire to become area manager.

End of interview.

Interview with Respondent 26 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 28 October 2002, 3pm

- Interviewer: OK. Service quality you consider to be a really key factor. Why is that really important to you?
Ms 26: Just because I think the customers keep coming back if your service is good, and you know, they keep returning to the store.
- Interviewer: OK. And returning customers. Why is that really key, why do you think that's really important to you?
Ms 26: To keep sales. I mean if you've got good service as well they're going to let other people know I think. Pass the word around.
- Interviewer: Yeah. And why is this increasing sales and improving sales, really really important to you personally?
Ms 26: Just because at the minute we are actually planning it, so it's sort of a goal to get it sort of.
- Interviewer: OK. Is that a company goal or your goal?
Ms 26: It's the company one, that's what they want, but then I sort of want to get it to that as well because it is achievable.
- Interviewer: Personal goal.
Ms 26: The personal at the minute is a bit less, but we're aiming to work it up to something..
- Interviewer: OK. So why is it important for you to meet your goals?
Ms 26: I think just so I know I'm doing my job properly. If you sort of reach the next goal, you know you just give yourself another one, and keep proving to yourself that you're doing well.
- Interviewer: Is it important for your career, or is it important for your job satisfaction or is it both?
Ms 26: Both I think yeah.
- Interviewer: OK. Why are those two things really really important to you? What do you feel as if the end of...
Ms 26: One of the things is, you know all these things about.... the store and how everyone's sort of struggled to do it. So I sort of really want to prove that ur..
- Interviewer: OK, so it's like a past difficulty, overcoming past difficulties, that sort of thing?
Ms 26: Yeah yeah.
- Interviewer: OK. So why is that really key to you? Is it, so that you can be thought of as a really sharp manager?
Ms 26: Yeah. I think because of my age as well everyone's been a bit funny, well not funny but,
- Interviewer: Sorry say that again?
Ms 26: Because of my age.
- Interviewer: Yes yes.

Ms 26: They've always, that's something that's perhaps held me back a bit.

Interviewer: Yes.

Ms 26: So I think that's another reason as well, just to.

Interviewer: Prove yourself.

Ms 26: Yeah just to prove myself really.

Interviewer: And it's probably proving yourself as being a really good manager.

Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Why is it really important to you to be thought of as a good manager do you think? Sorry, getting down to the ur..

(laughter)

Ms 26: You're making me think now. I don't know really.

Interviewer: What do you want out of it? What are your goals?

Ms 26: At the minute, this was my goal to get where I am now, so.

Interviewer: You can prove yourself that you're very good at that. And that leads to, job satisfaction again I suppose doesn't it? Increasing career path. What about how people in the community think of you? Is that important to you do you think? Or is it more personal than that.

Ms 26: No it is probably what the customers think as well.

Interviewer: OK. Right. We're getting there. Planning ahead. Why do you think that's really really important to you? How does that really help?

Ms 26: Say you know where you are, so I mean at the minute it's all planning up towards Christmas, so it's, we're going to need staff, orders, mainly to get sales, and make sure we've got the availability for customers.

Interviewer: OK. Why is that getting everything right for the customers really important to you? We've talked about some of these other issues... Is this to do with a good job again, is it to do with efficiency or?

Ms 26: Yeah. Being efficient again and, planning ahead helps with the sales, going back to the one before.

Interviewer: Is it also less hassle for you if you plan ahead? It makes your job easier?

Ms 26: It is yeah, it's sort of easier.

Interviewer: OK. And how does that sort of help, do you think? Your underlying feeling, do you feel as if you're given more control, or do you feel as if you're doing your job properly or, what is it?

Ms 26: Yeah. I suppose you have more control and just know where you're at and what you've got to do really each day.

Interviewer: Do you feel as if you've got control over these things?

Ms 26: Yeah just about.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Sometimes it's really difficult isn't it? You can see you're planning ahead and everything's going right, and then somebody sort of goes off sick, or a power cut or a, you know.

(laughter)

Ms 26: Yeah I mean, I just deal with the situation the same and.

Interviewer: And do you feel as if you can do that better if you're planning ahead.

Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: Easier. OK. And that control bit. Why is that really important to you do you think? Is it a big concern of yours or is it something that you've been taught to do?

Ms 26: Yeah well, I've been taught, been shown how to do it.

Interviewer: And you've seen it work in places, for you?

Ms 26: Yeah. Just, sort of, you know where you're at all the time, and you know what you're doing.

Interviewer: OK. So that makes you feel more competent in your job or whatever? It feels as if you're a good manager if you've got these things under control, whereas if you didn't have them, you'd feel as if

Ms 26: Yeah, what do I do next and yeah.

Interviewer: OK right. Very good. Now. Learning to improve. I think you've put these in a slightly different place over here.

Ms 26: Right.

Interviewer: It's at the end of this planning bit, the learning to improve bit. Why is learning to improve really really important do you think?

Ms 26: Just. I don't know from a customer's point of view if they're not satisfied then you learn by what they tell you, how to improve things, staff as well, it's perhaps linked in with the training and that. You know if staff aren't trained properly, you realise it.

Interviewer: And you spot things that you wouldn't spot if you weren't sort of in that area?

Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. We pick up on issues because you learnt things then proved things. Is there anything you'd like to mention that could fit in to this category that, things that you feel as if you, maybe didn't expect to begin with, and then you really had to think about it, and changed it round because you've..

Ms 26: Do you mean like based in this store?

Interviewer: Yeah your experiences, and why you've found it to be quite important.

Ms 26: I think the main one is the standards of the store. When I came here the standards weren't that good, so it was never tidy, there were a lot of gaps and that on the shop floor, the grocery and that. And there were a lot of customer complaints as well when I first came here about availability and things like that. And it's just through that really, learning to improve the standards of the store.

Interviewer: Right. So standards or what are you talking about? Is it availability, cleanliness?

Ms 26: Yeah. It was all actually, availability, cleanliness, pricing, what else was there,outcode stock.

Interviewer: Sorry?

Ms 26: Outcode items.

Interviewer: Ah yeah OK.

Ms 26: Just the general tidiness, yeah it was yeah.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Well presumably you identified these reasonably quickly.

Ms 26: Yeah. Because we had, when I came in, we sat down and planned out what we were going to do. And we did it in the space of about a week and a half.

Interviewer: So is this an area manager or another manager or?

Ms 26: Yeah, area manager. We sat down and planned it all out, what we were going to do. And we did it in about a week and a half. So.

Interviewer: And what did the other staff think about this. Because they were in here and?

Ms 26: Yeah. We had a lot of staff in to help, because the staff here didn't actually do a lot of it, it was other people brought in from other stores to help out that actually did a lot of it.

Interviewer: I see. Right.

Ms 26: But I mean once the end result was done, the staff here were really pleased with the standards, and how nicely it changed in that amount of time.

Interviewer: I see. And what did the customers think about this then?

Ms 26: A lot of positive feedback yeah.

Interviewer: OK. And do you think that's lead to them coming back more or?

Ms 26: I think so yeah. Because I mean they can get what they want in here now.

Interviewer: Right.
Ms 26: You know, it's just generally tidier. It looks nicer when they come in.

Interviewer: And it's a more positive experience yeah. Presumably if you're only here for 2 months, it's quite early days.
Ms 26: It is yeah.

Interviewer: So you just have to wait for the improvements to feed through into the particular figures and stuff.
Ms 26: Yeah definitely.

Interviewer: And you feel as if it's all..?
Ms 26: It is. We've had weeks where the sales have shot up and that. But whether that's to do with whether or what, I don't know. But as I say, most of the customers, they get it at the checkouts a lot, they get a lot of positive feedback. Yeah and they do come back more, they can get what they want in here now.

Interviewer: Very good, great. That sounds very positive. Motivation of staff. I suppose this is somewhat linked in some respects. Because of what you've suggested, you know, that there was, motivational bits there to do with it. Why is that really important to you then? Is it maintaining these things or?

(interruption in room)
Ms 26: Yeah. Just.

Interviewer: These ones seem to be sort of linked in a nice little way.
Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about that? Why do you link..... for example? Any local Christians?

(laughter)
Ms 26: I mean I think that's. I mean if your leadership's good you should be able to motivate your staff and make them, say, want to do the job, and come here every day.

Interviewer: Yes.
Ms 26: And then, developing comes down to it as well. Sort of identifying their needs. And then if you develop them more, they're going to be more motivated then, to do the job.

Interviewer: What do you think this is here?
Ms 26: Me.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Yeah. Can you be any more precise?
 Ms 26: The way I see it I suppose.

Interviewer: How do you think you do it?
 Ms 26: Just the way I run the store I suppose, each day, and manage the staff.

Interviewer: What do you actually do, do you think? What is your leadership style? Your personal leadership style...?

(laughter)
 Ms 26: Oh I don't know.

Interviewer: Presumably, now you've put it in here, it's this circle, or it's a development leadership style is it, rather than anything else, do you think?
 Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: Or are you more concerned with some of these other issues? I suppose planning is maybe sometimes associated with that? Maybe it encapsulates some other things? Perhaps you'd like to comment if it does encapsulate something else?

(silence)

Ms 26: What do you think it really is, this development and motivation in leadership style?
 Yeah, I'd say and planning ahead as well.

Interviewer: So it's sort of like, developing. OK. Why is that developing and planning bit really key? Why is it really important to you? And it works and?
 Ms 26: I think when you develop the staff properly, you're not checking up on them all the time, they know what they've got to do, and you can just sort of get on and do your own stuff, and leave them to do the job themselves.

Interviewer: So it's like delegating to others, and they would do a really good job. They feel as if they have responsibility?
 Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you feel as if you've had some positive feedback from that? Because they presumably might have had different management staff before...?
 Ms 26: Yes, probably, because I mean half the staff have left since I came. But probably.

Interviewer: Do you think that that's because they fitted in with how it was before or?
 Ms 26: I think so. Because they used to get away with murder before. And then I sort of come here, and they didn't like it then I think, and found it difficult.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Right, there you are.
Ms 26: Yeah I mean there's one lad who runs the deli, he's been doing that about 3 or 4 weeks now, and he really takes pride in it.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Ms 26: He's sort of, you know – It's your department. – He does the ordering and everything now. We need sort of. He's been trained how to do it, and takes pride in it, and always makes sure it looks nice.

Interviewer: OK yeah. I can see you're developing people and giving them responsibility to do a good job because of that. Why is that really important to you?
Ms 26: I suppose it's job satisfaction (background noise).

Interviewer: OK. I suppose we've mentioned that as part of this end bit here.
Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you maybe explain some of these links here. We've mentioned this once here, maybe some of these other ones that you've talked about here, these other issues?
Ms 26: Service quality. Yeah they're linked because, I think if your price is cheaper, and your offers and things like that are better than other stores, they're going to come here rather than go somewhere else. And then, service quality again, linked to that because.

Interviewer: Responsive to their needs?
Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: Does head office have an input in this do you think?
Ms 26: Yeah, they do yeah.

Interviewer: Because they've got more control, or?
Ms 26: Yeah they have yeah, they've got more sort of control really over the prices than what we have. I mean, they do their research on offers, what other stores and other companies are priced at and that.

Interviewer: And how often do you get that sort of information? Do you get that information regularly?
Ms 26: Not an awful lot. Probably about twice a year we get that.

Interviewer: Not a lot.
Ms 26: Not a great deal no.

Interviewer: Every so often and stuff?
Ms 26: No.

Interviewer: Do you feel that's adequate or do you feel that's a bit?
 Ms 26: Well we get, you know you get the offers down each week which we get told about, but I'd say, a bit more of you know what the competitors...

Interviewer: The state of play is like or whatever, I see.
 Ms 26: I mean we get their figures, how ours compare to theirs and that, and that's sort of it really.

Interviewer: I see. And do you get maybe, information on what sells well?
 Ms 26: What in other?

Interviewer: Yeah in other regions and stuff?
 Ms 26: No we don't really.

Interviewer: You don't?
 Ms 26: No no. We get sort of told how much of certain offers have sold.. information on how many cases and that they've sold on certain offers and everything, but I mean most of it is just based around the offers that they've got in the store.

Interviewer: And do you control the stock of the offers?
 Ms 26: Yeah we do that in store.

Interviewer: And you do that based on what sort of information?
 Ms 26: Just sort of by the prices they're going down by, what amount of money has been taken off.

Interviewer: And do you look at the date, do you go on the computer, or do you do it by feel of what is happening?

(background interference)

Ms 26: Head office send down a pack, that changes every two weeks and they send down a pack, and it lists everything we've sort of got on offer, and what the price is changing by, and it's just sort of done by that.

Interviewer: Uh huh.
 Ms 26: At Christmas we perhaps get sales from before and we use those to plan orders.

Interviewer: Yeah. And do you find? Which is the most effective way of maybe predicting what's going to sell and what's not going to sell do you think?
 Ms 26: Usually sales from before, as well as some of the offers you get, they'll come up every couple of months and that, and that's just through experience of what you sold last time.

Interviewer: Yeah right.
 Ms 26: That's the main one I think.

Interviewer: Right, personal experience.
Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you use the data on the computer? Or do you think it's more of a feel for what it..?
Ms 26: No, don't really use the computer much. Not for your sales. You can, but you just sort of know really, because we do the ordering anyway, so we just sort them out, what sells and, just do it by experience really.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. Very interesting. It's surprising because, I've mentioned this in my lectures and stuff that, you know, supermarket managers are in a really great position because they've got all this information.
Ms 26: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then I go to interview people, and it's very very different actually, it's quite funny really.

(laughter)

Ms 26: When I used to run a business I used to say the same sort of thing, you know you go for a feel, it feels right to me and this sort of stuff, ditch all the data!
Yeah.

(laughter)

.....It's funny yeah. OK I think that's great. I think I've got a very good idea of the sort of things that you think about, and the things that are connected. As I say, my experience of..

Recording finished.

Interview with Respondent 27 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 7 April 2002, 10.30am

- Interviewer: You have put down that your key factor is your personal motivation; can you tell me why that is really important to you in this business?
- Mr 27: Because I believe if you are motivated in your career and your job or work that will increase in your efficiency and how you manage the business, motivating other people in pushing the business forward obviously if you are keen you can bring everyone else into play and everyone else can be keen as well. It helps in developing people, often planning ahead, which is absolutely, crystal sometimes and obviously in this kind of retail business, flexibility is very important in terms of pattern, that kind of condition, war etc.
- (Laughter)
- Interviewer: Yes! OK so why is all that really, really important to you, is it to do with your personal career goals or is it your experience of becoming a best manager?
- Mr 27: I think it is a realisation when you are actually learning something different every day and you improve, but over times of experience makes more wiser, if that is true? I think we are always, in this bit you are always learning something new and you are always learning more and more about customers, habits, shopping habits, what they want or what they don't want. In the time I have been within retail, I have seen a massive change in the way people change their habits, particularly thinking how people are, a lot of people have got careers and mum has got a career and they are more career minded, so they have got less time, so that relates in their shopping habits, because they will basically have ready solutions, ready meals, meals that are prepared, then rather get all the ingredients as it might have been 10 years ago.
- Interviewer: Yes. But why is this motivation and doing this thing really well, really good, why is this really important to you firstly?
- Mr 27: Because I think it gives you personally, it gives you self esteem and it gives you, it keeps you doing well to develop yourself and move your own career on and get to think about why or what you could be doing next and you know, we have all got goals and ambitions in life.
- Interviewer: What about for yourself?
- Mr 27: Well basically my mission has always been, it needn't be the best, just to be happy in the job I am doing, because I have a happy home life as well so I like to have the balance. I don't want a job where I am working 70 hours a week but not having the quality time at home or do it the other way around. I want that balance and this actual current career gives me that balance, because I live 15 miles away, so it is not as if it is a burden in a way. I can, as much as I want to into a career, but I also can have quality in my life at home as well.
- Interviewer: So that is really quite important.
- Mr 27: Yes to have the balance, I have got a family so I can spend time and watch the children who are growing up. But unfortunately in this business of retail it is a 24/7 operation, so it doesn't always work like that unfortunately, it can be very unpredictable. Fortunately we are not here, customers are very nice, and it is a nice location so we don't have to extensive hours and things.
- Interviewer: It is a really nice place; this is a nice one isn't it, a pleasant one. Planning ahead you could say is really important, can you tell me why that is really important to you?

- Mr 27: You don't want to get yourself into a position where if you haven't planned ahead you have lost sales, because you haven't thought about things that might, just talk about... and panic buy and you know what people have got to do. Also, from the other side of the coin, it is from the employees, you have always got people on holiday or whatever, that needs to be planned ahead, so obviously your resources aren't stretched, you know, when they don't need to be. Planning can go a very long way, it is either short or long term. I mean really, we work on a week to week basis here, because the nature of the operation and that is the nature of the business in this village location we are in and it works well here. There are times you have to plan further ahead of course. I mean obviously we can plan things like summer seasonal things, Easter, Christmas, we can plan those more and we do, but obviously for the rest of the year it is just a week to week basis really.
- Interviewer: Do you mean there are some things you can plan and some things you can't plan?
Mr 27: Absolutely.
- Interviewer: What do you think you can't plan from?
Mr 27: Oh predictability, weather changes, war, things like that and things you don't expect to happen, you know, sudden surges, like a weekend. You know Saturday was a really nice day and you can have bar b que things and Sunday was a bit grotty really. In this business it is probably one of the key things, you can't plan for the unpredictability.
- Interviewer: Yes we have had a really nice March, things are so different, if you think of this year and last year for example.
Mr 27: People are buying a lot earlier, they are thinking about going to sit outside in the garden, their garden products and relations over and bar b ques and things, whereas last year it wasn't so nice until a lot later on. Also this year, probably people have changed because Easter is later, people have changed the way they are, people are going on holiday a little bit earlier, before Easter, rather than leaving it as late.
- Interviewer: So you can plan for things like your resources, your staff time and to, these things up and of course things like Easter and Christmas. Why is that planning bit clearly important do you think, do you think it is to do with you being on top of everything you being a really good manager if you plan well or is it, or is there some sort of bottom line to it really.
Mr 27: Yes at the end of the day, especially in this business, you have to plan, because we are very limited on space, if we don't get things in bit by bit, we are going to over burden ourselves at the last minute. So say if we left everything to the last week of Christmas we would have no chance, because we are absolutely snowed under and also we have to look at what obviously our suppliers in our depot, we have a central depot in Bridgend and Wellingborough. So obviously what their systems, they are working, what time scales they are working on, because if they can't provide us with the stock, we will have a situation which we call burst out, which means, you know, they can't get it on the trucks, because other people are Obviously you need to plan to stop those kinds of things happening. So you have got the stock in the stores when you want to.
- Interviewer: This sort of planning bit, is it almost quite difficult to plan in those ... you have got quite a sort of people that you are dealing with when you are planning. Do you find that you have learned how to do that correctly, how do you manage to do that?
Mr 27: Yes, you definitely learn with experience and I think you are learning year by year what is going to happen with it, especially with the company, you always know if there is going to, if there are going to be problems in the depot. So you learn to plan that little bit more ahead, so you have got it here before, because you know it is going to happen, every weekend, you can always say on a weekend there is a particular time whether it is Christmas or Easter, you say right, yes the depot is going to struggle and you have got to plan ahead and I think you learn from experience. You notice with the younger managers they

haven't thought about it and they don't realise that and then they know situation is ..., with stock and you can't provide your service to the customers, because you haven't got the products that they want. It is a vicious circle really.

Interviewer: Yes. When you first started out did you find out that you maybe over ordered or ...?

Mr 27: Oh yes, definitely, you learn by mistakes, we all do, we have all made a lot of mistakes, as long as you learn by them, it is not a problem.

Interviewer: So you think that this planning ahead is really part of being a good manager ...?

Mr 27: Most definitely, definitely.

Interviewer: And you spoke of your self esteem again, I mean is it also how other people think of you, that may be quite important to you as well or are you not so worried about that?

Mr 27: No, I am not so worried, I am not so concerned about is that at the end of the day that we all work together and if anyone has got concerns will they come and see me and we will deal with those concerns. Because it being a village community it is very nice, because everybody knows everybody really, so all the staff, most of them know me or know each other. That always go down well with the locals as well because you are employing locally. So if they are willing to support you, that is why we have a good customer base, because they are willing to support the local economy if you like and obviously because they want the village to stay as it is, a village with a village high street. They don't want the big boys coming in and wiping it out and closing the high street down. So I think it works both ways really, I mean if you have a good relationship with, you know, your employees down the local community, you definitely get on a lot better I think. I think that is where Convenience Stores Ltd.'s have found their niche really, is the village areas.

Interviewer: Yes it looks like it.

Mr 27: And when they go into the, yes, we struggle when we go into the towns and the cities, we find it difficult because obviously you are not getting the same clientele all the time and you can't build a relationship so you need to, obviously then it gives the opportunity for the big boys to come in and wipe you away really.

Interviewer: considering on price factors maybe they will, you know, they will, elsewhere.

Mr 27: That's right.

Interviewer: The thing about this relationship is that it is really quite difficult to build up.

Mr 27: That's right.

Interviewer: Do you think Convenience Stores Ltd.'s really should focus their stores in places like this?

Mr 27: Oh definitely yes, because these are our strong cards. The stores that do well are in more the villages or small town areas. Where we are in, OK we have got some good ones, but a lot of them do struggle and also we have a lot of high turnover in employees.

Interviewer: Do you have much of that problem here?

Mr 27: No not a problem.

Interviewer: I thought you might say that!

- Mr 27: Very low turnover, extremely low turnover, because there again you have got people who, you know, they have lived in a community they like working somewhere like this, because it has got, to work, everybody knows everybody, so you are all working together as a team and supporting each other. I think that is how you build success really.
- Interviewer: Very good. Next one you have got is personal leadership style. Can you tell me a little bit about your personal leadership style, what do you think it is for a start, I suppose and how, why it is so important to you?
- Mr 27: I think I try to definitely lead from the front and lead by example, so I wouldn't do anything that anybody else wouldn't do. So whether that is put a pack of beans on the shelf to cleaning the floor, whatever, I will do the same as everybody else, at the end of the day that is the only way you are going to motivate other people to actually carry out their job if you like. I have always have believed that leading by example is good and always, I always like to be on the shop floor rather than out back because I always believe, and you definitely can't in this day and age, you can't run a business from in the office you have got to run a business on the shop floor. I worked for Sainsbury's before and that was a very big problem I found was that, sometimes you don't see a manager from one day to the next and then you wonder how do they know what is going on. I have learned myself that it is the only way you can sort issues out and learn about things and see what is going on, is to be out there with the people. Also up to a point, building a relationship with your customers, they all know me, they all know who I am.
- Interviewer: This leading from the front and leading by example, why is it really important to you, is it more to do with this building relationships and maybe that you ... in the bottom line, you haven't mentioned ... the bottom line, maybe you are not so concerned about that issue?
- Mr 27: I am not concerned, obviously the business I am concerned about, but at the end of the day we always look at it, if you put the right processors in place and the bottom line should look after itself. So if you have got everything in place, like you have planned ahead, the staff are all doing their jobs, you have got your leads up in the right stock and show and all the sales opportunities, that will look after the bottom line and the profit will look after itself. At the end of the day we are concentrating make sure we are giving the customers the best service possible really and if they are happy with that they come back and that has been proved it here, they can get what they want, they can get it when they want. Yes, some people I think, get very like het up on bottom lines or figures, but that doesn't, that is not your job at the end of the day totally. Yes OK your job is, I am here to run a business, but I am here to run a business successfully and with everybody working with me and together.
- Interviewer: OK and motivation of staff
- Mr 27: Talking about that, if your staff are motivated and well trained then they are obviously going to give you their best, you know productivity and efficiency which means that you are going to get the job done better and you will get more done.
- Interviewer: You have mentioned developing staff, that is quite important as well, I know it is wrapped in with all these other issues in some respects, can you tell me what your sort of philosophy of that is?
- Mr 27: Yes, I think obviously, we try to in this business is what we call more to skilled people. So obviously they will start off with a core job, if you like, whether they work on tills or whatever they might be, they try to develop it into doing other things, but if the more skilled people then if you have got issues of opportunities, say people off sick or on holiday then you have always got somebody that can cover and it makes life so much easier for everybody else.
- Interviewer: Sort of flexible.

Mr 27: Flexible staff really and also developing staff into management roles as well, obviously the good ones you pick up on and in the business we have got a lot of training programmes. We have got first managing training programmes and we have got retail managing training programmes which are, you know, we are able to develop staff into management in the future, because obviously that is the important part of any future, any business with a future, developing their staff and moving them on really.

Interviewer: So does the developing your staff sort of fit in with your relationship bit, because you said it was very important

Mr 27: Yes absolutely right, yes, because I think you can, you can always pick up on, obviously the staff that who you think, you know, can be or can be developed further if you like, or are willing to be developed further, because people are more, you always have staff families or whatever it might be, for those who haven't and they are willing to give that little bit extra or want to give that little bit extra.

Interviewer: So if I can kind of sum up some of the things you have been saying here. You think that a focus on developing staff and your personal motivation are building good service to the customers through all relationships is really key?

Mr 27: Absolutely right.

Interviewer: And then the bottom line comes out of that as a result ...

Mr 27: It is a result not a process.

Interviewer: Yes. That about sums it up, thank you very much, that is very kind you.

(Tape switched off and on again???)

Interviewer: ... that this sort of experienced bit of working in your store. You could suggest I suppose that before I came into this I was in this area, oh supermarket store managers have got it right, they have got everything. They have got all the data, they would link into your store card, they can go, they have got everything with their fingertips.

(Talking together)

Interviewer: ... nobody uses it very much.

Mr 27:, we haven't got any of, and we get very limited information and we will get the sales information and losses information and expenses information, but anything is controlled by our Head Office, you know, they get all the information obviously through our PC's and back offices and then they decide obviously on what ranges they believe we need to stock.

Interviewer: Of course.

Mr 27: They get it wrong from time to time and then obviously the customers are not happy if you take it the stuff out of the way and but then it is our job to feed that back and say look you know we need to put this back into the range again, because of feedback is saying we need to carry this product.

Interviewer: Yes and you would know your customers in this region, they might ...

(Talking together)

Interviewer: So you don't use this hard data quite so much then, you are using your soft data by interaction with customers?

Mr 27: Absolutely right. I mean of course the business always looks, at the end of the day we all look at figures at the bottom line, that is what the, will do because that is how you measure it. But at the end of the day, and I have said to you, if you have got your processes in place the results look after, they should look after themselves.

Interviewer: Yes. Thanks

Interview with Respondent 28 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 28 October 2002

- Interviewer: You've put, I can see you put service quality as the most important factor. And of course it's in the middle of our map as well. Can you tell me why that factor's really important to you?
- Mr 28: I think it's one of the major things that we try and differentiate the company against our competitors.
- Interviewer: OK Yeah.
- Mr 28: We're not going to be able to match them on price. We can't advertise in the same way.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 28: But the one thing we can do is try and give them better quality. We know a lot of our customers and they know us. We're in the local area.
- Interviewer: Very good, right. OK why is that differentiation and knowledge of customers really important to you personally?
- Mr 28: To me personally?
- Interviewer: Yes.
- Mr 28: Well it's almost a two-way thing. You get a little bit back as well when you give someone, when you know you've fulfilled their needs basically. You've helped them out, find out what they want. It's almost a social thing, shopping at Convenience Stores Ltd., for a lot of our customers, they're in every day, sometimes twice a day.
- Interviewer: Yeah right yeah.
- Mr 28: So it's not to buy food. If it was to do that then, you could do that once a week.
- Interviewer: Yeah you can you can.
- (laughter)
- OK, so you feel as if you're getting in touch with customers. Maybe it's part of your enjoyment. Yeah. I think a lot of the team members do enjoy, there's a friendly banter and also, feeling that as it is local, that feeling of trying to keep it within the town, and keeping the town spirit alive.
- Interviewer: OK. That job enjoyment and town spirit, why is that really important to you?
- Mr 28: Well. I'm a local person as well. A lot of our team members live in the area, have children that go to the school, everything about it.
- Interviewer: So it's part of the community, you feel as if you should put something back in.
- Mr 28: Yeah. And with Convenience Stores Ltd. I find that a lot more nowadays, it's something we've been pushing as managers to do. To push a lot of community based or fund-raising events or different things where we can help out in that respect.

Interviewer: OK great. Thank you very much. OK you also mentioned shared corporate culture as being a really important point. Why would you say that's really important to you? You mentioned something about the team?

Mr 28: Yeah. Sometimes I feel that they can talk the talk and not necessarily walk the walk as they say. And they can say the pretty words of a way they'd like to be, but sometimes there are barriers to stopping that.

Interviewer: Right OK. And why is that important to you that you get that right, and that's maybe reducing the barriers?

Mr 28: We're all aiming in the same direction.

Interviewer: And why is that team...?

Mr 28: The team could also, again on that personal level you like to know where you're going, where's the journey taking you.

Interviewer: Why is it important for you to know where the end of that journey is, where you're going?

Mr 28: Again, job satisfaction. And knowing we can all be soldiers at the end of the day and do what we're told blindly, or if you get explained to you why!

Interviewer: Yeah. And that's important to you, to know why.

Mr 28: Yeah. I'm a pragmatist.

Interviewer: OK. Very good I think. OK why do you feel like that? Why is it important for you to know why, the direction, and, can you do your job better do you think if you know the direction, or is it something to do with fitting in to the culture, or you're agreeing with it, or agree with the culture or?

Mr 28: As I say. They are working along a very positive culture, and a change in trying to do that. Just sometimes I feel that, because of sometimes what's happened in past when companies have tried, it's not quite got there and people become very negative.

Interviewer: And disillusioned if it doesn't happen.

Mr 28: Yeah. And sometimes we can be a bit cold to the idea when we try again.

Interviewer: Yeah. See what you mean yeah.

Mr 28: We did this 3 years ago I remember now, you did that a bit sometimes with your team members.

Interviewer: And that maybe, with job satisfaction again, you want to feel as if you know what's happening. You're fitting in with what's the culture. Presumably if it was a culture you didn't appreciate you would?

Mr 28: If you knew that, then you'd made a decision based on it.

Interviewer: OK. Thank you. Great. And the next issue is co-ordinating operations. Why do you think that's really important to you?

Mr 28: Basically it can affect us in lots of ways with regards to trying to give the customers what they want. If deliveries are late.

Interviewer: OK.

Mr 28: If you start with just that one, deliveries side, it affects your team rota, it affects stock and orders, it affects customer service. Sorry just speaking of today, where the delivery arrived about 4 hours late yeah.

Interviewer: It always happens.

Mr 28: It all just knocks on from there. But also that's a 2 way thing. If we don't feed back the information we have to then, one, they don't know how that affects us, and also, information that they require from us to try and make things better from their end as well.

Interviewer: Are these things important because it's maybe less of a hassle if they all went well?

Mr 28: Mmm.

Interviewer: That if the co-ordination was really sort of spot-on, it would make your life a lot easier presumably?

Mr 28: If the computer system was doing what it was meant to be doing. If things basically happened when they were meant to happen. It makes long-term planning difficult.

Interviewer: Yes yes of course. Or even..

Mr 28: We're very good at short-term planning.

(laughter)

Interviewer: OK. And that long-term planning makes it difficult. Why is that really important to you? Is it important for?

Mr 28: Stability.

Interviewer: Stability. And I notice you haven't got sort of planning bits in there. You?

Mr 28: Yes well again because of that, planning in store is actually very difficult to... sort of incorporate, the way things are at the moment. We are a bit... not day-to-day, but I'd say, going back to that other one with knowing where you're going.

Interviewer: Yes yeah. Planning long-term you think is difficult, it's not easy?

Mr 28: It's not as though we can, like last time even when we planned manager's rotas for a month, within half a week somebody was taken out of the store and moved somewhere else. The minute you plan.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 28: And a lot of long-term planning is externally. Team member wise we can do our own bits and bobs.

Interviewer: And you can control that? You feel as if you've got some control over that, but the long-term one you're not sure about? OK. Rightee-o. So that sort of, future orientation bit which you look as if you're pretty keen on. You look as if you need to know where you're going, you'd like to have some sort of guidelines, and I suppose everybody would wouldn't they?

Mr 28: Mm.

Interviewer: Why is that important? Is it important for your career? It is important for your day-to-day decision-making? Why is it important for you?
Mr 28: All. It fits into all of those.

Interviewer: OK. And what aspects of your career do you think it really impinges on? Your motivation or?
Mr 28: Yeah well as managers we're meant to motivate our team. A lot of time nobody motivates us.

Interviewer: Right. So you feel as if, if you're in a difficult position, an insecure position, not knowing where things are going, you have difficulty motivating the team because you can't really give a clear message I suppose. Is it?
Mr 28: Well no I always try and motivate the team but as I say, it's just, different people are motivated by different things.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 28: To some people that's remuneration, to some it's just being told at the end of the day, you've done a good job.

Interviewer: What do you think motivates you more? Or is it both?
Mr 28: I would like to think that I did a good job and tried my best.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you think it's important for you to be known as a good manager and?
Mr 28: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you think characterises a good manager? I know that's a difficult question.
Mr 28: Yeah, as you say I think that's difficult. There are good managers in different ways.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 28: There are some that are very financially aware, but perhaps are a little less team orientated, and you've got others that are very good at the team side and, I would say that's a difficult one.

Interviewer: And what do you think your strengths are in that direction?
Mr 28: I would perhaps be more alongside the side of being perhaps too team-orientated.

Interviewer: Too team-orientated?
Mr 28: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh I don't know.
Mr 28: I can too easily see the other person's point of view.

Interviewer: Well, I suppose building teams is pretty important. OK great. That's very interesting. Learning to improve. You've got 2 staff development things here. Learning to improve staff development, developing staff. Why do you think they are really important to you? Maybe you just mentioned it really in some respects that the team is important and?

Mr 28: I always feel that somebody took a chance on me, and most Convenience Stores Ltd. managers that I know were part-time, back-room boys, a few hours a week, part-time job, and 20 years later.

(laughter)

And that's everything from I think the MD down. We were all, and if you're not careful, you lose that base. You're fragmenting the way we work nowadays, there aren't many people who work full-time.

Interviewer: Yes OK.

Mr 28: It's looking at where you know, the future comes.

Interviewer: Why is that, are these sort of issues really important to you do you think? You're thinking of the development of the company in some respects are you?

Mr 28: Yes. One, it would make, you know benefit the company, but also personally. If you haven't got the skill bases within the store then you can't go forward.

Interviewer: And do you think that's one of the major problems at the moment, that?

Mr 28: We don't recruit managers from outside the company.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 28: Which is a good thing.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 28: But they're having to now, sort of looking a lot more along that line, because they're looking to grow quite quickly.

Interviewer: And you would say that would be?

Mr 28: Difficult the way things are at the moment.

Interviewer: Why is that? Why do you say? Why would it be difficult to recruit outside?

Mr 28: No no not recruitment. For the company growing.

Interviewer: Oh right.

Mr 28: And not having enough good people coming up.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr 28: It was like, we all used to work like an apprenticeship basically.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 28: You'd learn different areas of the store but take your time basically. All the little skills that you need, and I feel sometimes nowadays they're made up too quickly.

Interviewer: Yeah and they don't know all the ins and outs of all the logistics, all the connections between these items and just, very superficial view of it all and...?
Mr 28: Yeah.

Interviewer: Right. That certainly could be a big problem for the future yeah.

(tape turned over)

Interviewer: They've always done that, they've always developed people internally and gradually made them up when they feel they're ready for it and.
Mr 28: Oh no. A lot of them have gone on, they're bringing in what they call the RMT Management Training Scheme for degree level, and they're getting quite a lot of success out of that. It's just, the locations that they're going to as well are a bit, based in London and South East, but now we're pushing for the North and stuff, where again a lot of current Convenience Stores Ltd. managers won't go.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah yeah.
Mr 28: So logistically it's..

Interviewer: So have they offered you one in Huddersfield yet...?
Mr 28: Well no.

(laughter)

But different Convenience Stores Ltd. managers or management are being offered it. But not many people are going that way.

Interviewer: Especially if you're a local person, and your whole family is here and so it's very difficult.
Mr 28: Mm.

Interviewer: Have you moved around a lot?
Mr 28: No. No I've been lucky in my work life, not been more than half an hour away from where I live.

Interviewer: Right. So they put you in stores scattered around this sort of area really? Within a half an hour commute or whatever.
Mr 28: Yeah.

Interviewer: Right. Very good. So this development of staff. I think yes. I can understand what you're saying that, need to improve, apprenticeship schemes, you're concerned about the development of the company and the way directions are going a bit. Why is that really important to you? Is it a motivational factor? Are you concerned about it?

Mr 28: No. No it's not necessarily a concern it's more, you know a lot of the time you don't want people trying to struggle and do a job that they haven't been properly trained to do. Again there is less of that nowadays, we're a lot better. But it's one of the concerns, you know you don't just want people thrown in. I remember my first day, you know, there he goes, just get on with it!

Interviewer: You don't think it should be like that?

Mr 28: No no, definitely not. And as I say it's a lot less like that nowadays. You know they feel a lot more comfortable in what they're doing, and confident.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 28: And again, the customers see a lot of that. The team members are trained in what they're meant to be doing.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 28: Then the customers can...

Interviewer:what they're doing, yeah.

Mr 28: OK. So the success of the store is maybe linked to some of the other things we've talked about I suppose. It's your career. You want to be a good manager. Any other issues like that do you think? Your community is very strong here as well?

Interviewer: Uh huh, yeah. Definitely. It's a good way of building the team again. When they're behind, you know our charity is EMS, so they're forever doing bits and bobs for them.

(tape paused)

To keep them as a unit. Rather than I don't know, individuals just doing what they have to do and going home.

Interviewer: Very good. Thank you very much. And last but not least, could I ask you to explain some of these sort of big connections here? Especially the strong ones that you've put down here. Although I assume that they're reasonably logical. They are logical. I can see the links there, but maybe I could ask you to explain them a bit. Just in case it went wrong.

Mr 28: Uh huh.

Interviewer: Knowledge of customers and service quality. So can you? How do you get knowledge of customers? Is it experience?

Mr 28: Yeah it's experience. And also a lot of them, we deal with them 2 or 3 times a day. It's just where they're saying – Hello, how's it going? – It's those sort of things that you wouldn't really find a cashier in Tesco's asking the customer how his mum is.

Interviewer: Of course yeah.

Mr 28: And you know they.

Interviewer: They appreciate that do they?
Mr 28: They appreciate that yeah.

Interviewer: And... operations, well of course you've mentioned about that issue.
Mr 28: If things don't go, then we can't...!

Interviewer: Certainly. Motivation of staff and staff development.
Mr 28: Well again. I think if you show commitment to them that you're training and develop them, it can lead quite strongly to.. motivation.

Interviewer: Yeah I agree. And staff development too, flexibility. What sort of flexibility are you talking about?
Mr 28: The different skills. First on smaller operations, people have to be trained on say, the deli, or on bakery, on grocery, so that they can cover different areas of the store. Or if people are on holiday, or day-to-day.

Interviewer: And presumably if you develop them in that way, they are presumably more motivated and they can fit in like a manger essentially.
Mr 28: Yeah.

Interviewer: They can just do whatever they've been trained to do, and quite enjoy the challenge.
Mr 28: Mmm.

Interviewer: Very good thank you very much, that's very interesting.

Some of the people I've spoken to recently....

End of recording.

Interview with Respondent 29 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 7 March 2003

- Interviewer: OK. You put personal motivation as your key number one important factor. Can you tell me why that's important to you?
Mr 29: I believe my motivation is what, you know, drives the place forward really. To be honest if I'm de-motivated it rubs off on the people around me. So whatever the circumstances I always make sure I go round with a bright and happy face.
- Interviewer: Right. OK.
Mr 29: And try and keep a happy perspective on things. I think it sets the mood for the rest of the team.
- Interviewer: Happy things. Right. And why do you think that sort of team happiness, or you portraying that happy feel, is really important to you?
Mr 29: Well we work in quite small local stores really. And I know most of the customers that come through the door, and get to know people. And also that rubs off on the customers as well. If you've got a manager that walks round with a long face, it eventually rubs off on the customers.
- Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 29: So that's why I do that.
- Interviewer: Customers notice, and how about the staff themselves?
Mr 29: Yeah, they tend to pick up on it quite easily. You know, if you're in a bad mood, generally 9 times out 10 it'll rub off on them.
- Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 29: And the productivity goes down. Obviously you've got nowhere to draw the line.
- Interviewer: So if you're happy all the time, and something really upsets you, they'd be even more shocked perhaps I don't know?
Mr 29: Possibly. Possibly but I tend not to let things shock me too much. You know, you tend to just go with the flow and you know, roll with the punches.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- GM If something goes wrong something goes wrong. There's not a lot you can do about it, you just learn from it and get on with it.
- Interviewer: Right OK. So customers notice it, and then productivity of staff is really important to you as well. Why are they pretty important to you do you think? You said that the customers notice it's a happy place, and the productivity of staff increases because it's happy and friendly. Why is that really really important to you, underpinning this?
Mr 29: I like to run a nice, not just tidy, but a happy store. When people come to work they don't want to come to work and be pissed off all day. And I think the best way to get the results I need out of people, to push the place forward and to make the customers happy, because that's what we're there for at the end of the day. I like to see customers leave my store with smiling faces, they've got what they wanted. And I think that really helps out.
- Interviewer: And so you get those customers happy, presumably repeat business?

Mr 29: Yeah that's right. You build up customer loyalty. And that's really important when you work in a small village or town.

Interviewer: OK yeah great. Why does that really motivate you then? What's underpinning it do you think? Is it, you want to be regarded as a happy manager or?

Mr 29: I think I have a great desire to move forward in the business.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 29: And the only way to move forward in the business is to get results out of the position that you're in.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 29: And to get results from the position I'm in I need to make sure that I'm doing everything to, first of all please the customers, secondly keep my staff or team happy. Obviously there is a line to be drawn. You have to know when you know, if things aren't going right, you have to draw the line. And you have to make the team aware that there is a line there.

Interviewer: And what sort of thing? You talk about, you want to move on, you want to be quite dynamic in this business. What are you, what sort of things are you aiming for? What sort of things, financial reward? Is it being known as a really shit hot manager or? What motivates you?

Mr 29: I like, basically I like people to come to work for me and say that they like working for me at the end of the day.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 29: It gives me great pleasure to know that someone's gone home and they've enjoyed working for me. And that I've got a decent day's work out of them.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK thank you. Personal leadership style. You also mention this is really important. Why is that, I suppose we've talked about that really, it's a similar sort of thing presumably that you're talking about is it? A friendly atmosphere and?

Mr 29: You have to learn how to adapt your personal leadership style as well. Obviously there are going to be situations where you can't be happy.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 29: And you need to deal with certain situations. You need to be flexible in your leadership style.

Interviewer: What do you say your leadership style is? If you can answer that question?

Mr 29: I tend to lead from the front. I tend to motivate people. I don't sit in the office all day.

Interviewer: How do you do that do you think? Leading from the front, you show them how to do it themselves and? What other things do you think you've learnt by doing that?

Mr 29: Most of the time I work with them. But I show them how to do the job properly the first time.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 29: And then what they do is, they go away and I let them to do the job, and they come back to me and they say – Is this right? – And I say, well you know, and I try and coach them into doing a better job.

Interviewer: OK right.
Mr 29: But the team always know where to come and find me if I'm not on the shop floor. It's sort of like a helicopter approach really.

Interviewer: Yeah right. Helicopter meaning sorting things out you mean or?
Mr 29: Yeah. I get in there and I help them out, then I let them get on to their own devices, and I take a step back and see what's going on.

Interviewer: Right I see. So why have you developed that particular style do you think? Have you had some good experiences in the past presumably, or maybe negative experiences of other styles?
Mr 29: I mean, I started off in a very tough store. It was a very dilapidated store and the staff were very down and depressed.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 29: So that's where I started off really, sort of picking them up, and getting them moving. And I think in these local stores you have to keep people motivated. Because not only do these people work for me, but a lot of these people know all or most of the customers coming through the door so.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 29: Word of mouth yeah.

Interviewer: Right yeah. Do you find with other leadership styles maybe that, or with things you've tried out in the past, that didn't work for you, to develop your own?
Mr 29: Not really, I tend to have stuck to this one to be honest.

Interviewer: You find it's worked reasonably?
Mr 29: Yeah, I tend to get the results I need yeah.

Interviewer: Thank you. Developing staff. Why is that important to you? We've mentioned some of the obvious things. Why is it really? Does it really, help the bottom line, and therefore help you as a manager? Is it an easier life because everybody's working well as a team?
Mr 29: I think it's a bit of both really. I mean if you've got people that can do the job, and take some of the onus off yourself.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 29: I think it gives you a bit of both. It makes your life a bit easier, but also helps develop the bottom line. If you're working to a common objective.

Interviewer: Yeah. How do you think you approach that developing staff then? How do you? You say you coach them how to do it properly, and what..?
Mr 29: I think it's a case of identifying when people need you to devote more training. We have an in-house.. training scheme anyway which we try to get people to use, and once they pass that they have the choice of moving on to another area.

Interviewer: Yeah. And that's what motivates them, because they feel as if they're getting, progressing in the company and?
Mr 29: That's right yeah. The same thing that drives me yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Next factor was... resources for the future. This dilemma of present and future. How do you put the emphasis on this, and which one do you focus on?
 You obviously have to do both in some respects?

Mr 29: Well I think you have to look after the present to look after the future. If you, you know, look after your team and look after the things around you.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr 29: In my experience, things tend to move forward in the future anyway.

Interviewer: And why would that be important to you? Why is building for the future important to you?

Mr 29: The stores I've been in, I like them to continue doing well. I mean the store I was in last, in Wendover, is still doing very well.

Interviewer: Right yeah.

Mr 29: I like that to continue on, so that people can look back and say, you know, - That's the team that Gavin built, it's still moving forward. – you know.

Interviewer: Yeah. Right. You put a team together and you feel as if it's ur.

Mr 29: Yeah, and most of them are still there now.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 29: It's still my local shop, so I still shop in there.

Interviewer: Ah right.

(laughter)

Mr 29: It's always nice to go back in there. And get what I want.

Interviewer: And get extra service.

(laughter)

Mr 29: That's right yeah.

Interviewer: OK right. So that's very very much, you want to be known as a very good manager again. And your reputation for team building I suppose. Is this what?

Mr 29: I would have said so yeah.

Interviewer: Is there anything else, of this management lark that you would like to? Team building yeah OK. Developing staff?

Mr 29: Results I would say. I like to be known for my results. I mean, you have to have a healthy balance between results and, balance between good results and a good team.

Interviewer: Right yeah. Sometimes they're contradictory, and sometimes good service is contradictory to a result, because you spend more on good service, and therefore you, hits the bottom the line a bit. How do you approach that dilemma?

Mr 29: Most of my team have been trained very well.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 29: They tend to offer the best service they can do. And obviously if I think they're not, then we go and sit down and have a chat about it. But most of the service is very very good. You know. They all pack the bags when they do the shop, and that's through team building exercises.

Interviewer: Do you think that it costs.. money for a good service.

Mr 29: Yeah I think so.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you feel as if you're, maybe trying to build a reputation for team building and good service, developing staff.

Mr 29: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think that classifies you as a good manager?

Mr 29: I'd like to think so.

Interviewer: How long do you think it takes to build up a good team, because you've obviously been in different places?

Mr 29: Langley I've found quite tough because we had a high turnover at the start, which I'm trying to deal with.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr 29: I think it's down to the area. But usually within about a year, year and a half. It's not overnight.

Interviewer: Right yeah.

Mr 29: But you can make some immediate effects on the team. You know, being interested in what they're doing. Sitting down on a one to one, or as a team, and asking them what they want from you.

Interviewer: Right yeah.

Mr 29: Trying to do your best to give them what, you know, near enough want they want.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 29: Obviously you can't give them everything.

Interviewer: No no. Do you find that some of the things that you can't give for instance, some things that are out of your control, like wages I suppose in some respects. How do you approach that sort of thing? Some things you've got a lot of control over, or you feel as though you've got control of them. Motivation and things like that.

Mr 29: Yeah that's right.

Interviewer: But other things you can't.
Mr 29: Well sometimes you just have to put your hands up. You know, wages is controlled by head office, there's nothing I can do about that. But at the end of the day, they decided to take the job on. You know, they knew the wage when they took it on. There's not a lot you can do about that.

Interviewer: Is there any other things that you feel as if, they're outside of your control, that you like to have more control over perhaps?
Mr 29: In terms of team not really, because we get quite a free reign... obviously if turnover is up they notice it, and they ask us why, but in terms of looking after you team, it's down to the sales.

Interviewer: How long were you at Wendover, were you there for a long time?
Mr 29: 2 years.

Interviewer: Right. So you feel as if you've had a good sort of 2 years slog at building a good team up, and feel as if it's still...
Mr 29: I don't like to be in a store for longer than 2 or 3 years maximum. You start to get stale.

Interviewer: Yeah right yeah. Have you moved nearly every 2 years then?
Mr 29: Near enough. I was, the store before that was about a year and half. Roughly every 2 years.

Interviewer: Right. Is that company then or is it? I've heard some that have stayed.
Mr 29: Yeah not really. I'd have liked to have stayed at Wendover a bit longer because as I say it was local to me, it was easy for me. But you tend to get into routines.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 29: When you stay somewhere for too long. You start to get... you start to overlook certain things.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 29: And the minute you do that, you lose your edge.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 29: ... Also you start to miss out on some of things that the team are doing or not doing.

Interviewer: Yeah. Like what? Like, things like, because they always do it, you don't spot something say?
Mr 29: That's right yeah. And when things do go wrong, you tend to overlook them a bit more if you've been there for a while.

Interviewer: Yeah right yeah. Thank you very much. I think that we've probably covered quite a lot of ground there in quite a short period of time.

End of interview.

Interview with Respondent 30 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 31 March 2003, 11am

- Interviewer: You have got that motivation in staff has been really important, can you tell me why that is really important to you?
Mr 30: I don't know I always think that as a manager you are only as good as the staff that you have got. So if they are motivated then...
- Interviewer: Do you feel that you then that you can do much about that?
Mr 30: Yes. As a leader, I think that is very important to motivate your staff, because obviously they are the contact with the customer, obviously as well as myself, but if they are not happy in their job, then obviously it could affect the sales profitability of the store. So as far as I am concerned staff are the number one area.
- Interviewer: Yes I can see it coming out of you in quite a lot of different ways there, it is quite prominent on this sort of map. Why others, sort of happy staff and then leading onto your sales and profitability really important to you personally, is it sort of to do with career, is it to do with wanting to be known as a good manager ...?
Mr 30: Yes I think it is quite important to me, results are obviously important, reputation. I think that is the measure of which we, as a manager in
- Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 30: Obviously that so far that has been in my opinion and successful of the results that I have had in stores.
- Interviewer: Right, so you feel that your career develops by that success?
Mr 30: Yes.
- Interviewer: Can I ask you what sort of aims you have got as far as your career is concerned.
Mr 30: Just to manage a larger store.
- Interviewer: Actually I have found that, a manager did this task and he had just come back from the area managers job and he said it was very similar, the sort of things that they were asking, which is quite surprising, a lot of the same techniques used, of course, was because of the sorting technique, was not used but looking for his staff development sort of reputation.
Mr 30: Yes.
- Interviewer: OK, developing staff is really important to you, why is that very important, is it linked with the other one, is it sort of, you have got something between them anyway or no you haven't got a link between the flexibility?
Mr 30: Yes as a business I think we are very short on management staff, so obviously if I can develop people within the business to manage, teaching managers.
- Interviewer: So why is that sort of really important to you, you are being helpful to Head Office or whatever ...?
Mr 30: Yes, because they can actually see that you can develop people within your own business first, obviously that would be helpful for their business as well. So obviously the two go hand in hand.
- Interviewer: And is this sort of linked to your career aspirations or...?
Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: And is that a reason for it, apart from the odd personal benefit or is it lots of different personal benefits.
Mr 30: I think there is a personal benefit and it does help because obviously you will be seen as somebody who can develop people. So future roles are seen as a positive and it is something I would like to get into at some point.

Interviewer: And of course area managers are very sort of?
Mr 30: Yes that is right, yeah.

Interviewer: They have got sort of 15 stores or whatever it is and they have got to staff....
Mr 30: Yes that is right.

Interviewer: So you see that as a career sort of goal?
Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: You want to raise this training/developing sort of role, what about this...?
Mr 30: Looking at it from the sort of management ...? What's is it, yes, training tomorrow's managers, you know, have you got these people coming through, obviously that would save the company financially and save the company a lot of money, but there is always externally. So yes that would be of benefit.

Interviewer: So are you flexible when someone says, why is that important to you?
Mr 30: Because as a business, we actually get peaks & troughs. Every week, you, there is a situation where you have got staff shortages at certain points of the week and I think it is very important if you have got somebody who is flexible enough to jump into those sorts of gaps. As a company I think we do the right thing, we have a flexible contract, so the employees are employed for a certain amount of hours a week, not specific days, that helps us. Because you do need colleagues that are flexible in their approach to the job.

Interviewer: So is that happening, is it to do with, linked to the planning bit, is it linked to, what is it linked to? Is it sort of less hassle for the Manager?
Mr 30: Yes that is right yes obviously if, because it is unpredictable, the business, you know the link, dependent on whether if you have got somebody going suddenly, you know, you are going to be a lot busier, it is reactive to that change quite quality. If you have got flexible employees, then you can manage that better.

Interviewer: I just heard on the radio on the way down that March has been years?
Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you see a lot of difference?
Mr 30: Yes it has been a lot busier, yes, compared to last year!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: So it is a reacting to change and rapid change quite quickly is the real major that you think is Important?

Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: Why is that reaction in the chain pretty important. Is it linked to profitability here or ...?

Mr 30: It is linked to obviously turnover and profitability. Customers, if you get, customers they are more likely to come back if they get a good service, rather than a!

Interviewer: And you think flexibility adds to service quality in some way?

Mr 30: Yes, the service that you are giving has improved because obviously you have got more people to cover your service points., been quality of service but the overall.

Interviewer: Is this this years service?

Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: So you don't get any sort of like duff points where it really all breaks down and won't, all these people?

Mr 30: That's right yes.

Interviewer: Next bit, we are going to talk about personnel turnover, why is that really important to you?

Mr 30: Because if you have got a high turnover of staff then you are consistently spending time, money, training staff again.

Interviewer: Have you had a lot of sort of problems here or is it a nice area ...?

Mr 30: Not really no it has got a persistent low turnover. It was quite high when I first come here, but apart from that is, obviously getting your own team together is sort of ... but now it is at quite a consistent level so, it is like we have got more experienced people now. So that helps.

Interviewer: What are the benefits that you get from that?

Mr 30: It improves customer service, it improves the work rates are going to be higher and also it is more team orientated as well. You can get to know the staff better, have a more of a better relationship wit them.

Interviewer: Why is that really important to you, the things we talked about before perhaps. So we have got better service quality or a more reliable service quality, working rates higher, team orientated and they are happy and work in teams better and relationships with customers, that improves. What is the major payback for you do you think? You see it all sort of nice and neat and it is all sort of and it is sort of like a nice, to be in. What do you think is the major benefit to you?

Interviewer: The major benefit, is one I have found is that I, but having more experienced staff, lower turnover, to spend more time looking at areas to improve a bit, rather than interviewing staff all the time or ... It gives me a chance to sit back from the business and sort of look around and I can manage. When I first came here there wasn't a

(Talking together)

Interviewer: You were shipped in to sort out some problems?
Mr 30: Yes, initially, of course I live quite local so it is quite nice for me.

Interviewer: So management, taking it back, like, they manage to put into the business rather than fire fighting with it.... Why is that really key do you think?
Mr 30: To myself it is just feeling in control of the business, like you say fire fighting, I feel like I am actually controlling results, you know wastage and look at different areas.

Interviewer: So does this sort of fit in with going for ..., increasing in general .., and get the results out or is it to do with you being a good manager or is it a bit of both or ...?
Mr 30: More results increasing in turnover!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: OK, motivation, can you tell me why that is really key ...?
Mr 30: I just think, I am a sort of approachable person and good delegator and I can adapt to different situations quite well, different people, sort of on different levels. I recognise weaknesses in people, within the retail!

(Laughter)

Mr 30: So that is sort of my style. Personal motivation, that is quite important to me because I see, if I think that I am not motivated then I will see how, I think I can't motivate other people, so that is quite important to me. The way I do that is by my own striving for results more.

Interviewer: What show them how it is done, to do things properly or is it ...?
Mr 30: My personal results within the store that is how I look at it. I don't think I am motivated by my boss, that is a weakness, I don't know if it is his fault but ...

(Laughter)

Mr 30: I believe motivation, obviously of staff, is important, he obviously doesn't believe that is an important issue as I do.

Interviewer: That's strange isn't it?
Mr 30: Yes. So my own motivation comes from, obviously, they are getting the reside results.

Interviewer: And can you tell me some examples of where you have lead that sort of link and how, have you tried, have you, is your experience?
Mr 30: Yes I suppose I have really, I have tried, I suppose I have changed my outlook on my job, but before I was, my motivation was to be an area manager as quickly as possible. I didn't care who got in my way sort of thing, but now I sort of stand back a bit and appreciate the people that work for me more than I used to do.

Interviewer: Is that because you have had the experience yourself or some negative things done to you and ...?
Mr 30: Yes, I have sort of, a few negative things happen and I was promoted and then I had to take a sideways step, that was a bit of a shock, moving back down again. Yes that, and obviously my style sort of changed over the time then.

Interviewer: So that is through experience and some bad experiences?
Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: And what about some positive experiences, you had seen this style of work for other people or is it, how did it come ...?
Mr 30: Yes, it was actually a previous boss, I think.

Interviewer: Lets have a look at this map. This is a very strong link, motivation of staff to personnel turnover, you think that is very strong, don't you?
Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: But not many other really strong links here, not really many positive strong links?
Mr 30: No.

Interviewer: That is quite surprising, why do you think that is?
Mr 30: I thought that was a negative?

Interviewer: It is yes, that is a negative but there is no plus
Mr 30: That should be a stronger one.

Interviewer: Yes, OK.
Mr 30: Quite, then again it is obviously very important.

Interviewer: Yes, yes you mentioned it, it is part of your style of doing things?
Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: You don't link these together, these, you know for instance, delegating tasks and developing staff, do you think they are not particularly linked?
Mr 30: Yes I suppose they are, I am sort of looking more flexibility of staff, that is another link we could put in there.

Interviewer: This is a strong relationship?
Mr 30: plus 2, yes.

Interviewer: Yes because I noticed that quite a few of these things here are to do with, well maybe I think that you think you that you can motivate the staff anyway, so it is like things to do with you and ending up with staff sort of things?
Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: Which is quite interesting I think.
Mr 30: Yes.

Interviewer: Is there one sort of major objective that you have that you sort of focus on that to the detriment of others.

(Laughter)

Mr 30: Yes I suppose motivation of staff is ...

Interviewer: Really what you think?

Mr 30: Like as you say, it could be to the detriment of others yes.

Interviewer: A lot of people would say, that I suppose there is two ways of thinking about it. Maybe my aim is to increase the turnover or increase the figures here, but my way of doing that ..., influence that is to motivate my staff.

Mr 30: That's right yes that is the strongest one, yes, out of all of them.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, that is everything.

(Stopped and started tape???)

Interviewer: So how do you focus on the products to give to customers, you mentioned it about increasing service to customers and things, you have actually some figures up here. How do you do that. How do you get in touch with your figures to find out how you are doing what things are selling well and what things are not selling and obviously?

Mr 30: There is procedures within the company, we have got our own sort of buying department, so if we need information on sales figures on certain products, we can just ring up, they can draw off all of that data. But I can check that one myself as well, yes, the things are at my disposal.

Interviewer: And do you do that and tell me why it is so important?

Mr 30: I do, yes, specific items, I have got supervisors that deal with it. Yes, I mean I do get involved for like promotions and things like, I will ask them what the sales are like. I just keep an eye on it really, a little bit less than ...

(Talking together)

Interview with Respondent 31 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 26 June 2003, 12.00

- Interviewer: Since quality is pretty prominent in this map, can you tell me why,
Mr 31: Because in retail, as far as I am concerned, service is everything and you have got to give the service to the customer and that is friendly staff, having the people in the right place and at the right time, all the usual old adages and the right products, having it available from the time you open until the time you close, having the staff fully trained, knowing what they are doing, motivated, everything just goes round in a full circle.
- Interviewer: I can see you have put right in the centre of everything that sort of represents your feelings about it?
Mr 31: If you get the service right, you then get the return custom and you get people talk about the business, so you get extra custom. If the staff are friendly that all helps, if they are knowledgeable that helps even more, there is nothing worse then going in to a shop and asking somebody for something they don't know where it is or they point it out, the third aisle over down there somewhere. So you have got to give the service, if you got the service right, everything else goes from that ... getting a reputation in the area for good service, availability, the company brand then gets known. It increases your sales, reduces wastage and makes sure that I don't get the sack!
- (Laughter)
- Interviewer: I think it is a bit more than that, isn't it, because presumably it is more of a positive thing than that? What is it then ...?
Mr 31: It is personal pride, personal pride is a lot to do with it, I like the staff to feel proud of where they are working, if they don't, the main staff makes some bad comments about the store, that also gets round the area, so instead of getting a good reputation, you then get people who are saying, oh well the staff even complained about being there ...! My personal motivation, if you like, is the pride of having a good store with happy staff, if I motivate the staff and they are happy in their environment and their working conditions they are then motivated ...
- Interviewer: I can see you see it, do you see it like a job satisfaction bit or is it ...?
Mr 31: It is job satisfaction, it is also career and, the people, if you develop the staff, particularly the youngsters nowadays, you develop them and you get your management
- Interviewer: Right so I can see that, is also the future that is coming in here, that you see that as important, because you are ...?
Mr 31: For the continuation of the company, it is also for the continuation of their career. I left school when I was 15, just before my 15th birthday and I have worked, I don't think, retail at some stage in my life, quite literally, but it was my, once I got into retail, I wanted to learn as much as I could from it, if you get the same response from, particularly the teenagers coming in nowadays, then the future is bright for everybody.
- Interviewer: So what you are saying is you feel as if you came into it at a time when you wanted to know about it, in a lot of detail and you think you want to instil that into other people, is that what you think?
Mr 31: Yes, I believe greatly in training and developing and getting people to use their minds.
- Interviewer: And that do you think has got a quite, lots of implications, lots of spin offs from that?
Mr 31: Yes.

Interviewer: Presumably motivation of staff is one thing, people feel motivated, can you name some other ones that really, some spin offs from that? I suppose they like learning, they like developing, you develop them ...?

Mr 31: Yes we develop them and we give them responsibilities and made accountable for things, they then get the position and duty the position of power it suddenly goes to the head!

(Laughter)

Mr 31: Does that mean I can boss him around, because I don't like him? That sort of thing and it also gives them a chance to earn, hopefully earn the potential up

Interviewer: Yes, and what is the major spin off for you, personally as a store manager do you think?

Mr 31: Well, because you develop the staff and they are improving and they are getting involved and making it their career then you have got people you can rely on and depend on.

Interviewer: So you find your job a bit easier?

Mr 31: Yes definitely easier.

Interviewer: And presumably they are reasonably become motivated and flexible, you haven't got to maybe deal with that quite, the problems quite so much ...?

Mr 31: That's right, once they are trying to, control the areas that they are looking at, then, instead of me sitting on their shoulders, if you like, they then take on responsibility. Although I keep a watching eye on it I don't advocate the responsibility,, discipline, afterwards delegate the position or the job on and just do a running week and a watch. Once again, meetings and things like that are very important and you get to a point where you are trusting people to do jobs, because they have got to have the feed back, they have got to give you feedback to find out what problems they have got.

Interviewer: How do you sort of manage, because I have seen sort of 2 ways of doing it, one is that people set objectives for others... for deputy managers and whatever... I suppose it is more like a friendly sort of approach?

Mr 31: I am more friendlier approach.

Interviewer: But you see them both being together, is that what you are saying?

Mr 31: Yes, there is a line, you can be very friendly and do anything you like really, there is line that people don't cross and as long as that is clear and everybody is fully aware of what the line then you are going to manage your business...

Interviewer: And you do set objectives as well of course ...?

Mr 31: Oh yes, you have got set objectives, you have got to plan, you have got to plan ahead, and not only for the day but for the week and for the month.

Interviewer: Next we have got personal motivation, why is that really key to ...?

Mr 31: If the manager of the store isn't motivated then a place doesn't So I have got to motivate myself.

Interviewer: And you are motivating ...?

Mr 31: Everybody else. There is nothing worse than a demotivated manager. I mean everybody has got the right to have the hump every now and again, it is just keeping on top.

Interviewer: Can I ask you roughly, not too controversial, why you are to try and sort things out?

Mr 31: It is to say, it was a very demotivated store.

Interviewer: That was the major problem?

Mr 31: That was the major problem that was affecting the sales, also being very short of staff and so I believe I am seen in the company as a developer of people and a carrier.

Interviewer: Yes I can see that you would be, because the way that you put this together looks very strong into that.

Mr 31: And it works, because that lady there always had (mumbling) 2 or 4 weeks ago she would have done, a living example!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Motivation of staff, why do you think that is really important, now you have picked up the link to what you have just said ...

Mr 31: People will go, yes people will come into work and think I don't feel like doing anything today, yes, somebody has got to motivate them.

Interviewer: And you see that as key management?

Mr 31: Staff development roles,, management role is to actually motivate the staff to reach a goal standard... such, level of presentation of themselves to the customers. Nobody likes going to a checkout and finding somebody sitting there moaning ...

Interviewer: So you feel as if this is all you teach your, happy good store, happy staff, people being, actually talking about development stuff! So the motivation is key to a perception, I suppose you would say this quality as well as...?

Mr 31: Yes, it is also feeling part of something isn't it? If somebody is motivated and they know what their goals and they know they are part of a team.

Interviewer: And why is that really important do you think?

Mr 31: I think in retail you need to feel part of the company, part of a team, part of belonging. I think a feeling of belonging somewhere and wanting to be involved in something, at the end of day, you will go to work for money, but you will be as miserable as sin!

(Laughter)

Mr 31: But if you feel part of something you can go to work and you might not be getting paid the greatest salary in the world, but you will be around an environment which is friendly happy and you are earning and you are not just a number. I remember retail when people walk in in the morning and then lunchtime somebody will kick you out of the door. So you never felt, you were always worried. There is far too much legislation nowadays ..., there is too much protection that it is a lot less, it is better to have more than just ways you can protect the staff

Interviewer: Yes, people can just have a personality difficult ... The other thing, staff, maybe some staff you like being developed, some people not quite so keen.

Mr 31: Now that is where the management intuition comes into a degree and you can usually tell the people who have got a feel for the business. I mean who want to learn. In my store in Essex, I have got 3 teenagers, 17 and 18 year olds, you have just started a food management training scheme. One of them was going to be a hairdresser, until she got involved, another one wasn't sure what we wanted to do with life and the 3rd had actually been at the store for 2 years filling shelves, got no ambition, do drive or anything at all. She is also on a course, all 3 of them are doing well, so the company has gained, possibly, 3 potential managers and they are all young as well.

Interviewer: How did you manage to do that?

Mr 31: Getting them involved, giving them different responsibilities, seeing how they responded and making sure I had the time to actually show them what they need to know.

Interviewer: Yes that is quite a big task isn't it, time to do it really?

Mr 31: Yes, you have got to make the time, if you want to develop people you have got to make the time..... feel frightened by asking what might seem a stupid question.

Interviewer: Yes, you have got to relax them and interact.

Mr 31: You have got to have a one on one with them.

Interviewer: And what's the main benefits for you do you think from having this, have people motivated I can see is fairly, increases service quality ... Are there any personal things you think is really ...?

Mr 31: I always get a great kick out of somebody getting on. I have had it happen in the past where somebody I trained ended up being my boss! To think that you kicked somebody up on their career and they have developed and they have carried on growing, that is great, it is a great feeling.

Interviewer: Have you experienced, I mean a lot of these experiences come from something happening to you in a positive or a negative sense. So for instance when you started out, you found some managers, you liked the way some managers worked ...?

Mr 31: When I first started out, I actually started out on a, I was on a delicatessen counter and the only way I could learn all the bits and pieces was by giving up lunch breaks and tea breaks, because in those days you had the, manager, you had an assistant manager, you had a first hand who took care of all the bacon, preparing the bacon, boning the bacon and rolling the bacon, cooking joints, there was a normally on cheeses, because it wasn't all pre-packed as it is now, all those sorts of bits and pieces. So to learn those jobs, I had to spend lunch breaks and tea breaks and stuff, learning those. Which as it was my time and wasn't getting paid for it, I probably picked it up a lot quicker than I would have done. When I was with Tesco's I was actually, I was actually a manager with Tesco's at the age of 17. I then went to Woolworths and worked for them for a number of years, I started off on the fresh foods sites in those days, once again they did food and delicatessen was opened, I ended up managing a store for them. Then I moved on to Medicare, which was a drug store, then I joined Savacentre and opened the, Savacentre as a fresh food manager then. In those days we were doing our own buying ... etc., etc., etc. So it was a case of just moving on, but over the course of the years I run into people who started me off and I have started other people off.

Interviewer: So you found it worked for you and you were motivated because of their, they way they managed you?

Mr 31: Yes, I had one manager, a chap called Alan Birbeck, he was an amazing person, every time you saw him, the first thing he would ask, where was a fag, the second thing was a cup of coffee! But he had a way about him which really motivated you, yes, and he never held a grudge. He would give you a bollocking one minute and 5 minutes later he would give you a fag, buy you a cup of coffee, ah what are we going to do for the rest of the day and that is so much better

than, because you have done something wrong and somebody had given you a bloody bollocking and not talking to you for 2 or 3 days. Every manager I have worked for, I have took something out of working for them.

Interviewer: What you thought really worked and worked well and...?

Mr 31: And there is a lot of managers I have seen and I have turned around and said no I am not going to do it that way, I will do it my way!

Interviewer: Oh if you have got experience and you have seen it work.

Mr 31: It doesn't always work, you have got to adjust to the different places, there is different ways of managing different stores.

Interviewer: You have sort of got, you have got planning here a bit, you have done, you are an enthusiastic planner or, are you a bit or, how do you run that?

Mr 31: I think you have got to play in the important things, you get bogged down, you are planning things.

Interviewer: Like that one yesterday, she really, she planned my visit to include all these schedules and everything, so I was amazed with that really

Mr 31: No, you have got to plan and you have got to, but you have also got to make sure that it is flexible enough to take care of anything that should go wrong.

Interviewer: Does problem have a problem, are things that predictable and you can plan things or some things are and some things aren't?

Mr 31: Some things are predictable but in a store, particularly like this one, when you expect 5 people to come in on the evening shift, but 3 of them don't turn up. You can plan to say, right nobody will be able to do this, this, this and this... most people are not there when your plans go out of the window. So you have got to juggle, you have got to be a good ball juggler in retail.

(Laughter)

Mr 31: You have got to swap ... You have got to be multi-skilled and ... I like to see what is happening ... planning during the course of the day ... either over run or something fantastic happened.

(Talking together)

Interviewer: Yes, I know I found it quite difficult I must admit. I can see the point of, you know, you find it really, really complex and you said you wanted to have your finger in every pie type of approach, but I would say, you have bought so much complexity to, it has sort of swamped you in some respects?

Mr 31: Yes, well it is like you coming, I knew you were coming today, I didn't know what time. So it was a waste of time me turning round and saying right I am going to spend on hour to do it. I could have sat the hour, sitting here, waiting for you to turn up and you hadn't turn up or you could have turned up in an hour's time and I say no, sorry I haven't got time for you, I planned you an hour ago, yes? We have got two bosses sitting in the office in there, who I didn't know were turning up. Now I have got to spend the time with them, juggle everything else, my assistant manager is on a day off today so I am the only person running the store. I am not complaining or anything but I think you get too bogged down in work. You have got to know that in two weeks time you have got a promotion starting your, has got to be ready for that. 3 weeks time one of my assistant managers is on holiday, we have got to have, for who is going to cover there ... etc., etc. The other day I got a phone call from the office saying that my delivery time has changed, which means I have now got to plan the staffing round that change of schedule, so that is planning.

Interviewer: So you can plan those bits that you can't?
Mr 31: That's right. You have got to move with it.

Interviewer: Thank you very much I won't keep you any longer, that was very interesting I think, I am very pleased with the way you I think you did a magnificent job here, really sorted out really really quickly.

Interview with Respondent 32 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 6 March 2003, 11 am

- Interviewer: OK. Thank you very much. I've written a bit more heavily on some of these stronger relationships you've got here. Maybe you can explain some of them, especially the ones at 3 and 2, so that we can look at some of these differences? A very strong relationship between personal motivation and motivation of staff? We've talked briefly about that.
- Mr 32: Yeah. Well I think if the manager is highly motivated, then it's going to rub off on the staff.
- Interviewer: Uh huh.
- Mr 32: And if he's not motivated, and it's all doom and gloom, then it going to drag them down. I guess it's how it's sold to them.
- Interviewer: Yeah. And some of these strong relationships up here?
- Mr 32: Start with the top one yeah. I think it's important that you know, the team know that there is a shared culture and we're all working towards the same goal.
- Interviewer: Can you identify what that shared culture is?
- Mr 32: Yeah. Well going back a while in obviously in our own company, there used to be almost like a them and us culture. Head office were almost working against the staff in the stores, or that's how it seemed to us. And since we had a management change at the top, when courses have been run, instead of managers going separately and then head office going separately, they've like split it. So you go on a course and there'll be so and so from accounts, as well as store managers.
- Interviewer: Right yeah.
- Mr 32: If nothing else we get to know them, and we're all working towards the same goal.
- Interviewer: So that policy's helped a bit, from meeting people, meeting people in different..
- Mr 32: Yeah, because you build up relationships as well, and then, you know, when you need something, instead of just ringing up accounts, you're ringing up Richard from accounts or whoever it is.
- Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
- Mr 32: - Hi Richard, how are you doing? Can you help me? - Whereas before it was like - No you need to see so and so, and so and so - It's like - Hiya! Good course. Let's see what I can do. -
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 32: So it's much more, I think it's also more open.
- Interviewer: Yeah. Right. So it's going the right way as far as you're concerned?
- Mr 32: Definitely.
- Interviewer: And culture leading into personal leadership style. Do they sort of suggest a personal leadership style that fits in with that culture or?
- Mr 32: Well.

Interviewer: Or doesn't it work like that?
Mr 32: They would. I mean they would probably suggest that the team is all important. And I would agree with that. Because if you don't, you know, lead the team properly, and if you de-motivate them.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: Then productivity, moaning, it all goes down doesn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: If the team is happy and motivated and rewarded for what they've done, it's almost like they want to impress to a slightly better stage doesn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: You know, if the guys doing the produce, you go down there, and you know, it's fantastic – It looks the best I've seen it this week! – But they haven't got any bananas.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: As opposed to, going down there, and it's like – Oh, you're out of bloody bananas again, what's going on? – It's a different way of the same.

Interviewer: Yes. Right yes. What do you think, why is it important for you, for this shared corporate culture do you think...?
Mr 32: I just think it's important that everyone sort of knows that we're all working towards the same goal, and it's not. They're working as hard to get to where we want to be as we are.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: Yeah.

Interviewer: And why is that? Why is having that shared goal really important to you do you think?
Mr 32: Because it becomes like a team doesn't it. When it becomes almost like a delegation, or as we'd probably see it, as an abdication, because we're at the sharp end.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: If we know that Richard in accounts, or someone in marketing is working as hard at achieving what we're asking, it just seems better that everyone is working towards the same thing.

Interviewer: And is it important for you to become, or to feel as though you're a member of a team? Why is that important to you?
Mr 32: Because if you're part of a team you will achieve more. If you try and go off on your own. As a store manager, if I try and sell something to the staff that I can't, then it's very unlikely to happen, or to happen as best it can. I mean I guess as a store manager you can always force things through. But if you can't get the team to buy into it. You know obviously the best way of doing that is to ask them how they feel about it, what their ideas are.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 32: As opposed to saying – We've got to do A. If you do that by going to B and then to C. - Whereas if you say – We've got to do A. Have you got any thoughts on how we can get there? – A lot of time, they often come up with the answer.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. Which makes it easy for you really.
Mr 32: It does yeah. If they buy in, it'll happen, and it'll happen better, and it'll happen faster.

Interviewer: So is it achieving more in a team, is that important to you because it's an easier life for you? Or is it, do you think it's the best way to be a manager or what?
Mr 32: It's both really.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: Because we all want, not an easy life, because we want, you know I want to be challenged.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: You know we don't want to just sit back and let it wash over us.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: You know but I have got targets that I'm aiming for, you know and if we can get to those, my boss is happier, he's probably hit his targets. So him on the operations team is going to be happier, and you know, it flows up and down doesn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah. So is that a personal sense of, a good feeling or?
Mr 32: It's a sense of, it's a recognition isn't it? Or an achievement. You know if you're beating last year's sales by 3%, or whatever it is. Although figures are very much, they just show a history, it's also, it is, it's a good feeling.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: On a Monday morning checking what the sales were for the previous week and.. the multi-buys, and, you know, -Yes! We've just done it! We've beaten last year yet again! – And it gives them a sense of achievement.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. And do you think that's because you want to be thought of as a good manager? Or is it money motivation? Or a combination of several things?
Mr 32: It's nice to be involved in success.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 32: It's nice to walk into, say, managers' meetings, and if we go round the room and we're talking about our own stores or. You know, my boss is going round the room and saying you know – Sales in Gerrards Cross, up 3% again, well done! Sales in Wendover, down 1%. – You're always sitting there thinking, you know, - I'm up there. - It's not one-upmanship, but it is nice.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 32: I mean, we all like to be successful don't we.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah, indeed.

Mr 32: It's a measurement on the decisions that you made or you didn't.

Interviewer: Right yeah, that's a good point. Very good. And your personal leadership style. We talked a little bit about this. So you've got this leadership style of, maybe asking them what their ideas are. And trying to?

Mr 32: Yeah. I mean having tried both. I mean when you're up and coming. I can just about remember back to those few years, it tends to be too autocratic, too much tell tell tell.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 32: And you do learn very quickly that although they'll probably do it because you know, the manager up there says – Can you go and fill the beans? – As opposed to saying you know – Do you want to have a wander round and see which bits we need to fill first? – Because it's very easy to tell people, but they don't buy into it in the same way.

Interviewer: Right yeah.

Mr 32: And you know they can come back and say – Yeah well, the beans are low, and I'm going to top those up first, followed by the cornflakes OK? – Thanks! As opposed to – Go and get the beans, then get the cornflakes, then go and get the crisps! – They can work that out.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK. So again, to motivate like that. Why do you think that is important to you? Why do you think it's important to delegate like that?

Mr 32: Because it makes them feel valued. You know, it's not only to make them feel valued, but they are valued.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: Because at the end of the day, it doesn't matter if you're the best manager in the world. If you haven't got the team with you, you won't achieve as much as you could, if they buy in.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: You know, and probably an example of that is, the companies that are very much autocratic, the Chief Executive changes every 6 months doesn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 32: Because one comes in, and he absolutely rips them to shreds, and – You will hit your target, if you've got to work 7 days a week, you will do it! – But you can only keep that up for so many months can't you, before that threat, it's not the same is it? You know he comes into your store in week one and everyone's like – Oh my God! – But when he comes in in week 21, it's like – Well, he's going to shout at us anyway so, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter what we do! – So.

Interviewer: Yeah. Good point. So that's valuing staff. Important, it's going back to this culture I suppose of a team.

(Interruption)

(laughter)

So. Valued staff, that's very important to you. Why is it? What's underpinning that do you think?

Mr 32: It's partly through experience. Partly through I guess, call them courses. I've been on 2 courses now, they're called Valuing People. Which is VIP.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: And it shows you. It gives you tasks to do as a team, and it shows you how you are reacting within the team, and how sometimes, without even knowing what you're doing, you'll over-rule someone or.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: So in some ways, it's getting you to just sit back a little bit and. See how you manage, and see how what you do has an effect on other people.

Interviewer: So it's reflecting on, is it sort of reflecting on good experiences or, best practice or?

Mr 32: Yeah. That's probably exactly it. You know. When managers get together you know, one might say you know – I've had a problem with a cashier. – And we'll say, you know – I've had similar, this is what I did, and it didn't work, so I had to do this, this is what I did and it did work.. –

Interviewer: Your experience as a manager over quite a long period of time of course.

Mr 32: Yes it is. But probably the best way is just to sit down and actually talk to them. Try not to let things stew. Because if there is, there is things that go wrong always you know.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: That's human nature. If you actually sit down and talk to them, and say you know – What is it? – It can be something so silly that we can put it right straight away.

Interviewer: Right. So is that? Are we getting into what you consider as a good manager? A sort of top guy sort of thing? Is that why this is all-important to you?

Mr 32: Yeah I would think so. I mean one of the courses that I've been on, one of things, one of the sort of tasks they asked us to do, I think it was a group of about 8 of us, and they said, - Come up with your idea. Name the people you would like to work for, as in you know, people that you can see as good at their job. – And people like Richard Branson always come up.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: Because you can see the success, but he's nice with it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: You know, from our perception of him, he doesn't need to rant and rave, he doesn't need to shout, he gets on with everyone, he's got the respect that whatever he asks for, you know, people will do. But he does it with them.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: He doesn't tell them to do it, if you see what I mean.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: And it's that. I guess you try and look at what makes someone successful and less successful.

Interviewer: OK great, excellent. Another one you had as quite important is personal motivation. Well, we've talked about that a bit. What other things would you like to say on personal motivation?
Mr 32: Yeah. I think that's possibly one of the most important. You know, if I as a manager wasn't motivated to get the things done that the company would like me to do, then that's not going to filter down.

Interviewer: No.
Mr 32: You know, I'm going to have bad days the same as everyone else, where something goes wrong at home, or. But if I bring that into work.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: You know, or maybe we do get a bad visit from a boss.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: If that filters down too much. You know and the fact they might think that we're looking rubbish, and nothing's right. So it's got to be. The message has got to be right, so as not to de-motivate the staff.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: You know, we've had a visit. Most of it's fantastic, but there's just a couple of areas we need to concentrate on, as opposed to – God! He's come in and he's moaned! – Because that will just drag them down.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: And if you do. I mean if I'm de-motivated I think well, blimey. You know so they can't be any different.

Interviewer: Yeah. You did mention that they were thinking of closing this store down, which seems rather strange, because it's in Gerrards Cross which is a very nice area.
Mr 32: It is yeah.

Interviewer: Sort of ideal place you'd have thought for Convenience Stores Ltd..
Mr 32: Yeah.

Interviewer: What's happening there?
Mr 32: Yeah. It is actually going to close.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: What it is, the lease has come up, and landlord apparently wants to double or something to it.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 32: We'd have to double our sales to keep making a profit. Which is inconceivable.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: It's not a bad thing in some ways, because there's a big big Tescos going to be built above the railway station.

Interviewer: Is there?

Mr 32: So. That'll be up within 2 years, so that would have knocked us slightly anyway.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: You know, we could have fought against some of it, but we wouldn't have been able to stop our sales going, so.

Interviewer: No right.
Mr 32: It is hard.

Interviewer: They're not going to build another one around?
Mr 32: I don't know what would happen to this store. We've got a competitor up the road, AA Fishers. They take similar to us. So for short term he'll be happy. In the long term, he's as worried about Tescos coming in as I guess we would have been.

Interviewer: Of course. I see, so you're going to be on the move reasonably shortly then?
Mr 32: Yes. The phone call I took earlier was a guy sorting out an interview with my boss, or my boss's boss, so we'll go and see him tomorrow.

Interviewer: So you don't know where you 're going to go yet.
Mr 32: No. To be honest, I don't mind. It'll be a new challenge.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: As long as it's within reasonable driving distance.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 32: Then that's fine.

Interviewer: Yeah good. I mean one of the reasons this is important, because talking about motivation, has that been a de-motivating factor? It's difficult to get hold of that really.

Mr 32: The fact that. I mean we found out we were closing last Wednesday.

Interviewer: Right yeah.
Mr 32: It's not so much de-motivating. It's disappointing. You know, because we made a lot of progress in sort of training the team, and we also managed to recruit in an area difficult to recruit. We filled evenings with the students we wanted. Which they struggled to do. You know, we brought the wastage down to roughly half what it was when we started.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: To make a bit more money.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 32: You know. But then the lease thing.

Interviewer: Well I suppose there's nothing you can do about that?
Mr 32: No no. And that's probably the best way to look at it. All the bits we could control, we have, and all the bits that we couldn't...

Interviewer: Some of these you talk about, that are slightly out of your control. Staffing you mentioned.
Mr 32: Yes. I can't control, because the company sets like the, whatever the hourly rate is going to be on whatever the band you're on.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: I don't it's that much of a plus or a minus. You maybe get a small minus every time the new rate comes out, and it's, so it's only going up 20p or something, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: And you might get a week's worth, of well, we thought were worth 25p.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: But you know. When they apply for the job, and you go through what the job is, and what the benefits are, including the pay and the discount.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: If they accept it, they know what the pay is.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: It's more to do with, probably what the morale's like in the store. That will make someone up and go, or not go.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: In that respect.

Interviewer: Planning ahead you've talked about as being pretty important. Why do you think that's important to you?
Mr 32: It's probably one of the most important things, because if you don't plan for what's coming up.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: I mean, something that's really big for, I guess all stores, is Christmas.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: We seem to spend 3 months planning for 2 days sales. But you know if we don't think of absolutely every last thing that we can, in terms of getting the staff in, the right shifts. It's important for them to know when their time off is. It's important to us to know when we can plan for them to come in.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: And you know, we can both agree it. And they're happy with what they've got off, and we're happy with what they've got in. It's almost one of the things that everything can stem from. If you know what your weeks.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: Although it can change at short notice. Like I've got to go out tomorrow now.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: But you know.

Interviewer: Why is it important to you? Do you feel sort of in more control or do you feel?
Mr 32: I guess it is a control thing. You try and, I guess you try and take out as many surprises as you can in that sense.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: Also for them. You know, if they ask you for a specific day off for something, and where possible you try and give it.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: You know, if then when it comes up, you sort of say - You can't actually have it because so and so's not going to be here. - Well, you would have known that when they asked for it.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: Or whatever.

Interviewer: So it's reflecting on your management position? How organised you are in some respects.
Mr 32: Yes. Oh yes. I mean that's probably one of the ones that you learn very quickly. Because something will happen and you'll be left totally open.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: And you think, next time we'll write that down.

Interviewer: Yeah. So it's really back to this thing about being perceived as a good manager?
Mr 32: Yeah. And when we do those things, and we draw up what we think a good manager would be good at, planning would be one of them.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: You know. Team motivation etc. You'd have to have certain leadership qualities.

Interviewer: Yeah. What do you think they are?
Mr 32: Motivation. Planning as we said. A sort of, the leadership style needs to be a sort of democratic one. There are times when you can't be democratic. There might be things that we have to do that are legal, that you can't throw open to the possibility that they will do it one way or another, if there's only one way to do it.

Interviewer: Uh huh.
Mr 32: You know, for example, we have to weight checks on the tills every morning. Which is like a Weights and Measures thing.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: The guy from Weights and Measures comes in, and we're not doing them, it's very black and white. So it's not one of those – Do you think we should do it Monday, Wednesday, Fridays? – You know, we have to do it, Monday to Sunday sort of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. So, perceiving as a good manager. This is important to you for your personal motivation? Is that what motivates you in your job or?
Mr 32: I suppose, in some ways yeah. Success is a motivator in itself isn't it?

Interviewer: Uh huh.
Mr 32: You know, if you get to the end of the week and you know, you've been targeting to get your waste under a thousand pounds, and you know, this is the third week running you've really tried it, and it hadn't come in. And then it does just click in. Then you know, you are pleased with yourself.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: For getting it. Whatever measures you know you tried to put in place.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: You know, whether it's saying well, it's one of the top 5 waste lines, we're not going to order this week, and we'll see if there's any demand for them, but we'll also see how it affects the waste.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: And you know, it just clicks in. And you know, ideally your boss is going to be on the phone Monday morning – Bloody hell, great, you’ve done it! – It’s, I’m not sure if it’s like a respect things. But definitely. Success is a motivator isn’t it?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: And you also want to, appear successful I guess to your colleagues as well don’t you, when you go to meetings and?

Interviewer: Yeah. It’s certainly, if one of the things they do is to go round the table, I’ve had it done to me as well you know, it’s the same anywhere else.

Mr 32: Yeah. As a company they don’t really finger point as such, we seem to have got over that which is good.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: But if something needs to be said, then it’s better if it’s done on a one on one in front of, you know, I wouldn’t dream of picking a member of staff up on something while everyone else is standing there.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 32: But that’s more of a personal. You know. If he’s just reading out figures as a guide, then everyone will be listening to their own – Where do I come in the list? – sort of thing.

Interviewer: Yes yes yes.

Mr 32: Plus 1, plus 2, I wonder what he’s doing to get to plus 3?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: But yeah. I mean success is probably the biggest motivator in some ways. It almost spurs you on doesn’t it? When you get that.

Interviewer: I suppose one of the things that you’re sort of getting at, is it, most respect, is it partly financial reward or?

Mr 32: Financial reward would come into it, but that works both ways. For example in my last store at Emma Green, we had this bonus scheme going where you could earn up to 50% of your salary. Well me and another 2 people on our area, we actually beat it, so we were due 50%.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 32: But because the company had done so well, they cut it, and we ended up getting like, say, it was around 20%, just under. So, while it was probably one of the best bonuses I’d got, it was also one of the worst.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: Because I thought I’d earned, you know, X, and I got paid Y.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 32: You know it was a good, it was still reasonable. But the fact that I thought I was getting more.

Interviewer: Yeah. More pay yeah.
Mr 32: You know. In some ways, the actual bonus ended up being de-motivating. Which is quite a strange thing.

(laughter)

Interviewer: It is really, when you've done your best, yeah.
Mr 32: Well yeah. It's like putting a pound on a horse that's 10:1 at the bookies. And getting in there, and he just gives you 2, because something's happened. You're like – What?– So yeah, that was strange.

Interviewer: Yeah. You don't think that sort of thing would happen anymore? Or did they just do their calculations wrong or?
Mr 32: The problem was. I think that's exactly it. They slightly did their calculations wrong. So people who achieved the top end. Although there weren't many. They had a pot that they couldn't exceed on the payout.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: And even people that achieved halfway, they got some of that pot, and they just had to scale it all down.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: I mean, we understood perfectly well why. But it still doesn't help does it?

Interviewer: No no it doesn't.
Mr 32: You know, when you should have been given a tenner and you only got a fiver. It's.

Interviewer: Rewards in other ways. I mean. What about your career sort of aspirations? Do you think that being a good manager's important for that or? Have you got any plans to?
Mr 32: Yeah, I mean at the moment, I wouldn't aspire to get any higher because I've got 2 youngsters, one's six and a half, one's four and a half.

Interviewer: Uh huh.
Mr 32: And in some ways I would like to see them more than I do, but I probably see them masses more than I saw my dad.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: In terms of how the working way has changed. But maybe when they're, I don't know, say 10 and 12 or something.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: And the last thing they want to be done is seen with their parents.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Indeed yeah.
Mr 32: You know, then may be the time to look at whether the next step is viable and there.

Interviewer: I see yeah. OK great stuff. Very briefly on some of these? If you can think of some other points you made about leadership style and developing staff. That seems to be one of your things that you really think is important anyway.
Mr 32: Yeah. I mean I think developing staff is very important. If you know, you take someone on and you tell them they're going to be trained in A, B and C, and you only train them in A.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 32: Then that's going to be de-motivating for them.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 32: And it's also, staff generally want to do a good job. And they want to know how to do A, B and C, so that they can do it for you. And they want to know how to do A, and you tell them how to do B and C every other day.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 32: They just want to. So it's a motivating thing for them. It's knowledge. I guess it's a sense of pride in their own work.

Interviewer: I see quite a lot of these things actually lead to motivation of staff?
Mr 32: Yeah.

Interviewer: Quite a lot of things are developing and motivating staff, which is sort of like, somewhat linked together.
Mr 32: Yeah. I think I've found that out in...

Recording finishes.

Interview with Respondent 33 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 8 October 2002, 2pm

- Interviewer: Right OK. You've listed motivation of staff as being a really key issue, or one of the major issues.
Mr 33: Yes.
- Interviewer: Why is that issue really important to you?
Mr 33: If the staff aren't motivated to do anything, they'll never get anything done.
- Interviewer: OK. Things done, are you talking about targets or profitability or?
Mr 33: No. Just general service. If they're not motivated, they're not going to be happy. I think if someone's motivated it just shows that they're enjoying themselves. If you're not enjoying a job, you don't really like doing it. So if you..
- Interviewer: And do you think, what's the result of that? Why is that important?
Mr 33: If they enjoy the job, you normally get something back from it.
- Interviewer: Yeah. So it's for their personal benefit, or for the customer's benefit or?
Mr 33: A bit of both. If they enjoy it, then they're getting satisfaction from the job. And the satisfaction from them doing a good job, normally passes on to the customer.
- Interviewer: OK great. OK. So why is that, again keeping the customers happy, staff happy, really really important to you personally?
Mr 33: Personally?
- Interviewer: Yeah. Why is that?
Mr 33: Because it just makes a nice working atmosphere.
- Interviewer: OK so?
Mr 33: I enjoy getting up in the morning and coming to work. But if there wasn't a nice working environment, I wouldn't enjoy coming to work so much.
- Interviewer: So satisfaction. And what's the appeal in that, job satisfaction? Is it just because you like to enjoy yourself at work? Of course that's really important but also?
Mr 33: Success is normally quite a good motivation as well.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 33: You know, motivation, enjoyment and everything like that. And then if you get a little bit of success back from it, it just motivates that little bit more.
- Interviewer: And what are you looking for, with success? Are you looking for doing a career path? Are you looking for...?
Mr 33: For myself?

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 33: Following my career path.

Interviewer: Yes. You're feeling motivated for your career really. Right. What other things can you think of that maybe motivate or underpin your..?
Mr 33: Not getting a bollocking.

(laughter)

Interviewer: OK we'll put lack of hassle there.
Mr 33: Yeah. With the amount of visits we have in this store.

Interviewer: Yes right.
Mr 33: And things, if everything's not right, you do get the hassle. And visits, you know you can..

Interviewer: Why do they come around here then, is it quite close to the head office?
Mr 33: Yeah. Head office is just down the road and they spend a lot of money on it.

Interviewer: OK great. Personal motivation. Why do you think that's really important? You mentioned that your motivation leads on to other people of course.
Mr 33: Yeah. Well my personal motivation. If I want to get on in my career, and have a nice life and earn good money and, you know the money is not always the most important thing but it does help. In the end. That's why I'm motivated towards it. Because I want to be..... you don't know when you start do you, and I'm now doing this.

Interviewer: OK. So you do get the rewards then. That's a part of it. But also is it to refuel belief as a manager. Do people look up to you more or? Anything like that?
Mr 33: No.

Interviewer: Not particularly?
Mr 33: No.

Interviewer: Maybe you would you like to be classed as a good manager?
Mr 33: Yeah I'd like to be classed as a good manager yeah. I don't know that I am. Everybody laughing at me behind my back.

(laughter)

Interviewer: And anything to do with maybe lifestyle, as in different issues there that you think are important? And your personal motivation, where it comes from?
Mr 33: Oh yeah. Well. With my personal relationships I get the benefits, I get the money. And I enjoy going out, I enjoy spending money on clothes and things like that.

Interviewer: We obviously bought the same suit.

(laughter)

Mr 33: OK, so you mentioned developing staff is a key important issue as well. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?
Development. It drives the company forwards really. It drives the store forwards. If you didn't develop the staff they would just leave, because they want success, and you know if they've got aspirations, and you don't back those aspirations up and develop them, then they will go somewhere else for it.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Mr 33: And if Convenience Stores Ltd. you know want to build the company larger, they need people to be coming up through the ranks and

Interviewer: And having experience of a good situation.

Mr 33: Yeah. And plus it, it passes it, recruitment problems.. it passes it on to other people that were actually ... and involved. And now we've just got the Investors in People award thing, so that's one thing to come out of it.

Interviewer: Great. Knowledge of internal operations. You mention that as being very important to you as well. Why is that really important do you think?

Mr 33: Because if you didn't have knowledge of the internal operations you wouldn't know what was happening in the store.

Interviewer: Is that to do with the profitability issue or, key issues you're measured on, or to do with?

Mr 33: With people as well. I think it's with people and the business. With people if you don't have knowledge of people, you don't know what their aspirations are, if you don't have the knowledge yourself to be able to develop and train people, you can't pass it on.

Interviewer: OK right yeah. I can see you've got quite a developmental type of view of all this. Link up may be with personal motivation type of issues.

Mr 33: And business. If you didn't have knowledge of the business, you just would not be able to run the store. You need to know the time scales, planning and legal things.

Interviewer: Legal issues?

Mr 33: Yeah legal issues are very important.

Interviewer: What sort of legal issues are important?

Mr 33: Just fire checks, temperatures of meat products, prices.

Interviewer: Great. OK. Planning ahead. How much planning ahead do you feel as if you can do? How much do you feel as if you're in control of things?

Mr 33: I do a 4 week planner. Within the store. And a 4 week objectives plan. I have a short-term plan which is for a week, this is separate to the other ones, a 4 week mid term plan, and I have a long-term plan which is up to 3 months.

Interviewer: Right. So you're a planner.

Mr 33: Also we have an promotion change every 2 weeks as well which has to be planned in advance before the promotion can happen.

Interviewer: Promotion change every 2 weeks?
Mr 33: Yeah. Every 2 weeks on the Wednesday so we plan, well in advance.

Interviewer: What does that mean? Promotion change?
Mr 33: We have different promotions..

Interviewer: Sorry I meant you meant like changing the staff round every 2 weeks. OK, so products. And can you tell me the benefits of planning this? Why will you plan that?
Mr 33: No fire fighting basically. If you wait 'til the last minute and you find out everyone's on holiday, and the orders aren't coming in and things. You're just fire fighting the whole time. Planning ahead, you organise to know what the issues are before they happen.

Interviewer: OK. And what things do you feel as if you can plan for, and which things do you think are difficult to plan for. You mentioned staff, maybe that's...
Mr 33: Yeah, there's some things you can't plan. There's obviously issues out of your hands that you can't plan for. Like sickness. You can't plan obviously. You can't plan for non-delivery of products because the lorries have broken down, and things like that. And then you do struggle. And that's when you have to fire fight really.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you feel that in this system these things don't happen too often because of this system in place?
Mr 33: Yeah. But you can't stop it. It's something that happens, and you deal with it when it happens.

Interviewer: I've noticed that you haven't put anything in here that's maybe sort of out of your control. The issues for example, things I have mentioned, some other factors that maybe are not under your control. Like the situation of the store, the car parking, economy going up and down or whatever else. You don't feel that those sort of things are really that important?
Mr 33: No. Because you can't change it.

Interviewer: No you can't. So you focus on the things that you can do?
Mr 33: Yeah.

Interviewer: And some of these things – can you tell me what things you think are predictable, and what things are not so predictable that you can predict. The sale of items on promotion for example because of knowledge or?
Mr 33: With promotions, especially Christmas time and times like that, we keep every year. So like last year's promotions we'd have kept, so we know what we'll sell, stock and order.

(Gap in tape)
Interviewer: OK. I think that's about it really. I've got a pretty good idea of what you think, and what your personal motivations are.
Mr 33: That was my boss.

Interviewer: Oh was it?

Interview with Respondent 34 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 7 July 2003

Interviewer: I can see you have put planning ahead as your top factor?
Mr 34: Yes.

Interviewer: And for the success why is that important to you?
Mr 34: Basically that, from a personal point of view, that to achieve anything you need to obviously plan what you are going to do. So that will be a good starting point and from there things then lead off from there.

Interviewer: Such as?
Mr 34: It sort of like a brainstorming, you are planning it, you can then, you will know exactly what you are going to come up against.

Interviewer: And problems or whatever or ...?
Mr 34: Yes rather than rush head long into it and then sort of come up against the barriers later on down the line, you can actually, possibly foresee potential problems before they actually arise and then that will then steer you down another route to try and overcome that issue.

Interviewer: OK and why overcoming these problems really important to you?
Mr 34: We obviously try to achieve a particular goal.

Interviewer: Which is?
Mr 34: It can relate to anything. So with, say you were trying to increase sales on a particular product or product group and by planning that through, just basically on paper, you can actually see that through without actually having to try and do a lot of unnecessary tasks to try and achieve the extra sales that you were hoping for.

Interviewer: So you, if I can get this right, so you are cutting out unnecessary tasks by this planning procedure and so does it, is it like a sort of an efficiency issue then or is it more than that?
Mr 34: You would become more efficient because obviously you are just planning this through rather than actually physically going out and doing the tasks. The other way of doing it or planning stage if you get other peoples input as well. So you can draw on their sort of knowledge and experience for the particular issue that you are or goal that you are trying to achieve.

Interviewer: So why is this efficiency getting all right by the planning really important?
Mr 34: Well it is a time issue, you hopefully get it right first time and just the sort of thought process, you have actually considered all the options. I don't know it is just the way that I would work. I would think about things first of all, what am I going to come up against, what do I need to bare in mind when I doing this and then that will then follow on to something else, right that does that and then I am going to need to bare in mind how that affects the customer and what impact that has on the staff and it will just sort of lead me round rather than just go out on to the shop floor and say right to increase the sales of this I am going to build a stack right in the first aisle! If I did that then that would obviously cause problems with, you know, the customers point of view. Yes it may increase the sales but it would probably hinder certain other things and then other products would then suffer as a, to my actions.

Interviewer: Do you see this interrelation of these different things then that If you didn't plan some unforeseen affect might occur, is that what you are saying?
Mr 34: Yes. There is going to be times when you come up against things that you didn't necessarily plan for or circumstances beyond your control and things like that. But if you have done everything else that you could do planning wise then the rest of them should fall into place anyway.

Interviewer: OK so you feel as if you have covered most angles by that sort thing...?
Mr 34: Yes we have covered all sort of basis really.

Interviewer: Do you think you are a planner, do you think you are ...?
Mr 34: Yes.

Interviewer: Talk a bit about style, is the, are they linked or are they, they do seemed to be linked a bit, aren't they, are you a planner do you think?
Mr 34: To a degree yes, I am probably becoming more that way as I am getting a little bit older, before I would probably just rush in and just want to get the job done and get it sorted and that sort of thing, but now I probably stand back a little bit more and think more about the issue that we want to resolve or the consequences that it could have.

Interviewer: What is the goals that you are aiming for, why is this planning bit important?
Mr 34: To be, from a store point of view, you would want the store to be successful, personally successful ...

Interviewer: Maybe reflecting on you as a manager basically?
Mr 34: Yes if the store is achieving its, all is targets, under sales, its controls and costings and that sort of thing, how good the staff are to work a) for you and b) for the company and if everything is working like that and you are not thinking that the success of the store is solely down to the manager of which isn't, the only way you can succeed is if everyone works together. So if everyone knows exactly what we are trying to achieve then that would come into the planning stage of it as well and you would inform them at every stage of what you are trying to achieve so they are fully on board with what they are doing. Which is basically involving everyone as much as you can, like I said earlier with the planning, if you can draw on their experience and knowledge as well then that is going to help you achieve the goal. I have only been in this store, what 7 or 8 weeks ...

Interviewer: I have got to put that in actually.
Mr 34: So I obviously don't know XXX or the people or the customers yet. So if I have tried to do anything I have spoken to the people that actually live here and ...

Interviewer: Pick up the vibes?
Mr 34: Yes, and get their opinions and, you know, what has happened previously and sort of see changes, we are going through obviously summer, so what did they do last year, how did that work and then try and do some of the same ...

Interviewer: You ask them that, you don't look at your, you presumably have got quite a lot of data giving you a rough idea of what, do you feel as if you are more involving people ...?

- Mr 34: Yes I could look through sort of figures and facts and that, but they are the people that are on the shop floor, working with it, day in and day out and talking to the customers, so that is where I am going to get a better handle on what is going on on the shop floor.
- Interviewer: Developing staff..., why is that really important, you have mentioned a little bit about that?
- Mr 34: Basically because, it is to get them something extra as well and rather than just coming to work and thinking that they are, you know shelf stacker or till operator, it gives them something extra to come to work for and they are learning a little bit more as well. So they don't just see themselves as only having one role in the store, they become multiskilled and it gives them a bit of variety and saying that benefits the store and the team itself because they are then skilled at doing other jobs, so that is holiday cover and sickness, you have then got extra people to do the work that needs doing. Also you can start delegating all the tasks out and you know that they can do those things that they have been given.
- Interviewer: Why is that really important to you, is there a reason why you think that is the best way of going about things, you did mention a bit about this, but maybe there are some other reasons why you think this is important. Why do you need to have these multiskilling staff really and having to be able to delegate out?
- Mr 34: Well it is the flexibility of it all really, having more people skilled at doing a variety of jobs and from a staff point of view, like I said, the variety that they get at working for a smaller firm or branch, because they are more, the work is more varied then, they don't get so bored and they not doing so mundane tasks. In a big store, say like Tesco's they are just being employed as a check out operator or a shelf filler and that would be all that they would do for their shift, at least here they do maybe 2 or 3 jobs during that time and then they wouldn't get so bored with them.
- Interviewer: Do you feel that there is, some ways of looking at it, some people are happy only doing one task.
- Mr 34: Yes.
- Interviewer: And there are others as you say are liking doing other tasks.
- Mr 34: You will always need people that will just be a check out operator for their 4 hour shift, but the more people that you can get that are like multiskilled and come to you and say right what else can I do, can you train me on this and this, the better it is for the store and then there is an as well.
- Interviewer: So you think it is better for the store and them, they feel more confident, perhaps they are not bored, they are happier maybe and the store has got multiskilled staff and more people ... What about for you, your angle?
- Mr 34: It makes my job a bit easier because I know that I can either rely on certain people to do the jobs, I haven't got, relying on doing it myself because there isn't anyone else that knows how to do it. One thing with that though, you always think that no one can do a job as well as you do, so you may think right, I will just do it anyway, rather than delegate the job out. Which sometimes is a bit of a stumbling block and can have a slightly negative affect on the team, because they are then thinking why don't you let me have a go at this.
- Interviewer: That's right yes. How do you approach that one? ·
- Mr 34: What I try and do is work alongside them when they do it, so I am still having an input and then hopefully they will, my sort of training or coaching that I give them while I am working on it, then rubs off on them, so the way that they merchandise, just for example, a particular product, how I would do it is then how they would seem to do it.
- Interviewer: You would hope that they would take over from ...?

Mr 34: Yes see how I would do it and they would sort of copy it, rather than me letting them do it and then having to go and do it again.

Interviewer: Then go round and have to?

Mr 34: Yes and then, you know, if they built a display and I didn't think it was the right way to display it, then I would go back and change it, then just, the motivation of that person just drops to the floor really. I think the way that I have done most of my management style anyway is because I started off just a sort of a Saturday lad, same as what I am now managing. I have been there and done that and done all the tasks that my old managers have used to set me, so I can fully understand what they think, as to what they are going through when I now set the tasks.

Interviewer: Yes, so you have got some empathy with them?

Mr 34: Yes, you know and I am not, I don't give people jobs that I am not prepared to do myself or haven't done myself. So I have got that sort of understanding with them that I can go up in there and not just coming in as Mr Manager and don't know a thing about retailing.

Interviewer: Yes of course. So, issue about staff is the risk factor, do you find that is a multiskilling, does reduce your risks because you have got more people ... or do you feel that that is really an issue?

Mr 34: To have people more multiskilled than that is going to benefit me and the team. I wouldn't necessarily say it was any sort of risk.

Interviewer: I just think, thinking of, because I have interviewed some managers of larger stores and they have less of, I suppose, concern with developing staff as maybe you might be.

Mr 34: Yes.

Interviewer: And I wondered the reason for it, one of the reasons for it, maybe a risk, because if you have a small number of staff, it is supposedly more of a high risk situation for you, you might have to get your hands dirty a lot more if you haven't got the amount of skilled people and certain people are off sick or on leave or something. I wondered if that was a real issue or not really?

Mr 34: I would agree that stores in, or smaller stores with fewer members of staff would have to have multiskilling, like you say if someone was on holiday or sickness or whatever, you wouldn't be able to do it, because there would be a certain amount of tasks that just wouldn't get done, because people don't know how to do them. So in a large store they have always got people to do everything, but here it is, probably one person to do three, possibly four jobs, where they would have one person to do each job.

Interviewer: But you don't see this staff development as really, is that a major focus this staff development, it is more of a, you are delegating tasks and getting people getting less bored, sort of happy staff I suppose, in some respects you are saying or ...?

Mr 34: Yes it is just the fact that you need the multiskilling in a smaller sites and just for the flexibility in the team and otherwise you just wouldn't be able to cover every single job, if there is not enough money for wages to allow one person to do every job.

Interviewer: A specialist?

Mr 34: Yes.

Interviewer: So you see this flexibility as very important, you see the staff are less bored, they have got things to do, different things to do, which is more encouraging then if they were just shelf fillers all the time or whatever?

Mr 34: Yes.

Interviewer: And you see, I suppose, as development for them, if they are happy with it?

Mr 34: Yes.

Interviewer: Anything else you can think it leads to?

Mr 34: The fact that they are then sort of happier in their work and it reduces the labour turnover and if they are actually happier in their work then that rubs off on the service that they are actually offering the customer.

Interviewer: What sort of goals do you think you have got here? You have mentioned service, service quality, it is in here as well, in the map as well and keeping the customers satisfied, which I suppose are both are slightly interlinked there, any other things you think are really, one of your major objectives? I see you have got learning to improve here, it is another sort of quite focused sort of ...?

Mr 34: Yes, once you have done your initial sort of planning and achieved your sort of goal, it is then sort of reviewing what you have done and how you achieved that and possibly sort of then making notes what, you know, how you would do it either better or slightly different the next time you were faced with similar issue.

Interviewer: Do you do that?

Mr 34: Yes you would sort of try and record people's experience of how you have handled certain issues. I have been in retail 13 years but I am still learning things and things probably don't phase me as much as they probably used to, because I have come across pretty much most situations within retailing, so I am probably then adjust the way that I think about things or react to a situation based on experience and all that.

Interviewer: Yes, and your management sort of style, can we talk a tiny bit about that, your personal leadership style, what do you think it is, do you think there is, other people can identify?

Mr 34: I think the fact that because I have worked sort of from the grass roots upwards that, like you say, there is empathy there and I understand exactly what jobs I am asking people to do because I have done them myself. So I basically just try and work with the people, so I am in a sort of an understanding role, I know the job inside out and the sort of, the pitfalls that you are going to come up against from being a sort of general member of staff. So there is probably a lot of understanding and empathy really that is in my style.

Interviewer: So you mentioned understanding empathy and you mentioned all sort of coaching, so you do you think that is your major style?

Mr 34: Yes I don't ...

Interviewer: I have done it ...?

Mr 34: Yes, if that is the way I come across, I have done it, I wear the T shirt all that stuff, but I don't see that I need to sort of run the store with an iron rod or anything and from a personal point of view, I have been managed like that before and, get the best out of me. So I think you sort of draw on previous experiences and managers that you have worked for and take little bits from them, their best bits or their, even their worst bits and you think right, I didn't like the way that they did that I am never going to do it to my own staff. I know you can't always be in a position that you have got to be nice as pie and all that sort of stuff all the

time, so there is hopefully an understanding back from the staff as well that the way that I treat them, they will then sort of respect that and treat me with the same sort of overall respect.

- Interviewer: So it is like a coaching sort of ... There is some two ways of approaching this sort of team working basis or , developing staff. One is that people are more friendly with, maybe you said coaching type of method and second objectives. Do you feel that you do both those or one or the other, or one more than the other?
- Mr 34: I probably don't set as much objectives as I could do really.
- Interviewer: So it is more of this coaching type of thing and showing by example literally?
- Mr 34: Yes that is the way I work and I have probably been brought up myself and the objectives, yes, that is probably coming more into the task as it were now, the last sort of few years actually. You know you set the objectives and you then sort of review it and if they need any sort of further on training, you just make the goal post a little bit wider and that sort of thing. So that is something that is sort of coming more into the ...
- Interviewer: You feel is not your personal style it is something that you feel as if it is coming in from, from outside of some description?
- Mr 34: Yes.
- Interviewer: Is it like an appraisal type of thing?
- Mr 34: Yes because of the way that I am, it should be then filtered down into how I manage the team as well.
- Interviewer: Right, motivation of staff, we have talked a little bit about this already. Can you tell me why that is really important to you. You mentioned how that, you know, happy staff is really important and things?
- Mr 34: Yes I think we pretty much covered it on what we were talking about ...
- Interviewer: Yes, it is like this service quality and thing for the customer, everything is happy and everything is going in the right sort of direction?
- Mr 34: Yes, which obviously would be more beneficial for the store and we would hope would achieve its targets.
- Interviewer: Yes OK, so although these things are, these customers and service quality are some objectives that you have got, you obviously want to make sure that the financial thing is running?
- Mr 34: Yes.
- Interviewer: Are you a very financially person ... or what?
- Mr 34: Yes I am aware of what I need to achieve and again if you sort of let the team know that as well, that, if they understand and know what you are trying to achieve then that is sort of half the battle as well, because otherwise they are just going to, well why am I doing this, what, why are we trying to achieve this and that? So my objectives sort of become their objectives as well.
- Interviewer: And what do you think you use as objectives, what do you think your staff think of your objectives are?

Mr 34: They probably think whatever I let them know is obviously, you know the flavour of the month, it depends on how they see it sometimes, but I just sort of try and keep them informed and up to date on what we are trying to do.

Interviewer: Do they see them as financial objectives, do they see them as service quality objectives, what is, or is it a mixture of both or what do they think?

Mr 34: I think, yes, a mixture, because some of them will go hand in hand, you can't have one without the other. The main thing anyway is the better your sales that then makes everything else look so much better. The downside of obviously increased sales is that you are that much busier and there is a bit more pressure on and then people start saying that we are understaffed and then that then starts leading on to other things. But there is never anything !

(Laughter)

(Talking together)

Mr 34: You think that having better sales would be ...

Interviewer: The end result and then that is it?

Mr 34: Exactly, but it actually just starts again when you start to increase sales!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Personal motivation, what is your real personal motivation do you think is it that you are juggling all these things up in the air I suppose in some respects?

Mr 34: Yes, a lot of them they do interlink a hell of a lot, because, if my personal motivation isn't there how can I then expect the teams to be there and I am not going to want to develop them myself, the targets that are either set by myself or the company, I am not going to have the belief or the desire to try and achieve them. So how can I then pass that down the line to my team?

Interviewer: So you feel as if that is really, this empathy bit of building up this coaching, I suppose in some respects I am seeing what you are saying is your personal motivation is to deal with these things and if you are motivated then ...

Mr 34: Yes that is it, if I am motivated the team will be motivated, if I am not motivated into achieving anything then they are not going to be either. Because it is, you probably don't realise when you become a manager how much of the, how much you sort of set the tones in the store and especially in a smaller store as well, it is, for whatever particular reason you might be in a bad mood or on a downer for whatever particular reason, the rest of the team will pick up on it. I have had on occasions where if when I am in a bad mood and not really thought that I am, then the rest of the sort of closer staff will say oh what is the matter and nothing, just the way you are coming across, they are going to pick up on it. Because you work with them so closely, day in and day out, they can pick up on sort of how different you are. It is like, in certain instances, you actually spend more time working with people here than you actually would at home!

(Laughter)

Mr 34: Which is kind of worrying! I know you feel as if you get married to the job, you are, because you spend so much time more here than you would do at home with your other half!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Yes it is a bit worrying isn't it? I noticed as you come here reasonably recently, have you, I see your, increase in turnover is reasonably OK at 4.5, pretty good, so presumably you haven't been brought in because there is some problems in this store or there was some problems or whatever or partly?

Mr 34: Partly, yes. The previous manager had been brought in here from a larger store with a lot more turnover, sorry, higher turnover and a lot more staff, therefore he didn't need to do as many tasks in his previous stores as you would need to do here. So his multiskilling wasn't up to looking after a smaller store. So where certain jobs needed doing he fell down because he couldn't do them and it obviously reflected badly on the rest of the team that couldn't actually ... Although the manager doesn't necessarily need to have to do every task in the shop and that is why he has the team around him, if the team are meant to be sort of looking up the manager and he can't actually do the job, then what sort of motivation of them and the sort of expectancy is a lot more, does decrease.

Interviewer: Yes, I suppose in terms of, it is like Tesco, when they started moving into the convenience stores, I mean they had a bit of a problem when they first tried it.
Mr 34: Yes.

Interviewer: I know they have recently more got in by the back door, but by spending lots of money buying stores but when they tried to go in ...
Mr 34: Yes if you had the store manager of the Tesco's in Abingdon and they then tried to run here, they couldn't do it. His people skills are maybe better than mine, but his actual getting down to physical work and his ability to do them all would be, he would be as strong as I would, but then his strength would be something that I would be weaker in.

Interviewer: Yes managing very large members of staff ...
Mr 34: Yes ...

Interviewer: ... involved in financial data?
Mr 34: Yes it is very much different to what we deal with here.

Interviewer: Thank you very much I think that has covered quite a lot, thank you.

Interview with Respondent 35 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 1 October 2002

- Interviewer: First of all you put planning ahead as your most important factor for success. Can you tell me why you think that's really important?
Mr 35: If you plan things ahead you can work out and try and account for various things that might happen and things like that. So you're not struggling later on.
- Interviewer: So you...
Mr 35: It's a way of covering yourself.
- Interviewer: OK. And why is that covering bits important to you? Is it..?
Mr 35: It's a bit like security really.
- Interviewer: I suppose it is really isn't it.
Mr 35: You're not worrying about something that might not happen.
- Interviewer: And why is security important to you?
Mr 35: I think it's important because if you have security, if you haven't got security in your job you start to worry and panic, and that's when things around you start to fall away and...
- Interviewer: So your concerns...
Mr 35: You have control don't you.
- Interviewer: OK. Control. Why do you think that's important to you personally? Is it something that you...?
Mr 35: Because if you haven't got control you don't feel as if you get to a way of running the store like you should be running the store.
- Interviewer: So it's a management type of thing. You feel control is a part of the management?
Mr 35: Right.
- Interviewer: The manager's job. OK. So that's part of doing your management job correctly. It's obviously important to you. Why do you think that's important to you?
What underlying reasons are there?
Mr 35: At the end of the day you have a satisfied customer and also the area manager when he comes round, he's looking for higher levels of control in various aspects of the store.
- Interviewer: Right. So is that area manager a bit of an appraisal type of thing?
Mr 35: Well it can be sometimes. He comes round and has a chat with you on how you're doing. Things you can do to improve. Give you ideas. Tries to look at things from a different point of view.
- Interviewer: And do you accept that. Do you like that sort of thing? That you can improve or do you think that...?

Mr 35: Some things he says I don't agree with and that's when there's a little bit of friction.

Interviewer: Yeah. Because you feel that you know the store pretty well and he hasn't really got an idea of everything?

Mr 35: Well every store's slightly different. The manager knows the store better than the area manager, he's in various areas.

Interviewer: So that's knowledge of store. Right. Manager level. OK. So that knowledge then is pretty important to you then personally because you feel as if you've built up some expertise within a particular store.

Mr 35: You know the store and start to understand it.

Interviewer: Start to understand it a bit and making sense of it I suppose, with what's happening there. Why is that sort of thing, that knowledge of things really important to you? Do you think that's part of the job, or do you think... what must it be?

Mr 35: I like to know how my store's doing financially sales-wise as well compared to the week before and where we're limiting at, where we're getting higher wastage and things like that, ways to control it. And to know those figures and the information, you can start to work out where is this information. The information I've got on the computer tells me which particular products I'm wasting a lot of.

Interviewer: OK, waste. And I suppose not only waste but also probably purchasing issues or lines that are running really well as well.

Mr 35: Yeah. That.. net more lines that can sell really well and then cut down on the ones, too many waste...

Interviewer: OK. So that is very important to you. Why... I suppose this feeds back in to the way you're thinking about it... is that part of being a good manager again, or is it something else do you think?

Mr 35: I'd say it's part of being a good manager. Being able to do that, do a review of what you've got in the store alongside the area manager. You can't just take things off the shelf and not do any more. You do have to go via the area manager. You can probably take a few lines away but if you start taking any more you have to explain why you're doing that.

Interviewer: And presumably... justify some of the decisions you made as well.

Mr 35: Yeah.

Interviewer: Does this... the sort of thing... say well I did this because I've got the...

Mr 35: The sort of thing... when he asks you where's such-and-such a product you can say I've ducked out because I'm here... information saying there's some wastage...

Interviewer: Yes

Mr 35: Three haven't come in and two of them went to the bin, went out of date and things like that.

Interviewer: Yes right I see.

Mr 35: Whereas if you have that information... he'll want to know why I did it. It puts you on the spot really.

Interviewer: Yes. It's justifying the decisions I suppose. OK. Why do you feel as if you need to do that? Is it.. is it all to do with your career aspirations or is it all to do with good management practice or what do you think?

Mr 35: It's the way the company should run really. It's part of company policy that you go away to the area manager and justify reasons, otherwise if you've been doing things willy-nilly... he can feel without any reason really at all!

Interviewer: (laughter)

Interruption by a mobile phone *tape paused*

Mr 35: That sounds very intriguing! It is yes.
Yeah that puts his influence back on me in a bit, that's how long he's going to be.

Interviewer: (laughter). OK thanks. If I could take this next one. Service quality is really very important as well. Why do you think that's really..?

Mr 35: If you've got good service quality the customers are going to come back to you again and again, whereas if you walk into a store and it's dirty, you're not going to come back into that kind of environment again.

Interviewer: Fine OK. So that repeat business sort of thing is very important to you, why do you think that is?

Mr 35: Its standards at the end of the day. You need to get standards in the store. It looks good on the company if you've got a good clean and tidy store as well.

Interviewer: Image. Good standards getting mentioned, maybe there's two different things there. Let's take good standards first. Why do you think that's really important?

Mr 35: Repeat business. What does that do for you? Does that make life easier for you?
It makes it a lot easier because then the staff, in a way, they know when something looks good and when something doesn't. And they can spot things around the store that are wrong. And without being told they can clean it or do things like that.

Interviewer: OK.

Mr 35: Whereas if you haven't got good standards they... it's more acceptable to have...

Interviewer: OK lead to good standards. Staff using their initiative. OK brilliant. OK why is it important for staff to be helping out together here, why is it important do you think?

Mr 35: For the staff to be...?

Interviewer: Yeah keen as well..doing that as well? Just because...?

Mr 35: It's taking pride in the way they do things instead of throwing things on the shelf I suppose, taking more care. If something is spilt on the shelf, or they see the shelves mucky, they clean it rather than leave it, because they know that it's not acceptable to leave it like that.

Interviewer: OK right. So pride is very important for that aspect. Why is that really important to you? Because it keeps the customers and repeat business OK but?

Mr 35: Yeah but what it also reflects on the actual manager himself when the area manager comes round to look at the store, he doesn't take too kindly if you stand there telling him that everything's all right and he walks round the store and says, well why is all this mucky? Is this acceptable?

Interviewer: Good manager. OK yeah. And that from that level.. why is that important to you do you think?

Mr 35: You know you're doing a good job at the end of the day.

Interviewer: And is that because you want a bigger store? Is it because of bonuses?

Mr 35: I don't think you can get bonuses. But you get your name mentioned..

Interviewer: It's more of a career move then really.

Mr 35: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Thank you very much. The next one we've got is price differentiation from competitors. Why do you think that's really important?

Mr 35: Right. If you've got really high prices, word spreads really quickly that you're expensive and dear, and less people come in the store.

Interviewer: Right. Lose customers.

Mr 35: It only takes one person to tell ten other people and them to tell ten as well, and in a little village area like this as well...

Interviewer: Yeah. OK yeah great. So that's very important so that... you could lose customers to your competitors. Are there are lots of competitors quite close by do think?

Mr 35: There aren't particularly with this particular store, but with other stores there are. And if the whole company started to up its prices then there are certain areas that would suffer really badly.

Interviewer: OK. So that's to do with turnover and, is that important for your career again, or is important to actually your maintaining profitability or turnover or whatever?

Mr 35: Just to keep it running, to keep Convenience Stores Ltd. as a company running, so that it's not making huge losses, it needs to keep those prices.

Interviewer: Lose money OK. And why is that Convenience Stores Ltd. thing very important to you? Is it because you want to be part of a successful company or is it..?

Mr 35: You want to be successful, and to always be successful you need to have a decent price strategy.

Interviewer: OK. Motivation of staff. Can you tell us a bit about that? Why is that important to you?

Mr 35: Right. If you've got highly motivated staff they'll do things for you a lot easier than if they're not motivated. Because if they're motivated they tend to be in a happy mood, which reflects when the customer's walking round the store. It creates that atmosphere where the customer wants to come back again.

Interviewer: Repeat business again. Happy customers. And I think maybe we've overstretched because we talked about that earlier on I think. And you want the customers to be happy and the speed of response to change in customer's needs and competitors. Why do you think the speed of response bit is really important to you?

Mr 35: If all of a sudden people want a specific product and we don't get the product in, they're going to go somewhere else and get it.

Interviewer: OK so losing customers to competitors, and reasons behind that. And I think we've... OK. Right. Fine. Now can you explain a bit to me how you've put these in this sort of order and stuff?

Mr 35: OK. To start with motivation of staff. That's linked to service quality. If you've got highly motivated staff the service on the shop floor with people smiling and saying hello to the customers, that's going to be a quite a strong bond.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 35: With the service and quality, obviously that needs to change pretty quickly with the changes in the market. And so that's linked in that way. Because you respond to the needs of the customer, you need to plan ahead, so you don't fall behind. And that's linked...

Interviewer: How do you keep in touch with these things? You mentioned the data you had before. Is there any other way you keep in touch with them?

Mr 35: There's actually other departments within this company that actually specifically look at other competitors and that. And then they can send emails to us letting us know, and there are booklets we get sent every week on what's going on in other companies.

Interviewer: I see. What about the customers on the ground floor. Do you feel as if...

Mr 35: We do actually share information with the staff downstairs as well.

Interviewer: Right yeah.

Mr 35: Special focus there, a special focus that we have...

(mobile phone goes off and tape turned over..)

Interviewer: We mentioned about you're planning ahead. How does this fit into the building resources for the future?

Mr 35: If you're planning ahead you can plan with your money as well that Convenience Stores Ltd. have got to build more stores as a company, they try to open 20 new stores a year at the minute. And there's a lot of planning involved in that anyway, so I see the sort of link in that.

Interviewer: Yeah. What about planning this.. part of your individual store? Like your extra facilities here or?

Mr 35: We do get people coming round when they update something like the lights for example, they'll start going round all the stores and updating them, it does take time but.. The same with security and things like that.

Interviewer: OK right.

Mr 35: It's just been in a few weeks now.... went round all the stores putting it in..

Interviewer: OK great. And with competitors, you mentioned data before, that you were looking at data a fair bit. Have you got much data on competitors or is it different forms of knowledge, or whatever forms of knowledge you...

Mr 35: ...gets passed down through the emails that we receive, because we have people within Convenience Stores Ltd. themselves that just specifically look at what products other companies have got on, and decide whether they can actually do these products any cheaper. Talk to the suppliers. Try and negotiate a decent price.

Interviewer: So that's planning ahead... linking directly to planning ahead again. Can you explain this one here?
Mr 35: If you've got good knowledge of your competitors, you can differentiate yourself from them, so you haven't got... so we don't do things exactly like another supermarket or a convenience store. If we do that the chances are customers will go somewhere else rather than stay with us.

Interviewer: Right. And one of the important differentiators is...?
Mr 35: Is the price. A lot of people that come into the store are very fussy about the specific prices. Whether it's a penny or 2p cheaper at so-and-so a place. They'll be very fussy about buying something if it is a little bit more expensive than a certain place they've seen it somewhere else...

Interviewer: Do they notice some particular ranges when they do this price comparison or what do you think? Is there some products they think well yeah, I know the price of that, I don't know the price of everything but...
Mr 35: Certain people at different stores will pick up on a tin of catfood or something like that is 2p cheaper at Sainsburys or...

Interviewer: I suppose they buy it all the time...
Mr 35: Yeah they buy it every week. If I buy 23 of these I can get one free...

Interviewer: Oh really?

(laughter)
Mr 35: Yeah. Things like that.

Interviewer: OK. And does that reflect on the price perception of the whole store or, do you think it's just they think that, oh well, they're on special offer somewhere else or whatever?
Mr 35: I don't know really, to be honest. The prices that they come up with, they tell us. Tell us that they're doing it a certain price, and we can decide whether we tell our suppliers or our people at head office. This at this price, can we better that all? The answer's either yes or no.

Interviewer: Yes right, there's not much you can do about that is there?
Mr 35: No.

Interviewer: And the level of investment is last.
Mr 35: That's linked to the maintenance of your price leadership. Basically because if you've got a good price strategy, your profits will stay at a reasonable level, and you'll have enough money to invest then.

Interviewer: Do you mean re-invest? Is that what you mean?
Mr 35: Yes, reinvest back into your training of staff and things like that. As well as physical things like building new stores and things like that.

Interviewer: Thanks. Excellent. Some of the things that may be uncontrollable. Do you think that they are important to you? For instance, you mentioned that head office does this, does this, and you haven't got much control over that. Are they particularly important do you think in being a successful manager?

Mr 35: Sometimes, there are decisions head office makes, you might not 100% agree with. Unless a lot of store managers go against it. I can't see them changing on specific things. Like all stores want to do this on this date, it's company policy, you will do this now, that sort of thing.

Interviewer: So that's like restricting you, but in a way it's restricting everybody at the same time isn't it?

Mr 35: Controlling the managers as well. There is a lot of control.

Interviewer: Is there anything you feel as if you should get more control over? That maybe is controlled a bit too much do you think at the moment, to make you feel as if you had a bit more flexibility, or you had the opportunity to do that, you would improve things?

Mr 35: Since I've been at this store they've got certain allocations for promotions that they get sent every two weeks, and they're very heavy at the minute. There's an allocation sheet and it's got something for everything on it. And I would like to be able to change that, so that we don't get all these excess... at the end of the promotion we've got a lot of products still left in the warehouse, and it's just being left in there. And we end up reducing it trying to sell it through...

Interviewer: So what do you...?

Mr 35: The way you go about doing that is you phone the area manager up and...

Interviewer: So it's like a stock level issue really and...?

Mr 35: Yeah, and with this store and the size of it, you get too many allocations I feel.

Interviewer: And that's like something that they do for you and then, you find...

Mr 35: Yeah. They don't know the store but they give you the allocations for these things...

Interviewer: Right, stock level...

Mr 35: You can get swamped with too much easily yeah. It's a good job we've got a warehouse this size really, because otherwise we'd be seriously struggling.

Interviewer: Is it really big then?

Mr 35: Yeah. Warehouse the size of the shop floor, so it soon fills up. Over the next week it will.

Interviewer: I see. So you feel as if, if you had the opportunity to change things round ordering-wise, you'd be able to do it much better for what you know at store-level?

Mr 35: I know that we will sell roughly this amount, and we can always order some more on top anyway, so that's... you get no choice in the allocation you're given.

Interviewer: OK that's it. What happens...?

Mr 35: A lot of moving things around as well with the lift. You can only get a few cases in there at a time, you call the lift and then, you have to bring them back down again when it's promotional changeover day, it's quite a long process and time consuming.

Interviewer: So that knowledge of it, you've mentioned here, would help the company?

Mr 35: If they made more use of the stores with weak allocations where they could do with a few more, a little shuffle around really.

Interviewer: ... would be OK. How could they do that then? Do you think if you've got the data...?

Mr 35: We can get data off the computer that tells us how many of a certain product we've sold.

Interviewer: So you can feed that through...?

Mr 35: You can say 'OK. You've allocated us six cases of this. We've only sold six bottles. And there's six to a case. So that's one case. So we've got five of them in our warehouse now.' Another store maybe didn't have enough and sold out.

Interviewer: And you knew that in advance really?

Mr 35: Because you've got the information to back it up as well. You can't just say 'We don't need all these allocations'.

Interviewer: Do you think you can predict some of these...? I mean in a normal situation I can see that you could do very easily. What about if there's a promotion type of issue. Is it quite easy to predict?

Mr 35: You can't predict them all the time no. Sometimes they'll sell really well for the first week, and not for the second, or vice-versa. So you'll be playing catch-up sometimes. Sometimes the allocation you get... you get them in and they just sit there for two weeks in your warehouse and you think 'Oh dear!', that's something else I've got to get rid of within the next few weeks otherwise I'm going to be struggling for space.

Interviewer: Oh right I see. Very good. Thank you very much. That was very kind of you. Thank you for speaking to me.

Interview with Respondent 36 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 23 June 2003

- Interviewer: You have mentioned that service quality is the most important factor you think of the success of this store, why do you think that is important to you?
Mr 36: It is really how the customers see us, you know, how they perceive the way that we run the business, if we can give them the best quality and service, you know, on the Broadway, then we are going to be the store that they use.
- Interviewer: So it is sort of a repeat business type of thing?
Mr 36: Yes definitely, that is why our customer based is going to be local; we don't have much in the way of passing trade. So we have to make sure that we are consistent and they can get what they want when they want, when they come into the store.
- Interviewer: Why is that particularly important to you then and why is strictly business and building up your store really important to you?
Mr 36: I have got to make sure that it is maintained for the customers and it is how other people perceive me as well within the business. If someone can see that my store can remain consistent then it gives them a good, a view of me as a manager as well, if the store is consistent and remains the same, you know, going from bad to work to brilliant, you know, then it just shows that we have got a steady place in the store that we work to.
- Interviewer: And why is this being persistent and look as if you were doing a good job, why is that really important to you. Is it sort of like, is it financially driven or is it a career thing or ...
- (Talking together)
Mr 36: Yes that is part of it. Yes, I mean from the stores point of view it is important that people remain consistent as long as we financially; the store will remain consistent from a sales point of view. Then obviously for my career development on the consistent in my approach and show and willingness in what I am going to be able to develop myself for the future.
- Interviewer: And for the future is, when do you think that future is going?
Mr 36: Well if I decide to stay with Convenience Stores Ltd.'s or move into another company, if I stay with Convenience Stores Ltd.'s then, I am consistent with my style and my approach and that I will be able to someone within the company that they are going to be able to use because they know that I am consistent in what I do.
- Interviewer: What do you think your goals are within the company?
Mr 36: I mean I am only young, I want a larger store and then moving up the ladder to whatever I can do, obviously it is their call, I will do what they class as Area Manager and then ...
- Interviewer: So you see that service quality is not only good for the customers but it is also sort of good for you and learning that the two of them sort of fits together really nicely?
Mr 36: Yes.

Interviewer: And you mentioned it as a really a leading objective hear it seems to be like one of the only objectives that actually you have got in here, it is like a strong sort of objective, something to focus on?

Mr 36: Yes definitely. Again, it is something that can be developed and I can use to develop to people within the store, I think part of my leadership style is very important that people development through the business, so they can carrying on improving.

Interviewer: OK this constantly approving and motivating people and constantly improving where does that lead, what is the upshot of that?

Mr 36: Well motivation of staff and, it is kind of the next key thing because if you haven't got staff who are keen and motivated to carry with the job, then it is always an uphill struggle. If you have got people who are well motivated because of what you have put into them, you know, developed them and made sure that they are happy in what they do and so on and so forth. Yes, they are going to be more motivated and essentially you will get more from them.

Interviewer: Where does that lead to then, how to get more of this motivation of staff presumably it is maybe a two way thing that they gain something and you gain something?

Mr 36: Yes definitely, because I mean if the store is flowing and you are on the ball all the time and you are working as a team well then everyone, you know, they will become more motivated because they can see the results and in return I can become more motivated because I can see the staff are developing they are getting better results, you know, whatever it might be.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 36: You know whether the store stands constantly in credit or whatever, if we are getting better financial results or we can just have a better environment within the store, you know that all develops and make it slightly easier to work.

Interviewer: And is there sort of major benefits for ..., if any of your staff aren't working very well together and everybody is motivated, it sort of you up to do things?

Mr 36: It gives me more time to look into details and business and things that you might otherwise overlook. If I am taking time to do the basics which other people should do, developed and motivated and trained probably to be enable them to do that and I obviously can't affectively do my job when I need to because I wouldn't have the time. So with the right training and development in place and planned in so that the people are aware of what is required of them over a period, in the meantime it frees me up to look into the details and business and what we can do to make the store

Interviewer: Yes. And your personal leadership style, can you tell me a bit about it, what you think it is?

Mr 36: I mean it is difficult because I am really a relatively young manager so it is something that development works over a lot of, as we go thorough the business, time and situations build up in my memory, they are not, as I go along anyway. But I think I am very keen to develop people, I have not been the business that long but I can see there is a number of assistant managers that have come along with me and I have been part of their development and making sure that they have the knowledge and understanding within the company guidelines to develop themselves and move up within the business.

Interviewer: How do you motivate people, how is your personal leadership style?

Mr 36: I would do quite a lot of empowering people and giving them the flexibility to do what they see within the business and to kind of, so that they can use their ideas and I can tweak them if you like and improve on their ideas or adjust their ideas to fit within company guidelines if they are not quite right. But I mean, empowerment is quite key, I think, with the business, if I have got 3 or 4 assistant managers working under me they know that they have got the flexibility to get

on and deal with things on their own, in their own ways then again, that in turn makes me more flexible and like look at what they are doing and set them objectives and make sure that they doing things correctly and so on and look at the detail of what they are doing to improve their side.

Interviewer: And you give up a lot of flexibility to what they think is best you also set some objectives I think I understand?

Mr 36: Yes definitely and have been doing more recently, so that we can keep, because obviously time scales are very important, if you lose sight of when it has got to be achieved then it is very difficult to carry on moving things forward.

Interviewer: So is that often time objectives basically or...?

Mr 36: Yes ...

Interviewer: ... something within a particular time sort of thing?

Mr 36: Yes there would generally be time scales within that, I mean some of them are just going to be ongoing to the, at the moment which is in there as well, but if, you know, if they can, we have got measurable results.

Interviewer: What do you think the of this flexibility. So you have got flexible staff, whereas you can, I suppose they have learned to do things a lot better, because they have been given them a lot of responsibility and empower them to do that. So they feel more flexible, you feel more flexible because you have got the time to do other things that you should be doing and may not be able to do if they weren't so flexible. What do you think is the outcome of all this, this flexibility? It is quite an interesting point, it is quite an important point?

Mr 36: Yes definitely. I think they just feel at ease when they come to work and it is a slightly less pressure there to, I mean there is pressure to the foreman and meet the timescales, but there is no dictatorship, that is very important to people because I know working as an assistant manager myself, you have plenty of ideas and that that you want to put forward, but if you have got someone saying oh no this is the way it has got to be done, it has always been done this way, that is the way it is going to be done you kind of, you don't have that freedom. There are so many ideas that they come up with, like the small ideas and develop the business, you know, the big league

Interviewer: So when you were in that position you didn't have that perhaps, is it true or not that you ...?

Mr 36: Yes there would have been some managements who, old style management if you like, that have been in the business for a long long time now and they worked the same way as they had started however many years ago now.

(Alarm bells/mobile phones ringing at same time!!!)

Mr 36: That is something that ..., kind of moved on and developed them myself, I looked not to be, not to use that mannerism you have just got to stomach people from using their ideas.

Interviewer: And you felt, I suppose a bit restricted, so much restricted in yourself, when you were in that position?

Mr 36: Yes definitely.

Interviewer: I can see it would be a bit of a turnoff if somebody myself! Great. Personal motivation, well you think that is really important?

Mr 36: Yes definitely. Yes being the store manager, you don't, we do have certain restraints, but the empowerment thing has come from up to are saying well this is your store, you make the decisions and you kind of stand by them. So, you know, if I can't motivate myself to get anyone being with the business or look for the opportunities then I think it will be very, very difficult to carry on, because we don't have someone sitting on their shoulder saying this has got to be done that has got to be done, you have got to make sure that you are keen and aware of the house rules running and if you are motivated effectively then that is going to show and go through to other people.

Interviewer: Yes. Does it increase their motivation, do you think?
Mr 36: Yes definitely.

Interviewer: Maybe we should put one into her then do you think?
Mr 36: Yes definitely, we do need to motivate the staff, personal motivation.

Interviewer: ... motivates the staff in some direction there like that?
Mr 36: Yes definitely and it is going to be positive.

Interviewer: Yes OK. Sort of 1, 2 or 3 in numbers?
Mr 36: Probably No. 2!

Interviewer: OK so I understand you. So you are motivating staff and then developing. Do you think that any of these lead on to, leading influence letting people ...?
OK, thank you very much. I think the last one, but we have really mentioned this quite a lot already. So there is sort of bringing all the people in board to head for this sort of, maybe objective here?

Mr 36: Yes. What through developing?

Interviewer: You are sort of learning to improve type of things to ...?
Mr 36: We did all the term improvement it comes with acceptance levels as well, you know, if we say that this is good enough, we have to be honest with ourselves and say this is a standard that we are leading the condition of a store at the end of a night and we are starting trade and throughout the trading hours, is that good enough for the customers is that what we would expect as a customer. Yes, the standards, presentation,, availability, whatever it might be is that right for the trading hour that we are in?, customers and so the service and quality is there.

Interviewer: How would you assess that? You would say that yes, this is what I would expect when I go to a store, presumably everybody goes to different stores and we expect different service quality levels or different cleanliness levels. How do you really assess that?

Mr 36: Setting a standard is quite important in saying well this is what we expect and this is what we accept. So whether that is from setting off a particular section with availability of the level of hygiene that you would expect in taking something else, well actually look at this, this is what I have done, this is how I expect, to be this is how I want it to be, you know, all the trading hours and, you know, this is the way that the display is meant to be and we need to use photographs and actually setting it up and then taking to the shelf or whatever it is and saying well like this is what I expect, this is how it has got to be and stuff. Photographs, is quite a bit, just to make sure that they are where they need to be.

- Interviewer: Yes. Very good. OK I think that about covers it. Can I ask you a little bit about your experiences in the past, where you said that you found some managers were very sort of dogmatic and said this is how it should be done and didn't leave people underneath to really develop themselves and therefore they were sort of demotivated. What sort of positive experiences have you had, do you think?
- Mr 36: I mean I have worked in quite a number of, retail management training scheme within a company, a fast track scheme. Now I have only been a manager for 3 years, but within that, quite a few different styles of management
- Interviewer: Anybody you found was totally any good or was there one particular person that you found that really, really ...?
- Mr 36: Yes the two which trained me on my management training scheme were very good, they were people orientated within the business and they spent a lot of time on the shop floors speaking with customers, speaking with staff. Yes I think there is very key people that could see that they were active in the role that they were playing. I think that is part of the style that I have taken on myself to make sure that there is an open environment in store where people feel happy to approach you with any issues and opportunities and just build up that atmosphere where you might struggle to communicate with the staff.
- Interviewer: Yes. operate two different ways there, often they are very friendly with the staff and maybe even go out socialising with them and sort of get them on board, that sort of way, other people maybe set more objectives and try to develop them in that sort of way. Is there any particular one that you think that you use?
- Mr 36: Or a different one to those, I mean for the social events if it is something that is organised within the company, you know, then I would like to think that we could go out and enjoy ourselves as a team without there being a kind of concern that I am going to put any constraints on the evening or anything like that, I think that everyone can enjoy themselves within a team. But more and more, I am starting to, you know, at the higher level end, assistant managers and that is to set objectives so they know clearly what they have got to do.
- Interviewer: Yes.
- Mr 36: Because planning an organisation with something that I know personally I need to improve and by doing that it will help me and be more aware of what is going on, because the assistant manager has more responsibility, you start to loose touch with what they are doing and where their timescales are, so it is just a ... putting it in writing ...
- Interviewer: Yes.
- Mr 36: And make sure that everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet.
- Interviewer: Yes, OK thank you. I have noticed that maybe things you reckon that is a bit of a slight decrease, maybe there is some reason for that you think and ...?
- Mr 36: Yes there is a lot of affects on the Broadway. We had that new Tesco Petrol Station changed over, I don't know quite how Iceland will affect us now, now they have had their refit, whether they will take any trade from us or how that will affect us, Yes it just seems to be that there is less and less people staying on the Broadway to shop.
- Interviewer: Yes.
- Mr 36: Now there is not so many outside, the other shops they used to, I mean they used to be like Woolworths and shoe shops and things like this, now you have kind of got cafés, charity shops and a few supermarkets, yes very little in the area that attracts them to come to the area.

Interviewer: So it is just like you are part of a maybe a store community in some respects, because if they haven't got these other ones there, maybe don't go to this area quite so much.

Mr 36: Yes definitely. There is also the issue with, you get a lot of vandalism and theft stuff in the area and because there are surrounding areas that have done things to stop it or prevent it, we have CCTV and this kind of thing, the Broadway or the council for the Broadway I already know are looking at getting into the area. You know, we have got the surrounding areas which are getting pushed into here. So until we get that kind of closed benefits, getting those additional things in and it is all going to be pushing these kind of people into the area. shops somewhere where you know there is a lot of theft and that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 36: ... that kind of thing actually in the store.

Interviewer: Yes but maybe I mean totally ... the sort of things like ...

(Tape switched over to next interview?)

Interview with Respondent 37 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 27 Sept. 2002, 10.00 am

- Interviewer: You put planning ahead as one of the most important criteria or the most important criteria. Can you tell me why you've done that.
Mr 37: Mainly so we don't get caught out with stuff and we are aware of things that are happening whether it's key people being off on holiday or whether it's planning for the refit or for Christmas, that sort of thing.
- Interviewer: Is this important for your management job or what's the reasoning behind this planning bit.
Mr 37: It makes my job easier, that's the honest answer and it also means that stuff is happening and we want it to happen in the store. We're not fire-fighting with stuff.
- Interviewer: Is that because you feel that you personally want to be well-organised. What's the reasoning behind it?
Mr 37: We'd all like to be more organised – let's be honest. But obviously planning ahead helps you organise other people and yourself. If you know what's happening you got more chance of doing something about it.
- Interviewer: Good response. Why do you like this mode of operation? Do you think there's something personal which you really like. Have you found it's been successful in the past or what's the reasoning behind it do you think?
Mr 37: I think it's the first thing they teach you when you start out in the industry but it's also a comfort factor. That you know that you're not going to be caught out by anything, gives you more confidence to do what you've got to do, if you know what you've got to do.
- Interviewer: Why is that confidence bit really important to you?
Mr 37: Confidence plays a big factor in what's happening within the store in terms of people and standards I've found certainly. Of course, my confidence filters down the line so if I come in and I can't be bothered, then no-one else can be bothered, the standard will drop.
- Interviewer: What sort of standards are you talking about?
Mr 37: We're talking about presentation, availability, quality, workload as well is a factor. If we're all feeling good, we tend to work a bit harder. It makes our lives more enjoyable.
- Interviewer: If we follow that a bit more you want the presentation to be good, quality to be good and everything to work alright. What's the reasoning behind that? What are you really looking for?
Mr 37: Customer satisfaction.
- Interviewer: That leads to profit..
Mr 37: Profit, more bonus for me, sales, praise from up above, well done on your sales, well done on your store.
- Interviewer: And that's important to you because...
Mr 37: It motivates me, keeps me happy.
- Interviewer: Is it something for your career that you feel as if maybe you are moving on, or working up.

Mr 37: I'm not so much looking for the next move. I just want to come in, do my job, be happy in my job.

Interviewer: So it's a life style bit.

Mr 37: I'd like to move on but I'm not doing the things I do because I want to get another store or more money. That's not the driving force. I'm driven by having a good store downstairs and getting a bit of praise every once in a while.

Interviewer: Leadership style. Why is that really important to you? What is your leadership style?

Mr 37: I'm quite a friendly person, I'm very open, perhaps a bit too honest sometimes. I do tend to say what I feel. I think it's important to build good team relationships. I've got a lot of people who support me a 100% and a lot of people who would do a lot of things for me. I can be tough and firm when I have to be. I'm not a big fan of the discipline process. I like to sit down and talk to people and try and support them and get to the bottom of what happened and try not to let it happen again. But then saying that, if people take the micky, people know where the line is with me. I'm not a big fan of discipline process but I will use it if I have to.

Interviewer: Why is this aspect pretty important to you?

Mr 37: Again, it makes a better working environment for everyone. But also if you look after people, they stay with us for longer. They do more things for us. We don't have to keep recruiting, retraining etc.

Interviewer: Is this a hassle to you?

Mr 37: Of course it is, it's hard work. Getting new people in, we don't always get it right, we make mistakes. It's a lot easier to stick with people that we know. It also means that we can develop their knowledge. If they're happy doing the job they're doing, we can move them on. Do other things with them. It's just a constant process.

Interviewer: So you think the main motivation is the working of the store and customer satisfaction?

Mr 37: The more people who know what they're doing, the better the job gets done downstairs. The less complaints we have, the happier the customers are.

Interviewer: So it's supporting your belief in your job well done. It's a well organised outfit.

Mr 37: The learning to improve aspect you mentioned as being important as well. In respect of my management style rather than assistant managers. We're all still learning. Things change. Things don't always work. Different people respond in different ways. Also in terms of things that come down from Head Office or people in other stores have ideas how to work. Learning to change, to grow, to mature.

Interviewer: Why is that important to you?

Mr 37: Again, we can always learn from other people. They've got ideas that can help the business. Help me the way I do things, the way I run things. It's also about supporting myself and other people as well. Encouraging and helping and starting the cycle again.

- Interviewer: So it's important to you to take on ideas from outside, try them out perhaps to see if they're working in this place rather than anywhere else. Where does that lead – running the organisation very well?
- Mr 37: It is. It's all one big umbrella.
- Interviewer: Management intuition that's an interesting one. Is it because of your experience?
- Mr 37: I think through experience you know sometimes what's going to work, what's not going to work particularly with people. Some people respond to a pat on the back and encouragement. Some people respond to quite harsh words, it might be shouting and swearing at them and kicking them up the arse. You have to learn who responds. You might sit down with someone and try to talk to them. It's not sinking in so you might try a different route and give them a rollicking. That might work but again it's about learning, responding and how different people deal with different things. Also in terms of intuition with what's coming up. Refits, Christmas. The refits example – I've done several before when I first started with the company helping out with stores. We had one here five years ago. I was three months into the job then. I was a little bit out of my depth. I'm now a bit more prepared and I've got a bit of intuition and a bit of commonsense and a lot of things will happen differently this time.
- There's a lot about previous knowledge really and previous experience.
- Interviewer: How much do you think you can bring your previous knowledge into maybe the profitability of this store? Do you feel as if you've got control – I know Head Office control some aspects of it. What aspects do you feel they control?
- Mr 37: I think that the biggest aspect is the standards downstairs. If the store looks good. If it's fresh and clean and available. If the staff are doing what we all should be doing and there's no complaints from customers then the sales move forward. If the store looks dreadful downstairs, things aren't right then the sales fall. It's a fact.
- Interviewer: So the standards in the shop you feel as if you've got a lot of control over. Whereas maybe you have got less control over some of the product ranges or whatever.
- Mr 37: We do have issues. We have very big ethnic range which just sits on the shelf. Obviously, we can't control prices in any way whatsoever. What we can do we can make the most of what we have got.
- Interviewer: So you order more the things you know that sell very well.
- Mr 37: You know good promotions. Every time the promotions change fortnightly, we sit down, go through it and pick out the winners. We look at the orders. They allocate lines and we look at where we need to increase the allocations. We decide where we're going to put it, what we're going to do with it.
- Interviewer: What things have you got less control over that you think maybe would be useful to have some control over?
- Mr 37: I would like to have some control over the weather. I really would. It's a big factor. When the sun comes out, the sales go up and when the rain falls, it stops. It is a big factor in a store of this size.
- Interviewer: Is this because of the location?
- Mr 37: Probably is because we're very limited in terms of parking spaces. Most of our customers are local. So if it's chucking it down with rain, they're not going to come out. They're wait till the next day or whatever.

- Interviewer: I suppose they might go to Tesco where there's a car park.
Mr 37: Exactly or where there's a bus stop nearby or where you can park easily.
- Interviewer: Personnel turnover. How does that fit in? You mentioned that it makes your life easier. It is.
Mr 37: Recruiting. We're in a very tough area for recruiting. In terms of the people, not just the quantity but the quality of the people who apply is pretty atrocious. The pay rate doesn't help the situation. We pay a lot less than someone like Tescos. We're fighting a losing battle. A lot of the people who live in the surrounding areas have very well-off parents. Particularly students. A lot of them don't need to work. And finding people to work particularly during the day is difficult. Very difficult. We try and encourage people. With the people we've got. For example, we've got two quite young lads who work full-time. One of them has just been appointed. He was part-time. He decided not to go back to college so we offered him full-time hours and he's happy with that. We've got another lad who we've put on the company training management scheme. A year-based course. So every month they get together with their colleagues and go through various aspects of the business and the management training. So we're looking to progress him. We might do the same with the other young lad as well.
- Interviewer: Having this good support staff and good relationships, why is that really important to you? I know you said about profitability. Customer satisfaction you get rewarded for that.
Mr 37: It's part of a comfort factor. If we've got reliable staff who want to come in and do the jobs, it makes our lives a lot easier. We had problems in the past where people are constantly phoning in sick. One person does it and someone else does it. Before you know it, you've got an epidemic on your hands and you've lost half your workforce. You dread coming in in the morning, you dread the phone ringing. It tended to happen with a lot of people who are fairly new to the business. They didn't last very long. Word got around. Sorted the problem out.
- Interviewer: Flexibility is quite an issue with managing a large number of staff I would think? How flexible do you think people are and how flexible are you?
Mr 37: We trade 96 hours during the week. I work a fair proportion of that. I do my fair share of hours. My assistant manager does that as well. There are some people in the industry or in the store that will never be anymore than what they are. For example, we have a cleaner downstairs. He came in on one of these Government-sponsored schemes for people with special needs. He's still at the stage he was at five years ago. He will do exactly what we tell him to do and he'll get on and he's a hard worker but he needs to be led by the hand step by step. We've got other people, particularly students, who come to me and ask if they can do supervising. They want to change their role slightly, they want to do a little bit more, have some more responsibility.
- Interviewer: And is that flexibility useful? Is it easy to manage?
Mr 37: It can be providing we can do it right. We'll take the supervisor on. We've got 2 lads – one that works Saturday and one that works Sunday. We've had people who've been doing that for the last year or so. They've now left and gone on to university. So now we've got these two people who have left and two people have come to us and said I'd like to do this. And we're going to do it with them because they've been here a while. They know what they're doing. The danger is that if we don't train them properly, mistakes are going to be made, they're going to pass wrong information on etc. We'll suffer perhaps financially in terms of stock loss or that sort of thing. But it's also good that it's encouraging them, making them happy. In terms of being flexible, so they can do other things as well. So it frees a lot of the pressure up for us and we can delegate the jobs that we shouldn't have to do perhaps. It encourages them and if we give them some responsibility and they get on fine with it, we can give them a bit more responsibility. Add more things to them depending on how they get on.
- Interviewer: Does this presumably free you to have time to look at different things?

Mr 37: Yes, for example, being a supervisor can be a quite time-consuming job. When you're doing it, you need to be down on the shop floor and near the tills. If I'm doing that, I can't be up here.

Interviewer: How much data do you feel you've got on the customers, you can improve your offerings? Do you feel as if you've got a lot?

Mr 37: Not really. Most of our customers are local. They are either working in town and they come out on their lunches or 5.00pm when they finish work or they're elderly and they live local and it's handy for them. Those people spend the same pretty much every day. They buy similar things. We know what promotions are not going to sell. For example, they keep putting these 12-packet crumpets on. Buy 1, get 1 free. 24 crumpets is too much for our average customer. Again, similarly with beer. We've got beer stacks pouring out of our earholes because Head Office allocated them. Our customers are elderly and can't carry it or they're at work. They're not going to take it back to work with them. Again, we know what's going to sell. In terms of changing things, we can't change much.

Interviewer: You can change the quantities?

Mr 37: Yes, we can order to increase if the weather is going to change for example. Or we can respond to a certain extent to customers' demands if we're constantly selling out of stuff, we can increase it. We cut back in other areas for example.

Interviewer: This planning ahead is very difficult when there are so many variables in there, for example, the weather. It's impossible to organise things.

Mr 37: That's right. A little while ago the Sainsburys in Chesham had a big refit and they laid on a bus service. There's nothing we can do about it and it did affect our sales for a little bit.

Interviewer: You mentioned sales coming down a bit. What's the main reason do you think behind that?

Mr 37: The main reason in the last six months is that the store has a very new and young assistant manager. My senior assistant manager has been with the company for 20 odd years and she is very clued up and knows what she is doing but she was off for ten weeks sick. So three weeks after my new assistant manager started, new to the company, she went off sick and there were a lot of issues in terms of holidays. We always struggle throughout the summer holidays. Very limited support from elsewhere and we plodded on through and we struggled through and the sales simply dropped because the standards weren't right. The till service wasn't right. We're still not there but we're managing to slowly claw it back and get the standards back again.

Interviewer: So you don't think it's because people are going elsewhere because of competition.

Mr 37: I think it's purely that the standards in the store were not right for a while.

Interviewer: This figure is it an annual one?

Mr 37: That's for the last six months. We do approximately 2 million a year.

Interviewer: You've been in this industry for some time.

Mr 37: Yes, since I was 16. The problem is that I don't know how to do anything else now.

Interviewer: That's fine. You know your stuff. That's the main thing. You feel as if you don't know your customers' prices that precisely. Why?

Mr 37: I'm sure people in Head Office do.

Interviewer: So they do their promotions and they do it based on them.
Mr 37: I should be more involved with what our competitors do but at this stage my priority is to get the store right. Once I worry about what we're doing right then I can worry about what other people are doing.

Interviewer: Is there much competition on the High Street do you think?
Mr 37: Not really. We've got a greengrocers, off licence down the road. We get the bulk of it. It's Tesco's that take all the money but in terms of the high street, we certainly take the higher percentages.

Interviewer: Improving the sales?
Mr 37: It'll put some money on the sales. It's going to be a lot of hard work.

Interviewer: So this negative figure is to do with...some things you can control..you can't control someone going off ill..
Mr 37: There were a lot of training issues which got left out during the Summer. There were a lot of people coming in, weren't trained properly for the simple reason that we were fire-fighting really for 6-8 weeks.

Interviewer: Is that because they didn't go through the training process at Head Office?
Mr 37: It's all done at store level. It's all my fault. My other assistant manager – she was still trying to learn Convenience Stores Ltd. procedure and trying to learn to be an assistant manager at the same time and it was too much. There was no support whatsoever. I worked 5 days of my holiday. It was physically impossible to take it. I was working long hours, I was getting tired.

Interviewer: Thanks very much. I hope you found it interesting and have a think about these things.
Mr 37: There's always something going on – if it wasn't Christmas, it would be something else. It might be people issues or training. It would be financial aspects or focusing on stock loss or other areas in terms of profitability. There's always something to focus on regardless of what time of the year it is. Perhaps pressure from up above. Three months' time it might be a focus on loss and after Christmas, it might be a focus on wages. It's a changing industry. I think it's the way I've always seen it. If you were to do this again in six months, a couple of them might be slightly different.

Interviewer: What the major focus is? So you think it's slightly led by the objectives or goals at the time whereas some of the things might stay the same?
Mr 37: Some of the things are inherent really in terms of what I do. People, for example, it's always been big for me. Without the people, we haven't got a business. That will always be a priority for me. Planning ahead is more of a priority for me now for two reasons. One because two or three months ago we were fire-fighting, doing no planning at all. Now we're back on the case a little bit. I'm forcing myself to get things right and also with a refit and Christmas coming as well and the two aspects together..

Interviewer: Very interesting. Thank you very much.

Interview with Respondent 38 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 22 March 2003, 9am

- Interviewer: You put firstly, motivation of staff and you just said that there are one or two things that you are pretty known for. Can you tell me why that's really important to you?
- Mr 38: It's important to me because a happy team breeds success. In simple layman's terms. If they're happy, they're going to want the work, they're going to want to work which is going to reduce sickness, absence. Well it won't reduce sickness but whereas before, they would take a day off sick if they weren't looking forward to coming to work. Therefore that increases profitability. And productivity.
- Interviewer: Right. Yeah. Some strong links there. Can you tell me why profitability and productivity are really important to you personally?
- Mr 38: With the state of the economy at the moment really, you've got to be, you've got to get the most out of people in order to reduce your costs.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 38: A happy member of staff is probably worth 2 or 3 unhappy members of staff.
- Interviewer: Yes. More productive.
- Mr 38: Yeah. And because they're being more productive, you get increased profitability through it. Because you're not having to employ an extra person to do the job of 1 person.
- Interviewer: Yeah. I can understand that. Why is that really important to you? Is it to do with, are you concerned about being a good manager? Or are you concerned about increasing profits because it improves your wages? Or career structure?
- Mr 38: All of the above really.
- Interviewer: Yeah?
- Mr 38: You always try to manage to the best of your ability. I find it quite important that members of staff are enjoying what they're doing, not just me. It's important that they're enjoying it.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 38: And if they're motivated, they're enjoying it. It gives them a reason to turn up for work, as opposed to just coming for the money.
- Interviewer: Why is that really important to you do you think? What's underpinning all this?
- Mr 38: Because it helps the company grow. The company grows, if all the stores had a motivated team, the company would be like for like stepping up every single year.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 38: Which to be honest it has been. So yeah, probably really economic.
- Interviewer: And why is that company thing really important to you? Is it because of your career structure in the company or, because you want?

Mr 38: Yeah. For career progress.

Interviewer: Have you sort of got any goals as far as that's concerned?

Mr 38: I have yeah. I mean I'm on a fast track plan now for area management. Hoping within the next 12 months to become some sort of area management role. And as soon as you become an area manager, you've probably got 14 stores to look after.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: In which coaching is vitally important, because you don't have hands-on control like you do in a store. You've got to be able to coach your managers without actually being there and nursing them you know. In some respects it's a lot easier in a store, because where you have to coach a team and manage a team, you are still in that environment. An area manager might be doing it down the phone, so you've got to rely on your coaching skills quite heavily.

Interviewer: Yes. And do they generally have people in as area managers who are very good or experienced as store managers presumably?

Mr 38: Not necessarily. It's been said that a good store manager doesn't necessarily make a good area manager. Because you might be a good store manager but not very hands-on, which wouldn't help you in the field role.

Interviewer: Right OK.

Mr 38: The field role is very very orientated towards coaching, motivation and leadership.

Interviewer: Yeah. And these things are partially true about a store manager, but even more so at area level.

Mr 38: Yeah. Any career and any environment, the higher you go, the more important the motivation and leadership skills are.

Interviewer: Yeah. Thank you very much. And developing staff. You reckon that's pretty important. It's sort of linked to what we've been talking about I suppose.

Mr 38: Yeah. Developing staff is basically a part of motivation of staff. If you're developing the staff, they're thinking you're putting the time into them, which is going to have a knock-on effect. It's going to make them happy because they're going to feel an important part of the business, not just another number.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: It's going to improve your customer service. And it's going to have all sorts of knock-on effects really.

Interviewer: So, the improving customer service, is that a means to an end, or what are you looking for there?

Mr 38: Well, you can always do more basically.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: You can smile and talk to the customer. Bag pack for the customer. There's always more. Customers' expectations are getting higher and higher every year.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: If they go to a competitor and they expect you to achieve that, then expect better, it's vitally important these days. You know you go to America and the first thing you're greeted with, it's a bit intimidating as a Brit going over there, but it's – Hello, how are you? – And the second you leave the store it's – Have a nice day! – You know the American terms.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 38: I think we're getting into the American culture of things.

Interviewer: Do you find that a bit sort of difficult?

Mr 38: I find it intimidating when I go over there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: And yeah, it's a bit of a culture shock, trying to blend it in here, but you know, basically as long as there's a hello and a goodbye, and polite conversation.

Interviewer: Yes. We're a bit more reserved and therefore we might not have the same sort of words, but we have, the feeling behind it we might sort of quite like to have a bit of that?

Mr 38: Yeah. And the customers like that. They like to feel important.

Interviewer: Does that then feed into the bottom line? Or is it something to do with you being classed as a really good store manager or, a manager?

Mr 38: It's both of those really.bottom line, because your customers go away, they talk to friends.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: One of the first things we had here when I started, was customers' expectation was very low, and they came in here just expecting to get the bits, not always being able to get what they wanted.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: But now they can. You hear customers coming up and saying – You're doing a really good job you know, marvellous job, much better than it was before. – And if they're telling me that, they're also telling their friends. And their friends will come into the shop. And it does affect your bottom line.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. You've also put down delegation of tasks to others as being pretty important. What's the reason that it's particularly important to you?

Mr 38: Delegation of tasks again, is well it's part of developing staff really. You're developing your staff by delegating to your staff. I use the phrase *if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got*. If, Wendy for example, one of our members of staff, she's been here about 15 years, if she'd been doing the same job day-in, day-out, she'd be bored.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: So it's just varying the role. You don't have to make massive changes in their roles. Just different thing week from week, just little things to keep her interested.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: And that helps staff attention, that helps with all sorts of things.

Interviewer: Yeah. And presumably the motivation bit as well, it's all linked together here?

Mr 38: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is staff retention an issue as far as you know, your job is concerned? Because presumably poor staff retention makes your job much more difficult?

Mr 38: Definitely definitely. Because you're permanently having to recruit and train from scratch. If you keep your staff, it makes your job a hell of a lot easier. We're fortunate here, because we've got a team of probably 8 or 9 people during the day that have been here, probably 10 years each. Which makes it easy. The hardest thing to keep is obviously your students, because they go off to university after a couple of years.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: So you're always having to train those.

Interviewer: And you find it's easier to manage if you can get this core of quite sort of?

Mr 38: Yeah, it's the backbone really. It allows me the time to work around and train other people, do other things. If you can come in at 7 O Clock in the morning and they all know what they're doing. You don't have to organise them all the time.

Interviewer: Yeah. You can act as, as a manager should.

Mr 38: You can manage!

(laughter)

Interviewer: Which is difficult if they don't know what they're doing.

Mr 38: Exactly.

Interviewer: And being that manager? Why is that really important to you? What's your motivation for that?

Mr 38: It all comes down to productivity.

Interviewer: Yeah. So you want it to be a productive store and you want to have a kudos of being, what did you say, one of the highest turnover places?

Mr 38: Yeah. One of the most profitable stores in the company.

Interviewer: 9 and a half percent increase. That's pretty impressive from one presumably, that's already doing pretty well.

Mr 38: Yeah it's doing very well. I mean, since I've been here we've put 15% on turnover. And you know after the last 6 months, it's been 9 and half percent the last 6 months, and it's still going.

Interviewer: Per annum?

Mr 38: Sorry was it per annum?

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: That's actually 16% then.

Interviewer: Yeah, one of the highest I've seen.
Mr 38: It will be tougher this year because of... figures now!

Interviewer: That's the problem!

(laughter)

Mr 38: I always tend to think that the area managers always expect that little bit more all the time and?
Yeah yeah. There'll always be more, but it won't carry on at that rate.

Interviewer: No no right.
Mr 38: I mean that's phenomenal. But even the company's performance at 3, 4% like for like, and I'm putting in at 16%. It's phenomenal growth.

Interviewer: Yes. And can I ask you how you managed to do that? You've cut down wastage, motivation of staff and?
Mr 38: Yeah. Motivation of staff. Getting the stuff on the shelves. And giving the customers what they want really.

Interviewer: How do you find out what the customers want? Is it, we know there's a lot of analytical things you can do here with you know, looking at your store.. and whatever. And you also get figures down from head office?
Mr 38: Yeah. You get figures down from head office but. More than that. It's talking to the customers.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: It's actually getting to the nitty gritty. For the first week I did nothing in here. I'd sit downstairs by the checkouts talking to the customers. Getting them to know me, getting to know the regulars, the ones that are in every day.

(tape interference)

.. and asking them if we could do more, - What would you want? - And they would give me the ideas.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 38: Stealing the ideas off them, makes my job easy.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: And they were saying, - Well, the store's a bit dirty, people never say hello and goodbye to me when I come in, they just want to get me through the checkout as quickly as possible, I always have to queue! –

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: And you just do a great huge brainstorming exercise at the end of the week, and pluck out the ones that are showing regularly.

Interviewer: Yes yes.

Mr 38: Highlight those, a big board up there.

(tape interference)

... until we sorted them. I think we've got 90% of them done now.

Interviewer: OK. Straight through to people coming more often and word of mouth and?

Mr 38: And I mean we get a huge feedback from the customers, how much better it is now. Which is great, it reflects in the turnover. They've gone away and told their friends, and that's all the advertising you need really.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: You know, you can put an advert in the local newspaper, but if it's coming from word of mouth that things are improving, then that makes so more difference than an advert.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's certainly very powerful isn't it?

Mr 38: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. Service quality you also mention as really pretty important. Why is service quality really key do you think?

Mr 38: Service quality basically is down to customer expectation. Customers certainly in the last 3 years have expected more and more and more. Ever since Woolmarts became...

(tape interference)

... expectation growing. Because Woolmart are an American company and they came very much customer-focused, hello and goodbye, going back to what I was saying earlier.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 38: And that's fed out into other companies.

Interviewer: Has Asda taken that American sort of market orientation?

Mr 38: Certainly, definitely. Cheap bulk goods but good customer service. They've got the rollover or rollback or whatever they call it. And because that's filtered out to other companies, customers expect that everywhere they go now. So we've had to change the way that we operate.

Interviewer: Is there an Asda around here? That people compare you to?
Mr 38: There's not an Asda here.

Interviewer: But they've just heard of this as a?
Mr 38: Yeah nationally you know. Asda's filtered out into Sainsburys. There's a Sainsburys nearby, and a Tesco's and it's come to us. The whole county now is much more customer-orientated than it was 10 years ago.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: 10 years ago it was all about the price, the cheapest price possible.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: Nowadays it's not so much about the price, it's the quality.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: You know, people will spend that extra bit to get the quality. There's an emphasis on fresh foods as well. Part of customer service. Fresh foods. Quality of fresh foods. Every since we had about a thousand cookery programs on TV every night, people want their raw ingredients. They want their carrots lose and fresh, instead of going and getting a bag of frozen carrots and wacking them in the microwave for a cheap dinner. They're spending a bit more to get good quality.

Interviewer: Yeah. I suppose you dread what Jamie Oliver's doing these days eh?
Mr 38: Yeah, get emails when Delia Smith comes on at Christmas. You get emails a week before and what's down on her program, so you can stock up. It's amazing the power that Delia Smith has.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Yes, so do you think you analyse? You've obviously got an email there from head office telling you the sort of things you think are happening, and presumably what promotions they've got and so on. What about your hands-on yourself? Is there any analysis you do in store that is. Maybe a softer approach where you're looking at what customers tell you, and giving them what they want?
Mr 38: For hard analytical facts I go on sales growth. You can analyse sales growth as percentages, and very hard to forecast sales growth.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: Without knowing more about it. I analyse... you know, customer flow through the store. You know, we have about 8 and a half or 9 thousand transactions a week.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: So we analyse that, and when I got here, it was 7 and half thousand. So we've got nearly an extra thousand customers a week, an extra thousand transactions a week.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: So, I analyse things like that. But a lot of it is, customers, staff, word of mouth.

Interviewer: Yeah right. What they're looking for at a particular time.
Mr 38: If you're in a bigger superstore, you can more focus on figures figures figures because that's what it's all about.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: Somebody like Convenience Stores Ltd., their niche in the market is, getting in with the local community. Because that is where our strength lies.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: You know, other multiples might say – Well we've got to get rid of this in order to increase profitability – They might need to get rid of the wine cooler. Whereas I'm quite happy to keep the wine cooler, because it's something that Convenience Stores Ltd. offer that other people don't you know.

Interviewer: Yeah... factor and stuff.
Mr 38: Yeah yeah.

Interviewer: So service quality you think, as you say, expectations here, and they're looking for quality rather than just price, and looking for fresh foods and this sort of stuff.
Does this really impinge on profitability angle again or is it? Is it you as a manager do you think, this is really important?
Mr 38: I think it's very important because it increases profitability, everything. You know, all of these 10 that I've noted are vital points for growth really.

Interviewer: Yes. You're very focused on growth?
Mr 38: Yes definitely. You've got to be, it's a business.

Interviewer: I noticed you mentioned the fact that you measure sales growth rather than other things perhaps?
Mr 38: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can I ask you why that is really?
Mr 38: At the end of the day profitability is driven by sales. If you increase your sales, the costs come in line. You know, if you lose control of your costs, the easiest way to control it is to take extra money because there's a percentage, your costs then fall back in line.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: Which is all part of profitability. And as a business you've got to be making profit, because that's why you're in the marketplace. You're not going to be in the marketplace losing money or just staying where you are.

Interviewer: Mm.
Mr 38: You know, if it's a small family owned business you might be happy taking I don't know, 100,000 pound profit a year, but as part of a company you've got to be growing. Because you've got to compete with other competitors.

Interviewer: Mm, yeah. In your sector, because of course Tesco's and all those sort of people have realised that you're into a good niche here, and convenience is the name of the game at the moment isn't it?
Mr 38: Yeah. Tesco's have just bought the MNW stores haven't they, all the Dillons and stuff like that. No, it's going to be tough for Convenience Stores Ltd. now, people have been trying to buy us out, maybe because they've seen us as a niche.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah, first one in.
Mr 38: We're the first really to specialise in the convenience sector.

Interviewer: Yeah. A quick look at this one. We've mentioned some of these things already. Motivation of staff I see you leading to service quality, you see that as really important. Planning ahead, leadership style, linking here. Can you explain planning ahead and learning to improve? Is this? Do you particularly plan this one or?
Mr 38: You have to plan ahead in order to be a successful manager. If you're always reacting to things, you're never going to be successful.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: And as far as learning to improve, you're only human, you're going to make mistakes, you've got to learn from them. Same as when you're a baby and you're crawling. The first time you try to stand up you fall over, you don't just give up, you make your mistake and you get up again don't you?

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 38: That's the same, or I see that as the same, in any career. If something goes wrong, you don't do it again, so you've learnt from it.

Interviewer: How do you find learning how to manage for example. For example, you've been, because obviously you're a pretty skilled manager, they wouldn't have given you one of the leading stores otherwise. What's different do you think when you came into here from another store a year ago. What sort of learning things did you have to do here that you maybe, was different somewhere else? Was there any unique problems here, or didn't you find that particularly?
Mr 38: You tend to find the same problems in every store. I wouldn't say anything was particularly unique about here. Every store I've been in has always been the same sort of problems.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 38: Staff getting a little bit.

Interviewer: Rusty or?
Mr 38: De-motivated. Rusty. It just needs a new face to give it a bit of a lift. You know, another manager will come in after me and do another job again. And increase it again. Because just a new face, different ideas.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: So it's learning to improve, not so much on this store, but just from experiences so far in my retail career.

Interviewer: What's? Can you highlight some key experiences?
Mr 38: Well, you know things like red dots. Red dots are fast selling lines which you must not sell out of. Kellogg's Cornflakes, all your branded goods that are number one lines. It's a schoolboy error really if you sell out of Heinz Baked Beans on a Saturday, you know, because they're one of your key profit-drivers.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: Robinsons orange squash, Coca Cola... and stuff. So really, learning knowledge of the products, and knowing which ones you've got to keep on sale to drive your profits.

Interviewer: Why have you orientated yourself around this, motivation, developing
(tape interference)

Mr 38: ... management. Why do you think you've got a, maybe I suppose, a developmental type of approach to things? You're motivating people and developing people. Why do you think you've got that sort of orientation if I can put it like that? What sort of experiences have you had in the past that would make you? I've always had a de-motivated team when I've come into a store, and I've had to motivate them.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 38: And I've seen the success that that has brought.

Interviewer: Yes. But were you, as a deputy manager for example elsewhere or?
Mr 38: I've been deputy manager.

Interviewer: And did you see this in action or how?
Mr 38: Yeah, yeah I mean I've been motivated by other managers. 2 specific managers really helped me and motivated me through my career. And I've taken. All the people I've worked for, the various managers I've worked for, I've taken bits and pieces, their strengths, and tried to bring it all in to me. And hopefully my AMs will take pieces of my strengths, and other managers' strengths, and that will help develop them.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 38: So you're taking little bits and pieces that you see as peoples' strengths, and try and develop them yourself. Which makes you a better manager.

Interviewer: Yep. Very good answer. Has the training programme added to that or helped? Or is it sort of less important than the experience of actually having it?
Mr 38: Training programmes have helped, they've given you guidance, but then it's all about experience in the store.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: You know, you've had motivational programmes that I've been put on, which has developed it. And that's just really highlighted what I'm looking for in a store.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 38: That's helped with. It highlights what you need to be doing to be a successful store manager, and to run a successful business. And then how you take those points. You can take those away and you develop those within your store with people. So yeah, of course it's helped, but then it's down to what you put back into the store.

Interviewer: Your leadership style, or your style of management in some respects, is based on what's happened to you in the past. And positive things have happened, and you saw it happening and working, and therefore it's been important because of that?
Mr 38: Yeah.

Interviewer: Any negative things that you think have happened to you in the past that maybe, de-motivated you, and therefore you're not going to introduce them?
Mr 38: Yeah. What has de-motivated me in the past has been, not being pushed. Not being given objectives to achieve. Being just allowed to drift.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 38: Without any real direction. Coming into work, doing your daily routine. It's all about for me, different things. You know I've got a couple of other stores that I look after now. It's just different to my daily routine. It means I can get out of here, and go and see the other stores, and then... it's development really.

Interviewer: Yes. So because, what motivates you is personal development essentially.
Mr 38: Yeah.

Interviewer: And if your manager is in tune with that, you're happy. If the person is not in tune with that, if he's not really cared about your personal development, it sort of de-motivates you essentially?
Mr 38: Yeah yeah. Because that motivates me, I assume maybe, that that motivates other people as well. And that's why I tend to develop my staff, because I like being developed, so I assume they like being developed.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 38: ... they do.

Interviewer: Have you had any people that you've tried to push in different directions, you know experience of this and experience of this, then they've countered with – Don't really like it. – Or doesn't that really happen quite so much.
Mr 38: Yeah. It does happen it does happen occasionally. 9 times out of 10 you get it right because, with experience, you know who is going to be able to do what, and who is going to enjoy doing what, so. But yeah, sometimes it backfires on you, and maybe it will be somebody who has been on fruit and veg for 15 years, and you say, - Look I think you need a change, how do you fancy doing bread? – And you get – I'm not doing that! I'm the fruit and veg lady! -

Interviewer: Yes, I can imagine.

(laughter)

Mr 38: But it's all about how you word things really. You know, as a salesman you could sell anything to anybody if you say it right.

Interviewer: Right yeah.

Mr 38: If you say to the fruit and veg lady – Look. Sales are down, wastage is up, I'm putting you onto bread because it's a smaller department. – Then she's not going to like that. But if you say – Look. You've done a fantastic job on the fruit on veg. I've got an opportunity on bread, I really want to develop the bread section....

End of interview and tape.

Interview with Respondent 39 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 22 March 2003, 3.30pm

- Interviewer: Let me clarify some of these points, you have got a link here that I couldn't quite understand, is it from personal leadership style to developing staff or is it from support from Head Office to developing staff?
- Mr 39: One from that, from personal leadership of staff to developing staff and there is another one there also.
- Interviewer: Are they both Plus 3, or are they both very strong or is this one the major strength, this leadership style?
- Mr 39: I would say they are both fairly strong, yes.
- Interviewer: I will put that on that one as well. OK thank you. You mentioned personal motivation as being the sort of major key factor as your top factor here, can you tell me why that is really important to you?
- Mr 39: I think everything else doesn't fall into place, if you are not motivated or the individual is not motivated, it is just not going to come from him, it is not going to go to through the staff, it is just, I can't really, I am trying to explain it. If you are motivated you are raring to go, you want to drive success, you want to drive the staff, you want to drive the business, you want to do the best you can. If you have not got that personal motivation you could, you maybe like, it is all right if we just leave it ticking it over, you are not quite a 100% behind it.
- Interviewer: OK so it is very much a success sort of key issue that you think is coming through. Why do you think that success or the motivation of the staff and the success and all that sort of thing is mentioned is really important to you?
- Mr 39: Obviously your most important asset is your staff, so you have got to have that right. I mean it is still a very much a staff based, you know, industry, you can't mechanise it, you can't, I mean I know you have sort of scanning and that and all these sorts of things that, but generally the store is run through its staff.
- Interviewer: OK so why are staff very important to you, is it the bottom line, is it your, the fact that you want to be known as a good manager, so you can manage your staff, what is the really motivating factor, do you think, what is the real, why is it?
- Mr 39: I suppose in a way, yes, it is to be a good manager, but it is also making easier job, if you don't develop and motivate the staff, then you end up doing the work. Then you end up concentrating on maybe tasks that your staff could do, which you could delegate, but you are not, because they are not motivated, you have not motivated them and you are doing them, then, you know, you can focus on other things.
- Interviewer: Yes, so it is to give you time to manage I suppose or something like that?
- Mr 39: Manage, plan, yes.
- Interviewer: So why is this time for management and time for planning and managing things really important to you, what is your goal at the end of the day, do you think?
- Mr 39: My personal goal?
- Interviewer: Yes, your personal goal, yes.
- Mr 39: Obviously to achieve well in the store, which would hopefully reflect back on me, you know, this person has done well, he has done this, this and this. So I suppose it is recognition from staff, promotion, increase in salary.

Interviewer: OK, so why are they really important to you, obviously we would all like an increase in salary and we would all like some promotion, so what is your overall goal do you think?

Mr 39: My personal goal?

Interviewer: Yes, your personal goal, yes.

Mr 39: Probably to be a store manager, it is not only that, but it is also you can learn, you know, it is also sort of a learning experience as well, sometimes you get it wrong, sometimes you get it right!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: This is obviously the case! Why is learning experience really important to you, is it because you want to be classed as quite a well rounded manager or you can manage different situations or what is it for?

Mr 39: Yes to manage different situations.

Interviewer: Yes? That is important, yes?

Mr 39: Yes and it gives, like you say also it makes you more well rounded.

Interviewer: Why is that then, what is the real motivating factor there? That you are known as a really, you can manage different situations? Is this, promotional things, yes you want to be put in different stores or is it ...?

Mr 39: Yes, it also, yes it also makes you a better person, it makes you more, as a person, interactive generally, you know, it just brings it, it hones your own skills and improves them.

Interviewer: So you see that as a goal in itself, then do you see the fact that you are, your personal fulfilment is, or your personal learning and stuff is tied into all this?

Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you, right. Personal leadership style, can you sort of define what that is, this is a difficult question I know?

Mr 39: Excellent!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Yes OK, excellent style, but what is the style?

Mr 39: There is a lot of hands on.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that, exactly?

Mr 39: Well I actually run two departments here, I run foods and the frozen.

Interviewer: I suppose you show by actually doing it then really?

Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: Why do you feel that that is important?

Mr 39: I think you don't want to be too distanced from your staff, you don't want to be shut in the office, you want to be obviously approachable to the staff, if you are shut in the office you are not. If you also know about staff, you know their needs, you know their wants, their needs, their aspirations, again if you are shut away from them and you are not down there with them, it is a case that you don't know their needs, you don't know what they want.

Interviewer: OK, knowing their needs and doing it, showing by doing, I suppose by example is quite important, but why is that really important, is it to do with, it is what you said before about making it an easier job by delegating?

Mr 39: Yes, partly, yes.

Interviewer: And what is the other you think or list other ...?

Mr 39: Yes I think that is it, I mean if you show staff, if you say to the staff can you do this, can you do that, they might not do it to the standard you require, they might do it in a totally different way. If you set an example you then know, it is like bench marking, this is what I expect and your staff can follow that.

Interviewer: Is that sort of leadership style work for you?

Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: When you were, sort of like, you know, in the same sort of thing, if you ever were?

Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: And that you had sort of examples of a different style that you didn't realise, for example?

Mr 39: I suppose, I have always liked instructional management, it is probably part of the way I do it, you know, I do this, this and this sort of very logical instructional way, it makes it very clear, it is very precise. It is how some people sort of like do coaching and let people develop their own style, that is good and I like people putting in their own opinions and their own ideas, but it is not so precise and if you are coaching, it is also slower. If you tell people this is exactly what you want doing and you want it doing now, it normally happens, if you start coaching, you put in your own ideas, it is not a) it might not come out the way you want it, also it might take longer than you anticipate.

Interviewer: So have you had some reasonably sort of negative experiences in that by doing it differently then by coaching and?

Mr 39: Yes I have, I mean it is ...

Interviewer: You have obviously tried it out?

Mr 39: I have tried it and it has not been overly successful.

Interviewer: OK, so that benchmarking needs, what is the ideal type of way of doing it is quite important then?

Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is, is it a sort of efficiency type of thing or is it like a sort of hands on management, it is very sort or precise management?
Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: Why is that important to you?
Mr 39: Well you have to have attention to detail.

Interviewer: Why do you feel that you need to have attention to detail?

(Laughter)
Mr 39: Because I think I suppose things can look at OK, but in actual fact they are not. I will give you a real example. A couple of weeks ago the produce looked OK, it looked all lovely and everything, but in actual fact on close inspection it was dirty. The customers can pick up, you know, on anything, and it only takes one or two customers to pick up on it.

Interviewer: Yes, and word spreads a bit?
Mr 39: Yes, word spreads a bit, it also then means, I mean if you are potentially detailed the whole time, you are on top of the situation.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 39: You don't want to suddenly find that the produce is dirty then look around and it is like, oh the whole shop is pretty much dirty, and then you have suddenly got a major cleaning show on your hands.

Interviewer: Yes. OK, so it is sort of partly, it is sort of, other than presentation, is there sort of like a miss service type of issue really, it is maybe show that everything is running smoothly and ...?
Mr 39: Service and presentation issues.

Interviewer: So you think these are really important for, who for?
Mr 39: For the customer, as goes for me in terms of staffing and delegating tasks and my own, and the staff, staff timing and my own timing.

Interviewer: OK you also mentioned management intuition as being important, can you tell me a little bit about that? I see you are linking it to, maybe developing staff a bit as well?
Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: And being responsible for a bit of a planning in there as well?
Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: Also linked to personal motivation, and you have tied them up there in some way?
Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell me something about that?
Mr 39: Yes. Sometimes you have got to go with a gut feeling or you have got to make decisions, that can, that motivates you, or this is a good idea lets go with it. Obviously you start off with an idea and then you have got the sort of plan, all right, you start at this idea, lets really get it down into details to what we are going to do and again it is the same at developing staff, if you have got an idea and you can, so and so would be good at this.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 39: You might be able to carry this idea forward, you know, it maybe over a viewing or something.

Interviewer: So it is, why are you thinking intuition comes, it is just an idea, it comes from you personally rather than ...?
Mr 39: Yes it comes from me, it can be picked up from outside sources, I mean for example, the other day, obviously the War on Iraq is the latest thing, that is why you see we have got 10 tons of water here, because everybody thinks they are going to poison the water sort of thing and people think, you are being stupid, but I have seen people walk out of here with 4 or 5 baskets full of water. So to bring in this much water which is an horrendous amount of water, but it will sell.

Interviewer: OK, yes. So it is ...

(End of side A)

Interviewer: ... is this sort of having ideas really important to you, is it, does it really increase the bottom line that much or does it, is it important to you to have, to be thinking ... job or what is it?
Mr 39: It is important, yes it effects the bottom line, I mean we have fairly stable sales, but if you can lift them.

Interviewer: Is that one of the ways you think you can lift them, is to cast some ideas and ...?
Mr 39: Yes certainly in the short term you can lift them by having ideas, capitalising on local trends, local, yes say local trends, maybe national trends.

Interviewer: Yes, with the, idea yes?
Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: And what is this sort of increase in profit quite important to you, is it linked to the sort of things you mentioned before, of doing a good job, of promotion and salary and this sort of stuff?
Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: It is how you measure yourself really?
Mr 39: Yes it is a measurement, yes.

Interviewer: Any other things you could quickly, that are sort of really you, or in a different way then many other people would think about it? Do you think that a lot of people worry about these little up trends, the smaller trends or do you think it is more important here or is it, what is it?

Mr 39: I think it is only important to the customers, I mean, if they suddenly want something and they come in and we haven't got it, they are going to leave the shop with a bad experience, they might not buy anything, they just might ...

Interviewer: Are there lots of competition round here, presumably there is in this area, I mean ...?

Mr 39: Yes, we have got Sainsbury's down the road, which is massive, Waitrose...

Interviewer: Passed that yes.

Mr 39: Yes, they are the main two really, there is an Iceland in the high street, there is nothing really other than those two. Then they are pretty big and when you are competing against those two ...

Interviewer: Yes you have got to be pretty responsive you think?

Mr 39: Yes, that would be on the, because the sales, is all going to go down to Waitrose.

Interviewer: Yes of course. OK, planning ahead you mentioned as quite important. Can you tell me a little bit about planning ahead?

Mr 39: It's, I suppose, it is linked into intuition, if you can, I suppose if you can forecast and predict these figures are going to happen, it makes a lot easier to react to them, to be proactive rather than reactive.

Interviewer: OK yes. So what would happen if you were too reactive do you think?

Mr 39: Generally, a lot of the time you miss the boat, you don't pick up on a trend for example, you don't order in time, you are starting lose sales because people are going down the road. Obviously there is only, it is very difficult to run a small store, you can't hold big supplies, you can't hold the ranges. So it is very important to jump on the local trends.

Interviewer: And you think that you are being more, I suppose, responsive because of, you are kicking, ball like this, whereas perhaps you can, it wouldn't be, or maybe they have got the range, they can do it more easily perhaps and you have got to worker there, I am not quite sure?

Mr 39: I suppose it is a combination of the two, I mean generally stores are planned out, like this here, that here ..., it all comes from Head Office, but we actually, and this is off the record ...

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 39: Break a lot, plans, there are a number of sections here that aren't planned at all. I have planned my own reception with ..., up here, you know I have bought a lot of this in, mainly using my own intuition, would it sell, would it not, sometimes

Interviewer: Do you do a lot of trial and error type of thing, because of these things are, you know, I am for, myself, but I find it is quite, sometimes it is quite difficult to predict, because you are taking risks and you are doing a bit of trial and error type of things, are you not?

Mr 39: Yes, it is a risk and it is, it has gone wrong sometimes. However, when it goes right, it goes really right and then you, you are the only person that can turn round and say that it was me that did this.

Interviewer: I see yes, presumably they are not really high risks in you wouldn't have lost a lot of money if it went slightly wrong, it would just be a bit of stock on your hands or whatever it is, a little bit too long or something... is that his implication?

Mr 39: Yes. So again the benefits way out weigh the risks.

Interviewer: OK. So that is, you were improving your profitability, improving this sort of thing, is it all linked to this, you know, career structure thing that you have in the back of your mind and you think as being manager of a store or is there some other things that you think are important yet you ...?

Mr 39: It is a factor, because if you are seen to be doing well, seen to be ..., someone is going to pick up on that and yet people can say that, you know, this guy is doing well, lets give him another chance, lets take him up a level and then you have got the whole cycle again, what areas you are sort of, I have got a store now, how do I improve it, how do I... So yes that is a ...

Interviewer: Yes. Anything else that you would like to mention?

Mr 39: What was the question?

Interviewer: Why you manage in this sort of way, why you plan ahead and get all these initiatives coming in and take these initiatives which are sometimes risky but you know, maybe a low risk in some respects, as a cost risks, but then you think it is benefiting your career, your profitability, career and ...?

Mr 39: Then again that is probably a long term view, but short term it is, obviously you have got customer satisfaction.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 39: If you have got customer satisfaction you have got happy customers, life is a lot easier with happy customers!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: OK, delegating tasks to others, can you tell me a little bit about that, why you think that is important?

Mr 39: Again it links into planning, it is about giving other people roles within the store, it develops them, it motivates them, it partly motivates people and it also takes responsibility away from me, instead of me having to physically do it, I can leave it to other staff.

Interviewer: And presumably that makes it really quite an easier life, but is there other things that are really important as well?

Mr 39: Well it helps me to focus on other aspects of the business.

Interviewer: So it is a time factor again, it is sort of time to reflect and time to manage and stuff?

Mr 39: Yes and it is also an economical use of staff.

Interviewer: Yes. OK thank you very much. Can you explain some of these links here. Personal issues start to personal motivation, you think that, this is quite, we have talked a little bit about this to be truthful.

Mr 39: Yes OK.

Interviewer: And personal issue start to planning ahead, you think that you are a planner or do you think that you think it is something that you need to do?

Mr 39: I think I am a planner, I think it is something that is always an ongoing process, you always need to keep planning and the more you do the more skilled you get at it. You then begin to use different tools, different methods.

Interviewer: And personal motivation to and managing intuition we talked about it. Planning ahead so that you plan a delegation of tasks to others quite clear I see. Managing intuition to delegating task, how do you link those managing intuition to delegating tasks? It is not so important for you I should think, it is more developing staff I suppose. Management intuition to developing staff?

Mr 39: Yes. Again it is that picking, looking at people and think, can we give them a chance, we give them enough unity, you know, lets give it a go, lets see how

Interviewer: So you think you need you need your gut feeling for that really, that is just really ...?

Mr 39: Yes.

Interviewer: What would work, what wouldn't work?

Mr 39: That's it.

Interviewer: Support for Head Office to develop new staff?

Mr 39: That's 3.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr 39: It's quite a strong one.

Interviewer: Yes it is.

Mr 39: I suppose in, this is quite a small company, and there is a lot of, let's say staff The staff work up to, beginning to train as management and obviously there is a lot of technical knowledge that they need to have, they need to obviously know the law and how the law affects ..., in about 10 different ways. So you need that sort of support and outside training from Head Office to really develop these people. Not only to know the law, yes to know the law, but then to be able to practice the law.

Interviewer: So that is your support for developing the staff? Does this developing of staff, motivation lead anywhere to you, it is sort of, if you are all, and you see a lot of interlinks here? Where does it lead you, do you think? We have talked a little bit about

Mr 39: I suppose it generally leads to a more efficient staff, which means a more efficient store, which again it gives me more time to focus on other areas.

Interviewer: So it is time? OK great. You have got so many negative things, can you explain some of these? Support from Head Office with internal efficiency is ...?

Mr 39: It is generally that Head Office can be very bureaucratic.

Interviewer: Yes most of them are.

Mr 39: Which again reduces the internal, deal with ...

(Talking together)

Interviewer: I see, I see, I see. You also planning ahead slightly demotivates staff, is that true or is it, do you think some of them don't like planning ...?
Mr 39: I can't think why I put that now!

(Laughter)

Interviewer: Maybe it is not a really strong influence it is only a 1 anyway.
Mr 39: Yes, I can't think why I have put that now. I suppose it could be that actually it is not the shop floor, when they are having to do... having to do hopefully ...

(Talking together)

Interviewer: I see, so yes, just like when you get into the management role there is one less person to help.
Mr 39: That is it, yes. But I don't see it as a strong ...

Interviewer: But it is not really particularly a major problem?
Mr 39: No.

Interviewer: It looks as if you have got quite a ... thank you that is very good.

(Tape turned off)

Interview with Respondent 40 Store Manager of Convenience Stores Ltd: 25 October 2002

- Interviewer: First of all I'd like to ask you about your most important criteria if I can start with those. You've got developing staff at the top of your list. Can you tell me why developing staff is important to you?
- Mr 40: The main thing is purely from experience really. What happened with myself was, I've worked with the company for 13 years, and 3 years ago I got seconded into the logistics area of Convenience Stores Ltd., which was the depot, delivery. And the culture from stores to the depot was a very black and white culture. It must be done on this time, or whatever. And basically you would have to get the stock.. and sent on time, because that was your job. And by hook or crook you have to get it done.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 40: I spent a year or so of not being nice to people. Because you have to to get the job done. And there were constant battles.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 40: Because it's all performance related and everything like that.
- Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
- Mr 40: And I came back out, and I came back into stores because my secondment finished. And I came back into stores and suddenly, I was in such a culture where, people, you know you would tell people to do it but you wouldn't get the response. And then it came to the point where at which I thought – How would I like to be spoken to? – And what I then tried to do was build a team ethnic, especially here, pick on a few people who weren't, who I thought had more potential, and started asking questions.
- Interviewer: Uh huh.
- Mr 40: The question – How do you think or feel? – Started to come off my lips, rather than – You do this – and suddenly we started to get a bit more responses. And I'd always done it in the past but this year was kind of like, the last 2 years, it was a definite change in my view, from how you do it.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 40: So what I started to do was give people the opportunity to make mistakes, and take control and ownership.
- Interviewer: Yeah.
- Mr 40: And slowly but surely I've started to have people who will do the job for me. And then something quite erratic happened, was turnover increased. Because instead of having one person saying – Do this do that! – Everyone was looking out for each other. And people were helping each other out. Instead of just having one person to do one job, I would say everyone got developed and trained and coached into doing “this” job.
- Interviewer: Uh huh.
- Mr 40: So we would, when there was always a backup for every task, I stopped having to manage. I just started to. I'd say it's not really managing now. I'm more of a, I kind of counsel them. Of that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah.

(laughter)

Mr 40: And so I started to do that. And we brought on 5 assistant managers and in 18 months from within the team, which I kind of took over.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: A lot of them have left and moved on to manager's positions. And the main part of it, it's just kind of, how would I put it? I'd say instead of a yellow brick road, which if you say – Aren't you to do this? – They follow your path.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: If you turn it around on people now and you say – This is the task we've got to do, we've got to do this. – And they will come up with the ideas. You might not like them, and if you don't like them you can influence them without them knowing you've influenced them.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And so, I've kind of built that side. And it seems to work here. And literally I control costs. I will control how many people we're allowed, what sales turnovers are, what we need to achieve, and I will develop all that and sort all of that out, and then I will go to my team and I'll say – This is the target. How are we going to do it? This is a bit there.. - So I'm not openly telling you we've got to hit this target and we're not doing this, because, I keep it very much as a background area.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 40: Something people say is, they never see me openly have a go, or shout or any of that. Because I do, but no-one else sees it yeah?

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr 40: There's not, I've never even in the time I've been here, shouted at anybody. In a way if you speak to people they will come up with what their issues are.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And that's what's very pleasing really.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And we're not perfect, we're far from the perfect, but the climate of the... group we're in is not perfect. But the people here will work for you, and that's more important than, it's the reason why I haven't put things like staff pay down.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: Or any finance areas, there's not one finance area within there, because you could pay. My viewpoint is, if I paid my checkout person 50 times what we pay her an hour now, she's not going to go on the till any quicker. Yeah?

Interviewer: No no.

Mr 40: Yeah. So it's absolutely nothing to do with finance. It's nothing to do with that. It's to do with how they feel within the task that they do.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: Yeah. And that's really the part of that side. Personal motivation is the only thing which is related to the manager within the store. Everything else is revolving about the team, and how they develop there. Because you may be the best manager in the world, but if your staff won't work for you, it's never going to happen. Yeah?

Interviewer: OK. I think your philosophy, I think is a better philosophy. It comes out very very very strongly. One of the end results of this philosophy is as you say a very impressive increase in turnover, and obviously an excellent store as far as head office is concerned. Why is that particular issue very important to you personally?

Mr 40: The store. It's self-recognition. Myself as a manager, you really, you have to have drive, you have to have ambition, but the main factor is, I like to come to work, and I like to then go home.

Interviewer: So enjoy your job, and enjoy your family life or whatever?

Mr 40: Yeah. It's not even so much as enjoy your job. The main part for myself is, you know I wanted to have a career which I was OK at. That I could live with.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: It's not my personal choice of what I wanted to do in life but, you know, I don't think any young lad would put down that they want to be a food retail manager.

Interviewer: No.

(laughter)

Mr 40: It's not the most glamorous job in the world.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: But the thing which I wanted to do is just really, have a job which gave me a reasonable and comfortable living, and I could then finish my work, go home and enjoy my life.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And if I can make my task at work easier, then I don't have to worry about when I leave it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Is it free time you're looking for at home? Or is it? What's this really driving force to make everything work here? What's behind it?

Mr 40: I don't know really. I enjoy people contact. I enjoy seeing people succeed, and I enjoy people developing. I should have been a teacher actually.

Interviewer: . Yeah.

(laughter)

Mr 40: But yeah. That's the main drive through work now. And I'm very defensive over my team.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: When even. When I had a new boss there. If he says anything of which I don't agree with, I don't agree with.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: I will say yes, I will say no when he's wrong. But if there's anything that I disagree with, I'm very much well, they pay me to do a job. And my job is to make somebody else richer, yeah?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: The bottom line is, we're in that area. How we do that is what they pay me for.

Interviewer: Yeah, indeed.

Mr 40: They give me certain tasks to do, and there are certain legality reasons, and health and safety and everything else which you have to follow. But bar that, they pay me to do a job.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And if they come down and say – We want you to do it this way! – I'm very, what is it? Belligerent I think?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And I very much stand by the way I see things and it...

Interviewer: It sounds as if you have a very strong philosophy, and if people come in and challenge it what?

Mr 40: Yeah I don't like that all. So, it's the only thing of which ur. I think my team doesn't, they always say I don't, I have a problem with authority. I don't like that side of it. And that's something which, I think people, I manage the way I like to be managed, and it doesn't always happen in the retail world.

Interviewer: Yeah of course.

Mr 40: Especially when you see some of the other types of retailers and you see their corporate videos. And it's very different to the way I perceive how a team should run.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: You speak to my staff, I probably sound like Ricky Gervais don't I?

Interviewer: Right.

(laughter)

Mr 40: But I think it does work, so that helps me. But also, it's something that is allowing me to move on in the company as well.

Interviewer: Yes, so that career path is important to you as well.
Mr 40: Very. I have got an opportunity to move up, and I'm being fast-tracked for a whole region of stores. So that's. And the reason I did this graph so quickly is because when I had to go for an assessment, this is what I did.

Interviewer: Really?
Mr 40: I didn't mention one iota of store sales or anything where everyone else did what they thought they wanted to hear, which is sales growth, this and everything, and I went in just talking about staff. And I mentioned nothing about sales targets, wastage, all the things which we normally hear. And I went through this.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 40: And apparently it was quite enlightening. But yeah, that's important I think. I'd quite like to bring that on with managers which are slightly more hard people to manage than a team. Because to manage the managers that's the key.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 40: That's the challenge. I suppose challenge is important to me.

Interviewer: Do you feel as a challenge, you want to be recognised as a really top quality manager? Is that really important to you by outside people do you think?
Mr 40: I get embarrassed. I get embarrassed when people say you're doing a good job. But I think everyone is motivated by a pat on the back.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: I think if people say you're rubbish. You're not doing the right job. It's not a motivator. It's an aggressive part, and you either back off or like me you hit them head on. But if they say well done, you're doing a good job, how do you think you need to feel to improve, if I'm motivated. And I try to do that with my team.

Interviewer: Uh huh.
Mr 40: I think they get frustrated at times because sometimes they just want plain – This is the path to go – Because it's hurt for them, if they come to you because they, well it's strange really because they've got the illusion where I know the price of everything, how to do everything within the store. And I've never given advice. Because some people have worked here for 20 years. And I've worked here 18 months. I don't know the people that live in St Albans, I live in Northampton.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.
Mr 40: Yeah? I don't know the people around here, they do. So they come up with the answers, and they get frustrated sometimes, they don't want to think.

Interviewer: Yeah. They want to be told.
Mr 40: But they have to.

Interviewer: But they have to yes. Very very interesting thank you very much. Motivation of staff you put as being another really important factor. I know this links to some of things you've talked about here. But. Can you perhaps explain why that is so important? You mentioned the delegation. I should put that down, because you've mentioned that you delegate a lot to them, much more perhaps than a lot of other managers would. What about that?

Mr 40: Motivating staff. I think it just goes with... If they know the job, they know what they're doing, they enjoy it. The hardest thing is if you go up for a job and you don't fully understand what you're doing, you don't feel as if you've got any support, and it doesn't get done correctly. And a motivated team is better than an unmotivated team. I know this by 2 years ago in the depot.

Interviewer: Yes yes, you've experienced the bad bits and
Mr 40: Yeah. And even though the depot system worked, and it's the right system for that environment because you haven't got the time to be able to say – Do you need to do it this way, do you need to do it that way? – But for that one that's the difference.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: And you can do it here.

Interviewer: So it's partly the conditions of the environment that allow you to do this you think?
Mr 40: Yes.

Interviewer: So you would say, you're experienced now but this changed presumably quite dramatically in the last sort of, 18 months, from the depot experience. But you say, if you went back to the depot now as the manager of the depot, how do you think you would change things there?
Mr 40: I don't think you can. I've been asked this question before, especially within Convenience Stores Ltd. and things, because a lot of the stores don't understand how the logistics side of the business works. So I've seen both sides, which is quite a rarity.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 40: And they said - Would you change it? - and I said – NO! - Because it's also the people you have. People who work in a minus 28 degree area. And a lot of it is within that area, they're the main breadwinners of the, they earn the money to survive.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: When you've got a store which is mainly secondary jobs, where the majority of the team are youngsters who earn that, or you have people working part-time because it's a secondary income to the main earner, it's a different environment to work with.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 40: And these guys. Probably you know..... it's like an industry, we're not a unionised area, we're more family-based. Whereas that ones a cutthroat – What are you going to give me to do this? – So no, I wouldn't change it. I would have to go back to the way it was. Because I think the whole culture would have to change. Especially with how the push and pull cultures change within retail.

Interviewer: Uh huh.
Mr 40: After the war, people would go into their butchers and say – What have we got today? - And he'd go – I've got this nice piece of – Whatever and you'd buy what they'd have. Whereas, now consumers come into a store and go – I want x, if you don't deliver, I'll go somewhere else! – So now the whole chain is pulled towards the consumer, where 50 years ago, it was pushed towards the consumer. So that environment I worked in was very much, the consumer pulled it,

we'd have to deliver, and it was very quick, fast and everything. And I know there's things you can make customers buy. And you can. You know with that aggressive merchandising.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: You can do all that to make him buy it. But deep down, you still have to deliver 90% of what the consumer wants.

Interviewer: Thank you. Fine great. Really good stuff. Current resources. Why is that so important to you? I can see maybe you feel as if you gained in coming to this store because you had some resources just before you turned up was it? Or was it?

Mr 40: Yeah. Basically with current resources, I took that one again, in regards to right person in the right place doing the right job.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr 40: And if you've got them, you make the most of them.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And identify what you've got. So, that can be buildings, that can be people, that can be anything. Because everything you do is, you're tied to really. You haven't got unlimited resources, you haven't got loads of money to spend, you haven't got an infinite amount of back-up space, shop space, or tills or anything. So you do have to make the most of what you've got.

Interviewer: Yeah. And is that important to you because, now you identify it yes, is it important to you as a limiting factor do you think, or is it because you have to deal with this as a good manager?

Mr 40: Yes. You identify what you're strengths and weaknesses are. Easy one, you do things like SWOT analyses and things, on areas, like if you looked within the store you could do a SWOT analysis.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: You'd know what its strengths are. And you can also, you know very much what its threats are, and the weaknesses.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And you can go through and see it in every way. You can go buildings, people, customers and everything. You can do one on each. And then you understand where you're from. And it's, yeah, current resources it's all to do with knowledge really.

Interviewer: Uh huh. You mentioned earlier on that your staff by definition of being round this area for so long, would know your customers better than yourself. Do you use data you've got, because you know, store managers have got more data than most other managers in the country. Do you use that data? Or do you go in on your staff's gut feeling, or knowledge?

Mr 40: Yeah. The data isn't ur. I wouldn't know the customers on that. You basically find out from your team because they live here as well.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: What they buy. What they don't buy. From them because when you've got I don't know an estate of coming up to 300 stores, spread from Sheffield down to the south coast. It's such a big change.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 40: Of staff and everything, and down to consumers. The area around here is a cash rich.. time poor culture, which is all within the M25 route. So you do know that they can't be in the, our strength is people want to come in and get out as quickly as possible.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And that's where our strength is. And we have to give them what they want.

Interviewer: How do you get the feel for what they want though. Do you? Is it? Your experience?

Mr 40: They bloody complain.

(laughter)

Interviewer: They do do they? Yeah? If you haven't got it?

Mr 40: And also. You can tell by sales data what they want. And a trend will soon appear for what they want. And if you don't. If someone buy x amount, you know how many you sell, you know how much you have to order to maintain the availability for the customer.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And that's what you do. You do use a lot of data on that there. And I'll monitor sales by department, case by department, with everything else, and what we know is the best selling product within Convenience Stores Ltd., and I can tell you what the biggest single fresh food growth item in the county is, and it's organic milk.

Interviewer: Yeah right yeah.

Mr 40: Organic milk has gone something like three and half thousand percent in two years. And it's just something which, you don't know, we never stocked it a year ago, now we sell 3 or 4 cases a day.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: Purely because that's what the consumer wants. And if you didn't know that, they wouldn't buy it. Everyone does that. There's teams of people who do that for us.

Interviewer: Is that the head office people, analyse the lists and stuff?

Mr 40: They will give all the information to you, and you can interpret how or what you want to do.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: A lot of the time they will merchandise and they will promote the item for you.

Interviewer: Do you feel as though you have a lot of control over that, on what you've got here. Or do you feel as if?
Mr 40: They tell you what to do.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: As in to sell. And you know what the plan... where you put what or whatever. You have a limited amount of change and things to it.

Interviewer: Right.
Mr 40: But you have more control of our environment. Yeah. If there's a problem with a maintenance issue, that's out of my hands, I pass that on to somebody else to do.

Interviewer: Yes.
Mr 40: But, within my environment, I can control people, I can control how much we order, I can control yeah, costs of things. No, I can't control if Mavis is going to come in and buy a pint of milk. But I can ensure that if Mavis wants to come in and buy a pint of milk, there's one for her there.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: We are very hands-on. We don't, we are, we have to do quite a bit of it actually. Counsel.... personnel. We manage the people they're interviewing, you know reviewing. Development. Everything. It's not just. You don't manage to do this task anymore. You have to know every type of employment law going now, and every legality, well law and stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: So it has changed very much in the past 10 years. A great deal.

Interviewer: Yeah. And not many people do know the law in that respect. Have you had to spend a lot of time genning up on this?
Mr 40: Yeah, well recently with retail. We. The main part is, it's come down to things like risk assessment with health and safety.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: Because the culture changed into the – We will sue you if there's any problem. – With these kinds of things you now have to make sure that every team member is, I have to spend half an hour showing kinetic lifting on an induction day.

(laughter)

So I have to actually officially speak for half an hour how to lift a box. And you just can't believe that you have to do this. And you say – Well this is a box, this is how you pick it up, like that, would you like to have a go? – And apparently half an hour is the industry standard of teaching how to pick up a box. Or pick something up. And you just can't believe it now. I mean it's just, it goes without

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Mr 40: So you have to know that side. You also have to know like, we've now come to where we have to recognise unions now. Which the industry never used to have to.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: So unionisation is coming in now, and things like, you have to be very careful about how you speak, how you laugh or anything else like that. And it's just, very much changed in a few years, because of the suing culture I suppose.

Interviewer: Yeah.... Thank you very much that's very good. Building resources I think I can probably cover the same sort of issues. But you've talked about learning to improve, and maybe the learning bit might be interesting to, with some sort of issues, why is that really important to you? I can see how it's within your philosophy of developing staff or whatever.

Mr 40: Learning to improve is if you don't want to learn. And you don't want to gain new experiences or anything. I don't think you can improve. I was in retail management training when I was 20 years old, and I had a year of training down to understanding how to run a shop.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: But within that 12 months, no-one taught me how to manage staff.

Interviewer: Yes yes yes.

Mr 40: I knew the business inside and out, and suddenly I had to deal with someone who had an issue, who might have been old enough to be my grandmother at the time. And you know I found that incredibly difficult, and over the past 10 years you start to learn how to deal with people.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: Yeah, your experiences, through life, that's how a child learns. If you can't do it, you'd never learn to speak, or read or write would you?

Interviewer: No.

Mr 40: So. That's why it's important.

Interviewer: It certainly is important. I think that covers that angle, because I think it's linked in to some of these extra issues I've mentioned and I've got loads of notes on those. I think that's about as much as I'd like to speak to you about really. Maybe a little tiny bit on some of these connections. You mentioned before we put the tape on. Personal motivation I can see. This is your personal motivation for what? Is it to develop staff that is the key issue sort of thing?

Mr 40: Personal motivation is a want yeah? If you don't want to do that, you're not going to. Yeah?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: And if you don't make people your main aim, you won't succeed and that's my opinion there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr 40: So if you're a motivated manager and your motivated into being a team player and pushing on to that, you can then get them to do it for you. And if they can't do it, you can slot into each of them yeah? And that's the main reason why each arrow is not a direct link, it's a two-way process.

Interviewer: Yeah. So these should be both ways.
Mr 40: Yeah, so both ways there, a two-way thing yeah? Control resources, straight into development of staff, learning to improve, everything would go either way here.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: But then, that's the strongest link between each of them, each of the outer circle, except for personal motivation, is developing staff, but each one of those will be linked in some way.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: And then, I think that, yeah, if you don't do any of those, the biggest, no the only negative on there would be you lose people, everything else would be a positive within there. So it's kind of, it's a central point which is the key, and then it's got the tentacles going out, and then you've got like the wheel. Like a bicycle wheel really.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. It neatly encapsulates your philosophy I think because you've put that at the centre of everything and
Mr 40: It's kind of like, if I put it in anyway, if you have there, the wheel is the one which it turns, makes it go somewhere. The lines in-between going into the main cog, strengthen the wheel.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Mr 40: Yeah, and then it turns. But if you don't have personal motivation, that chain that runs it and, if that breaks down it won't move, but the centre bit's the cog, that's the strength going out, and that's what makes you eventually move in the right direction.

Interviewer: Very neat, and very graphically presented I'd say. Yeah. I was enthralled because you did it so quickly, that I thought, how the hell did he manage to do that so quickly? And if you have this sort of diagram in your mind I suppose of how it could link together, I could see how you could do it so quickly, but if you didn't have that diagram, I was a bit sort of dumbfounded that you did it so quickly.
Mr 40: It's mainly because I went to, it's only recently I went for a meeting, a promotion type of thing, area managers, and the main part was I used virtually all of these techniques within strengths of how to build a thing. I never actually came up with that diagram before, that was just come up with, and it just made sense straight away to me. Yeah but. Luck you hit me at the right time.

(laughter)

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

End of recording.

APPENDIX 3.

THE EXPLORATORY QUESTIONNAIRE

Which best describes the quality of your products – tick box

Higher than competitors'

Same as competitors'

Lower than competitors'

Which best describes the prices of your products – tick box

Higher than competitors'

Same as competitors'

Lower than competitors'

Which best describes the quality of your service – tick box

Higher than competitors'

Same as competitors'

Lower than competitors'

4. The store

Number of staff you manage

square ft

Area of store

Please list three words that best describe the store brand

1.

2.

3.

What were the sales generated by the store during the last six months

%

What is the percentage increase (+) / decrease (-) in turnover per annum

Strategic Orientation Questionnaire. The information given in this questionnaire will be regarded as confidential.

1. Store manager

Length of time within industry in years

Length of service with company in years

Length of service as store manager in years

Age in years

2. The environment and operation of the Store

Please state your attitude to the statements by ticking the appropriate box

	Very Strongly Agree		Neither		Very Strongly Disagree	
	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
We are able to define and quantify our markets precisely						
We know precisely what our competitors prices are						
Identifying fashion trends are an important part of retailing						
Our customers' needs are very predictable						
The success of new product lines is very predictable						
Our competitors' behaviour is very predictable						
Delivery time from suppliers is very predictable						
Our customers' response to special offers are very predictable						
Food fashions are very unpredictable						
The nature of customers' complaints are very unpredictable						
Customers' buying behaviour is very predictable						
Staff strengths and weaknesses are very predictable						
The lower our prices the more we sell						
Store managers are most effective when they focus on delegating tasks						
Measuring performance is critical to success						
Building relationships with suppliers is critical to success						

Please state your attitude to the statements by ticking the appropriate box

	Very Strongly Agree		Neither		Very Strongly Disagree		
	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3
Building relationships with staff is critical to success							
We alter our product ranges based on customer feedback							
Our customers are looking for low priced items							
Store managers are most effective when they control staff							
Our customers are looking for well-known branded products							
We are very much dependent on one particular niche in the market							
The success of this store is dependent on fashion and/or technological change							
Developing staff is critical to staff morale							

Please list your store's three most important competitors (rank the most important first):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Please list three factors that differentiate your store from your competitors

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Please state your attitude to the statements by ticking the appropriate box

	Very Strongly Agree		Neither		Very Strongly Disagree		
	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3
The success of this store is dependent on accurately identifying customer needs							
The success of this store is dependent on obtaining more resources							
The success of this store is dependent on factors outside my control							
The success of this store is dependent on what our competitors do							

3. Strategy

Please state your attitude to the statements by crossing out the incorrect words in the box

The growth of the internet is an	Opportunity for / Threat to	this company
A recession would be an	Opportunity for / Threat to	this company
A booming economy would be an	Opportunity for / Threat to	this company

List one major opportunity for this store:

List one major threat to this store:

Which best describes your objectives – tick box

Defend current position
Steady sales growth
Aggressive sales growth

Which best describes your strategy for achieving objectives – tick box

Expand market/s with new products
Win market share from competitors
Cost reduction/ productivity improvements
