

Making friends with Benefit

Here's a question: do you know who has the best-selling mascara in the whole of the UK? If you guessed L'Oreal or Max Factor, you'd be wrong, because it's actually a company that was started by two Indiana farmgirls — Benefit Cosmetics; the makeup lover's go-to brand and cult beauty sensation.

You won't find their products being splashed on billboards or the side of busses, but chances are you've heard someone raving about High Beam, Benetint, Ooh La Lift or one of the many classics that are loved by celebrities, makeup artists and beauty lovers alike.

Once known as the 'biggest beauty brand you've never heard of' Benefit has become one of the UK's best loved names in cosmetics since opening here in 1997.

them gorgeous, but each and every one of them have a very genuine love of their job.

You won't find a single 'salesperson' working at Benefit, because talking to one of the Benefit team is like talking to your best friend about their favourite book — they love it and want to tell you all about it so that you'll love it too. Everyone working at Benefit is genuinely one of their biggest fans and this has as much to do with the way that Benefit treats its staff as its products.

Nice package

And when we say treats, we mean 'treats'. After all, you don't win Best Overall Large Employer in the Best Employers Awards with a regular 9-5 schedule and grudging discount in the staff canteen.

Putting aside the free makeup and employee discount, which is an amazing reward in itself, the benefits package includes competitive holiday allowance, bonus schemes, private medical care for head office and managers, contributory pension scheme, loyalty rewards, summertime working at its head office, employee assistance programmes and a unique 'passport' programme, which takes employees on a journey to excellence and success.

The passport scheme is the brainchild of HR Director Andrea Lansbury and is now being rolled out internationally. It sees employees nominated to get onto a progression journey to more senior positions or even to other areas of the business where appropriate. But of course, it wouldn't be Benefit if it wasn't glamorous, so each employee on the scheme receives a charm bracelet to which charms are added as they progress through the scheme.

"Working at Benefit is a lifestyle rather than just a job", Ms Lansbury says. "People ask me what to expect and I always reply 'this job will be the biggest challenge you've ever had, but the rewards are more than worth it'. They don't tend to believe me at first, but everyone always comes back and says 'you were right!'"

Q

If the classic Benefit employee was one of the products, which one would they be and why?

A

"I'd have to say They're Real because we're all about real people and real passion. And just like our number one selling mascara, our employees are hard wearing, long lasting and go to great lengths!"



Hello Flawless

The phrase 'not just a pretty face' could have been written for Benefit. In fact, going above and beyond seems to be a company-wide trait and Benefit even pours fun into good causes. One example of this is the 'Mascarathon' which it held in 2012, a 500 mile relay race across the UK, split into two mile sections between hundreds of runners in aid of domestic violence charity Refuge.

Participants, including TV presenter Caroline Flack, Donna Air and Hollyoaks star Jorgie Porter, passed a giant They're Real mascara wand amongst themselves over the course of 15 days, raising over £70,000 for the charity.

"Beauty attracts the attention but personality captures the heart."

In fact, it seems almost impossible to keep the girls and guys from Benefit in an office — this year will see a wave of recruitment drives across the country as the Benefit Recruitment Roadshow hits the towns of Britain looking for their next big stars. Expect fun, goodies and lots of laughs to give you a taste of being a Benebabe for the day, so watch this space...

For more information, or to apply for jobs at Benefit, visit retailappointment.co.uk or scan the QR code below:



That Gal...

Q&A with Andrea Lansbury, HR Director

Q: What is the most important thing that keeps staff enthusiastic and engaged with the brand?

A: Our relationship with our staff is really close and the recruitment process is interactive right from the first audition, to our new starter kits (complete with makeup kit and advice on how to get 'counter ready'), to new product ideas that our staff have been involved with.



Q: What makes Benefit different to other beauty brands?

A: We try to step away from the "pushy salespeople" label — we're much more about the experience and sitting down with customers for some girly time to get them excited about our products. That's why our people need to have that warmth and sparkle. They don't need to be the most gorgeous person (although that helps), but they have to have something about them that creates that magic. As we say at Benefit, "Beauty attracts the attention but personality captures the heart!"

Q: What is the biggest challenge about working with Benefit?

A: Because we don't use traditional

advertising, a lot of our marketing comes from the enthusiasm of our staff and customers which means we all have to have high energy levels and a genuine love of our products, which you can't fake. But we've come from a little-known American beauty brand to the number one premium beauty brand in the UK, so it's a strategy which clearly works!

Q: Tell us something that not many people know about Benefit

There is a massive amount of opportunity with Benefit. We have the most area managers of any beauty brand because we want them to work closely with our store teams. This means that there are so many rewards for doing well and lots of opportunities to grow your career.

The faces behind the face...

Back in 1996, we were looking for something very different in the world of cosmetics. Something which could surprise and delight the UK make-up aficionados. A brand that would put a smile back on the faces of a Brit pop-loving nation who were becoming bored with the brands their mums had been using forever.

We discovered Benefit in 'uber cool' Henri Bendel in NYC. It was hidden away at the back of the department and there was none of the extraordinary, eye catching packaging that we all know and love today, but there was enough personality and playfulness to set the pulse racing! We just knew that Benefit could become a rule breaking success back in the UK.

And rule breaking is what Benefit has been doing ever since; removing those boring old barriers (aka counters) and creating a 'sweetie shop' for grown-ups with colourful, eye catching merchandising. We found teams of beauty advisors who want to have fun, who smile readily and want to share their favourite products with our customers. Our Benefit family is very special, as are our wonderful teams...it's all about our people. Creating impromptu in-store customer parties and events (and parties mean music and more fun) — this is the Benefit experience.

We opened stand-alone boutiques (the jewels in our crown), brow bars, in-store boutiques and provided all sorts of other services for our customers: body waxing, spray tans, blow dry bars, nail bars and even champagne bars!

The big winners kept coming: Benetint, High Beam, Boi-ing, Hoola, They're Real, Porefessional. Benefit's reputation grew from 'cult' brand to BIG success! By the end of 2013, Benefit had become the Number One Premium Make-Up Brand in the UK! But it can't stop there because, as we say, "Make up is the best cosmetic — so grin and wear it!"



Ian Marshall and Gail Bojarski
Managing director and general manager
Benefit Cosmetics UK

*Source: The NPD Group. Value and Unit Line sales of the Total Prestige Mascara Makeup segment for 2013 Jan to Dec

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