

Case Study: British Gas

British Gas is a British-owned energy supplier. It is part of Centrica. It is a top 30 FTSE100 company with energy businesses in the UK and North America. British Gas is the UK's leading provider of energy and has over 16 million customer accounts. British Gas employs over 20,000 people and was voted one of the '25 Best Big Companies to Work For' by The Sunday Times in the UK in 2011.

British Gas understands the importance of investing in its employees. Training employees is the cornerstone of developing the business. Its open and honest culture, based on trust and respect, creates a sense of community. British Gas focuses on building a diverse workforce where employees can fulfil their potential and be rewarded fairly for their efforts. Valuing diversity or difference provides a business with many benefits, for example, being able to draw on the widest pool of talent. It also enables a business to closely reflect its customers' needs. British Gas does this by having female engineers available to respond to its female customers in their homes.

Having the appropriate structure is vital for an organisation or business to meet its aims and objectives. A business may be structured by:

- Functions - activities such as customer service, marketing, operations, finance or IT
- Location - where regional divisions of the business take responsibility for a specific function or particular products, whether locally, nationally or internationally
- Product or services - where the business is divided into the particular products made or services provided.

All organisations have employees working at different levels of responsibility. At the bottom, a business depends on its operatives to produce the products or services. Team leaders often perform the day-to-day management role, with operational managers setting direction and strategy for the business as a whole. The number of employees in each level will depend on the business' organisational structure.

Large organisations, like British Gas, tend to have tall (or hierarchical) structures. A tall structure will have many different levels of employees all reporting upwards to team leaders and then up to operational management. It will have a wide chain of command with a narrow span of control. The chain of command refers to the number of levels within an organisation. The span of control is the number of employees who are directly supervised by one person.

A tall structure can often lead to slower communication channels and decision-making. British Gas divides its business activities by products (gas and electricity), by services (maintenance and repairs) and also by functions, for example, customer services.