

## Retail Staples



## Canon helps Staples to boost revenues with customer-centric approach

### Company Name

Staples

### Industry

Retail

### Founded

1986

### Location

The Netherlands

### Services

Office supplies, technology and furniture

### Website

[www.staples.com](http://www.staples.com)

### Overview

Staples is the world's largest office supplies company with over 2,000 retail stores across 27 countries worldwide and global revenues of \$24.5 billion. Since inventing the 'office superstore' concept back in 1986, the company has continued to provide customers with a wide range of office supplies, technology and furniture. In 2010, Staples Retail in the Netherlands developed a repositioning strategy to transform and expand its Copy and Print services across 16 of its stores to grow revenues. It began developing in-store campaigns and offering intensive training for employees to deliver higher quality services. Since its launch, the Copy and Print operation has grown and is now active across 28 of its stores. Furthermore the Dutch Staples Retail initiative has set a revenue target of 100% growth for this service and an increase of the current 0.7% internal revenue share. Also launched in the same year was EasyTech, a PC maintenance and repair service for both the office and home segments.

Yet despite the brand's global success, the Staples Retail Organisation in the Netherlands, faced with low revenues and reduced footfall, has had to look towards a more customer centric, consultative approach in order to remain profitable in a competitive market that is crowded with new online retailers.

### New online players

The retail sector and the office supplies market in particular is being influenced by a number of volatile factors that had been putting Staples NL under pressure. There is a rise of online competitors selling products at low prices, increasing globalisation and transparency, new products from the Far East entering the market and the ascendance of digital technology.

Roland Laschet, Managing Director of Staples Benelux retail, knew that the branch's future was under threat and something had to be done. Laschet comments: "There are a vast range of online propositions that are fulfilling the customer's needs, and this is changing retail. We had to adapt to meet this challenge otherwise our customers would have gone elsewhere - and without our customers, we would have no purpose." The answer, Laschet knew, lay with the customer. He says: "Everything begins and ends with the customer. We recognised this but needed help to adapt and to improve the customer experience, because that is what will pull customers back in. You can't expect them to come back when there are seemingly easier, cheaper options out there at a click of a button that will deliver the product to your front door. You need to add value to what you're offering and build a relationship with the customer, demonstrating why they need your business."

With customers more impatient, demanding and individual than ever before, Laschet and his team needed to make a comprehensive value proposition to their customers. A more integrated customer experience was required to create more cohesion between its in-store and online offerings, and it needed more direct marketing channels for personalisation and to draw customers in. This was a daunting task.

"It meant a change in business model and approach, from being a company that sells products to being a company that sells solutions & services.

We needed a consultancy approach to gain insights in our customer drivers. What we needed was a resolution and a strategy, but these didn't appear to exist until Canon Enterprise Services got involved.

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## Roland Laschet, Managing Director of Staples Benelux retail

This meant altering a part of the company," says Richard Houppermans, Manager of Business Services: "We could no longer just be a commercial organisation driven by products and suppliers. We had to really think about what the customer wanted, whether the product we were selling them was actually the solution for them. We needed a consultancy approach to gain insights in our customer drivers. What we needed was a resolution and a strategy, but these didn't appear to exist until Canon Enterprise Services got involved."

### More than meets the eye

Houppermans recalls: "We already had a good relationship with Canon because we stocked and sold its printers and cameras. Canon was also involved in developing our copy and print services. Canon supported us in developing e-learning training material, giving and developing training on location, optimising workflows, developing scanning procedures, and the implementation of a web-to-print project."

"We didn't know anything about Canon Enterprise Services (CES), but we were willing to listen to what they had to say," continues Houppermans: "It was clear that Canon understood that we wanted to continue raising the profile of the Staples brand while enhancing the customer experience. We needed to not only have the capability to offer more solution-based office service, but to be able to promote and market the fact we were now doing so to the right people, in the right way."

CES was initially enlisted to do a customer assessment programme that would give more concise insights into the Staples customer in the Netherlands. This made it possible to get an idea of the core elements needed for a new customer vision and to build a roadmap of customer initiatives for Staples NL to execute.

Laschet explains: "Canon looked at the market, our customers, and the way we dealt with our customers. They then began developing a new customer vision that would be more personalised, interactive and flexible, and which would enable us to substantially grow and enrich our portfolio of services."

"Our main objective was to not only offer more complete office solutions, but to expand our whole business - including the copy and print services and PC services." Laschet concludes: "We wanted to be the number one office solutions supplier in the Netherlands."

Canon developed and delivered its tailor-made customer strategy for Staples NL. Following the customer assessment, CES worked out the maturity level of the store's customer experience. It lacked a direct line of communication with the customer and this needed enhancing.

Houppermans further elaborates: "Canon consulted everyone who was involved with the customer- stakeholders, management, employees and even the customer himself - to fully gauge how the store was being run and to understand the culture of the company and why people walked through our doors. Bi-weekly meetings took place between CES and the store to ensure all customer insights were considered before preparing for the next stage in the plan."

Houppermans continues: "Then CES began developing and broadening the overall vision. We had regular bespoke workshops to help design blueprints for every identified segment that would create a strong customer journey, meticulously analysing every step. It looked at the demographic of our customers and how to effectively market to them. CES wanted to ensure we had some quick wins, like the development of a customer multichannel acquisition plan for the Copy & Print services, as well as success over the long-term. The latter was important to everyone involved - to lay the foundations to ensure continued high custom in the future - a customer-centric model that consistently offered a loyal, dedicated and capable service and brought in new customers at the same time as tightening the bonds with the existing ones."

### Change starts in the mind of the people

Staples NL's new customer experience strategy was implemented seamlessly and started to pay off immediately. Laschet says: "Canon Enterprise Services know how to help a business. The consultants looked at the entire company from top to bottom, working with us to change and improve the customer's experience. Within four months, there was a noticeable change. We have a better understanding of our customers and this allows us to up-sell and cross-sell products like Copy & Print products and other products in the store with more precision."

The store brought in personal advisors to accurately diagnose customer problems and to supply the correct solutions and implement a loyalty program. Laschet goes on: "We offer a more informed, consultative approach that adds value to every service sold. We also, through channel innovation, can reach our customers in more direct ways, through avenues like social media." The company can now answer customer problems and solutions through the online service Twitter, in addition to incorporating digital marketing to appeal to the younger, more modern consumer. There are also plans for a MyStaples mobile application.

Not only was the switch to a service proposition easily implemented, but it altered the store's culture. "Change starts in the minds of people, and this is where we are now," says Houppermans. "We now know we deliver the best solutions to our customers because we focus on the customer, not just the product."

The customer is at the forefront of everything the store now does. Laschet comments: "Before we do anything, we think, 'What would the customer think?' In our business meetings we have an empty chair at the table - this is where the customer sits. Before we decide anything, we ask 'What do you want? What do you need?' That's our first principle."

Laschet concludes: "Overall it is a great effective relationship between Canon and Staples and a vision we continue to build together. I'm excited about the next phase of this journey."

Canon Inc.  
Canon.com

Canon Europe  
canon-europe.com

Canon Europe Ltd  
3 The Square,  
Stockley Park,  
Uxbridge,  
Middlesex  
UB11 1ET UK

English Edition  
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