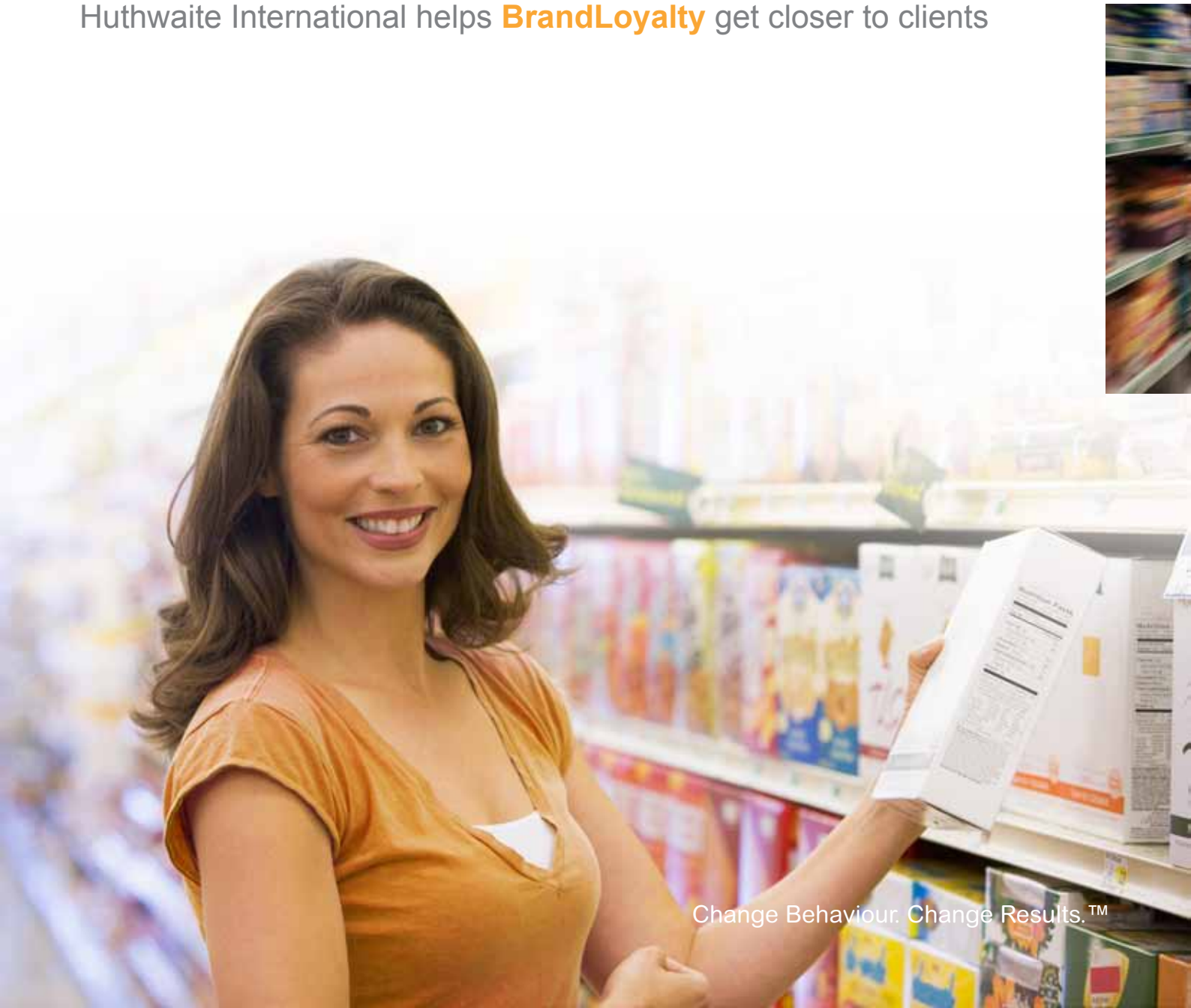
Huthwaite
improving sales performance International

Fast-growing global company stays loyal to SPIN®

Huthwaite International helps **BrandLoyalty** get closer to clients



Change Behaviour. Change Results.™

brandloyalty

Some companies today are so serious about their employees' performance and training that they create their own university. This is exactly what BrandLoyalty has done.

Netherlands-based BrandLoyalty is the world's leading supplier of loyalty concepts to the food retail sector, operating schemes globally in over 20,000 stores each year. Working with the industry's top players such as Tesco, Spar and Lidl, it develops customised solutions as part of a total package, with strategic guidance and the entire management of the programmes including all logistics and analysis.

The BrandLoyalty University was set up last year. In a world where short-term attitudes to employment are becoming increasingly common, there are still businesses around with a mission to invest significantly in their employees' futures and developing their full potential. This commitment appears to be paying off, as over the past 18 years the company has grown from 4 to 400 employees worldwide, with significant revenue growth predicted over the next four years.

To help realise this growth, BrandLoyalty University's Sales Faculty works in partnership with Huthwaite International, the sales performance improvement specialist. According to Hans Hoppenbrouwers, BrandLoyalty Area Sales Director, Huthwaite International's training has, *"helped us to establish significantly better relationships with our customers with a far greater mutual understanding, ultimately leading to increased sales."*

Precision and transformation

With each loyalty concept carefully customised, Brand Loyalty's relationship with clients and its knowledge of their brands and strategy is central to the success of each project. As Hoppenbrouwers explains, around four years ago the company recognised that sales people had to get to know the client as much as possible first before defining their offering. *"Food retail is a highly-competitive industry sector – perhaps one of the most competitive of them all. The big names in particular aren't interested in a standard product or service. Rather, they want suppliers to work with them to develop a highly targeted offering which will resonate strongly with their customers.*

"We found that the most successful of our sales people were those who went to see a client and asked the right questions in order to find out how their business works, the challenges they were facing and how BrandLoyalty could help address these to help transform the business. We wanted to find a way that the rest of the team could raise their game to mirror this success. We also began to see that the earlier we became involved in a client or prospect's buying cycle, the stronger our relationship with them and the more likely we were to provide concepts that could bring tangible results for their business," he explains.

Learning & Development manager Mariël de Jongh adds: *"In 2007 we conducted a worldwide reputation survey among clients and international stakeholders. One of the issues that arose from this was that we were very good at talking about our concept, but we needed to become more consultative in our sales behaviour. This reflected what we had learnt already from our own sales team."*

At this point, the company recognized that the concept of SPIN® Selling was similar to the kind of behaviour being observed in its most successful sales people. "*Some of the team*

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Hans Hoppenbrouwers, area sales director, BrandLoyalty.

already applied SPIN®, without even realising they were doing so. It became clear that this was the route to take and we decided to go to Huthwaite International as the company that developed SPIN® Selling," says de Jongh. She adds that the fact that Huthwaite International could deliver training worldwide and in local languages when required were, at that time, also important deciding factors in their choice of partner.

The first training was delivered in English to 30 employees from the sales team. *"They learnt how to create value for our clients not by relying on assumptions but by asking deep, searching questions to get close to their real needs,"* says Hoppenbrouwers.

BrandLoyalty repeated its reputation survey in 2010 and found that clients now clearly appreciated the sales team's new approach, with its consultative sales techniques rating much higher than previously.

Since then, Huthwaite International has become BrandLoyalty's preferred supplier for sales training worldwide and offer SPIN® Selling introductory, refresher and coaching courses as part of its University curriculum.

Multi-layered role play

More recently, BrandLoyalty has invested in Huthwaite International's Negotiation Skills training having identified the need to improve these competencies during the sales cycle.
Huthwaite International and BrandLoyalty worked together to customise the case studies and role plays that form a key part of the Negotiation Skills training. *"Our sales cycles are multi-layered,"* explains Hoppenbrouwers. *"We typically talk to buyers, marketers and CEOs, so we need to be able to establish a different common ground with each of these roles to make the best possible business relationships from which to negotiate.*

"We provide a high value, specialist service which can really make a significant difference to the business performance of our clients. We need to be able to demonstrate and reinforce the specific value that each element of our offering brings, so ensuring that our clients have a clear understanding of that value in any discussions we have about price, terms and other negotiable issues." Hoppenbrouwers believes that the main message the team has taken away from the Negotiation Skills training is this: *"There are two parties involved in any negotiation and the result must hold equal value for both; it's not a case of win or lose."*

Marco Weijers, Netherlands country manager at Huthwaite International BV agrees and believes that BrandLoyalty's increasing maturity of sales knowledge and ability is continuing to drive its success. *"Through asking the right questions and creating and capturing value throughout negotiations for both sides, BrandLoyalty is better able to align its programmes to the business needs of its clients. "BrandLoyalty's close relationship with these clients and thorough understanding of their needs has become a real market differentiator,"* he adds.

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