



# The UK's best Vending Services company?

## M&S says 'it's GVS Assist.'

GVS, the UK's leading vending service company, has secured a three-year contract with Britain's flagship retailer...

There are few companies in the UK with as many vending machines as Marks & Spencer. The flagship British retailer has more than 3,500 of them, comprising models dispensing snacks, hot drinks and cans and bottles, built by a diverse selection of manufacturers.

The logistics of maintaining such a huge estate of machines are bewildering – so it will come as no surprise that M&S chooses to bring in a specialist supplier to take control and to ensure that each machine operates to its maximum effectiveness day in, day out.

For M&S, the stakes are high: as a leading employer that seeks to look after its staff as well as it looks after its customers, vending machine downtime is unthinkable. That's why the company left no stone unturned in its search for the UK's best supplier and at the end of an exhaustive selection process, it chose GVS.

Kate Perdue, the M&S Contract Manager, explained her search criteria: 'There are a number of vending service companies out there that claim to offer national coverage', she said, 'but very few that can actually deliver on a national basis.' Many potential suppliers fell at this, the first hurdle... not GVS.



National Accounts Manager Pat Gibney takes up the story: 'we have two operating centres, Smallfield in the south and Normanton in the north. We have almost 120 field-based engineers, so our reach is genuinely nationwide. There isn't a location on the UK mainland that we can't reach in under an hour.' The beauty of both the volume of engineers and their coast-to-coast location is that GVS has no need to subcontract its service to third parties, allowing the company to maintain minute-by-minute control of its field based personnel – something that M&S saw as a major competitive advantage.



Marks & Spencers





For M&S, though, the requirement was not simply 'bodies on the ground', as Pat explained. 'We're exceptionally proud of our field-based work force and we look after them well,' he said – and these are not just fine words. The average length of service of a GVS field engineer is an amazing 17 years, which means that the team is peerless in the industry when it comes to experience. 'We've got years of supporting brands under our belt', Pat confirmed, 'and we're holders of ISO 9001, a clear indication to the marketplace that we take quality of service very seriously indeed.' However, despite the premium service that was on offer to M&S, Kate Perdue said, 'GVS's offer demonstrated real value for money.'

It was important to M&S that the contract changeover was completed as quickly and as smoothly as possible to minimise disruption to the company. This meant GVS had a timeframe of just 3 weeks to prepare and input all the necessary data to do with 3,500 vending machines. 'It was a tough task, as we'd normally schedule 6-8 weeks for a project of this size, but it we saw it as an exciting challenge rather than an obstacle,' Pat said.

Kate Perdue seemed delighted to confirm that the changeover was 'seamless'. She wasn't surprised: Kate's experience of GVS stretches back some 15 years, in fact to the time when management bought-out the business and changed its name from Wittenborg. At the time, she worked with Boots The Chemists, a GVS customer to this day. As she said: 'track record was important to us.'

'I feel that the relationship between M&S and GVS is more of a partnership than a simple 'client / supplier' scenario', Kate said. Pat also sees the business relationship as one of partnership. 'It's the only way ahead' he said, 'as we've proved working with retailers and brands. Repair time and fix rate are important statistics and the best results are achieved when client and supplier work hand in hand. We're in a position to relieve M&S of much of the stress and minutiae of managing so many vending machines', he continued. 'Our service delivers technical maintenance, preventative maintenance and filter changes.'

In addition, GVS has established a close working relationship with GiroVend, to ensure that any 'cashless' issues that arise are dealt with effectively and efficiently.

'GVS is also helping us to identify and add accuracy to asset register', Kate added. 'It's hard to keep up to date when there are so many machines to manage and so many other demands on M&S management time.'

As Pat insisted: 'it's all part of the service!'

