

# *The Williams Way*



Williams & Co

*trade only*

PLUMBING & HEATING SUPPLIES

## Why are we here.

### *Plumbing matters!*

Having clean water, functioning drainage and warm, dry homes is important for everybody's well-being.

You can't have clean water, decent drains or warm homes without a reliable supply of pipes, fittings, valves, bathroom equipment, boilers, radiators, controls etc.

*Selling toilets may not be the sexiest profession, but it is one of the most important.*

## Our Vision

We aim to be the best plumbers' merchant in Britain for our chosen customer type, and the best employer in our sector.

## Our Mission

We aim to sell the best products, at the best prices, with the best service, and constantly to improve our workplaces, pay, and benefits. *We never tire of raising the bar.*

## Our values



**INTEGRITY**

We choose to do **THE RIGHT THING**, because it is the right thing to do, even when it is not easy, and even when no-one would know if we compromised.

## Our values

**LOYALTY**

We look after the people who look after us. This includes staff, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders. Loyalty is a two-way street, and we place a high premium on mutually beneficial **LONG TERM RELATIONSHIPS**.

## Our values

**AMBITION**

We relentlessly search for ways to grow and improve our business. We are never satisfied with being “good enough”. We are dedicated to being **noticeably better** than our competitors.

***Everyone in the business is responsible for upholding our values. If you think upholding values is airy-fairy nonsense, you need to work somewhere else.***

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## Our Strategy

There are many different types of customer buying the products we sell.

It is not efficient to configure a single business's resources to meet the different needs of every type.

We focus on one customer group, which includes self-employed tradespeople, up to firms employing around 5 staff. We call them "the one-to-five" and everything we do is aimed at becoming the favoured supplier of this customer type.

By focussing on the one-to-five we can simplify our business model. The money saved is re-invested in more service improvements to the one-to-five, creating a sustainable competitive advantage.

We don't serve the public because they waste time which could be spent improving service to the trade, and because our trade customers need to make a margin on materials.

We love larger trade customers, but not more than the one-to-five. Our best products, best price and best service is available equally to all trade customers.

***We accept this trade-off: we lose sales from the public and large trade customers. This is a price worth paying to be a fantastic supplier to the "one-to-five".***

## Best Products

We sell great products in each segment of the market.

We understand that some customers want premium brands, some customers want reliable mid-market products, and some jobs come with a tight budget.

Our minimum two year warranty on every stock product shows our commitment to selling reliable products.

We don't try to carry every product on the market and concentrate on manufacturers and suppliers who want to work with us.

Our commercial team are charged with selecting the products that we sell, and they need to be awesome at this.

Every colleague can help them be awesome by providing feedback about quality, customer comments, and potential new products.

## Best Price

The one-to-five don't employ buyers and don't have accounts departments. Time wasted haggling over a price or dealing with an incorrect invoice is time they could have spent either on chargeable work or with their families.

We give all our trade customers our best price, regardless of their spending power. They don't need to haggle, and our invoices are invariably accurate.

We don't employ salespeople to negotiate discounts, or administrators to set them up on a computer system. The money we save is either used to give a better price to everyone or is re-invested in better service.

Our commercial team negotiates with suppliers and sets selling prices, and they need to be awesome at this.

Every colleague can help them to be awesome by sharing information about competitor pricing.

***We accept this trade-off: our pricelist becomes a target for our competitors to aim at. This is a price worth paying for the benefits that the single price policy brings to us and to the one-to-five.***

## Best Service

Competitors sell the same products as us, and some of them have much more buying power than us. We might sometimes be beaten on price, but we must ***never*** be beaten on service.

Our service has to be ***noticeably better*** than our competitors. Not just a little bit better – we must be so good that customers will actively choose us over competitors.

We have to raise the customer service bar constantly.

Service to internal customers is just as important as service to external customers.

Great service requires resources that cost money. It is a false economy to cut costs at the expense of service.

We don't have a rigid view of what great service is. We hire people who are passionate about service and empower them to find new ways of being brilliant.

Every colleague must be awesome at this!  
No half-measures and no "off days"!

***We accept this trade-off: Great customer service is not cheap, and being the best may sometimes mean that we sacrifice short term profit. This is a price worth paying, to maximise the lifetime value of the customer, not today's transaction.***

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## Best place to work

A great workplace culture stems from everyone living the values, every day.

We constantly look for ways to improve our workplace culture.

Great culture needs honest people working hard together with mutual respect, to achieve ambitious goals.

It also takes determination.

We are determined to put people before profit.

We are determined to tackle problems head on and not avoid difficult conversations.

We are determined to be tolerant of people, but intolerant of poor behaviour or poor performance.

We are determined to drive out bullying, workplace politics, and negativity.

We like to say *"thank you"* for a good job.

***We insist that everyone plays a part in ensuring a great workplace. We will always challenge unacceptable behaviour, even from a senior or high-performing colleague.***

## Our customers

We ask three things of our customers:

- Be a genuine tradesperson
- Don't be abusive
- Pay our bill in full and on time!

***Everything else is down to us.***

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## **Our suppliers**

We ask this from our suppliers:

- Send us good quality products
- Give us the terms and service package needed to effectively sell your product or brand
- Respect our right to set our own selling prices
- Address problems swiftly and constructively

In return, we promise:

- We will promote your product or brand to the very best of our ability
- We will work with you to make this a mutually profitable relationship
- We will pay our bill on the agreed date

***We place a high value on long standing, mutually profitable business relationships.***

## **Our shareholders**

All of our shareholders are employees or retired employees.

***We have no institutional shareholders, venture capitalists or private equity partners forcing us to make the wrong choices for short term reasons.***

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## **Our colleagues**

We promise to treat colleagues fairly, pay them well, support them when they need it and provide all the training and resources that they need to do a great job.

*In return, we ask everybody to bring their best to work every day. Nothing less will do.*

## **Our managers**

We owe our colleagues the very best management that we can provide.

The managers role is:

- To lead, manage, coach and inspire the team
- To organise the team to deliver mind-bendingly fantastic customer service
- To be active in managing the team Profit & Loss
- To uphold our values and ensure a great workplace culture

***Managers are the keystones of our organisation. We ask all our managers to commit to becoming better managers, not just better plumbers' merchants.***

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## **Our customer facing teams**

Our business works best when our customer facing teams make customers happy.

Our customer facing teams should be able to spend at least 90% of their time and energy making customers happy.

Our customer facing team managers should be able to spend at least 90% of their time and energy making customers happy, either directly or by developing their team.

Every other part of the business should be organised to give our customer facing teams what they need to maximise the number of happy customers.

***The needs of our customers always, ALWAYS, ALWAYS trump our administrative convenience.***

## **Our support teams**

Our support teams exist to help our customer facing teams be awesome.

They do that by:

- Removing obstacles to awesomeness
- Responding promptly and helpfully to requests
- Providing effective tools and resources that are intuitive and easy to use
- Simplifying systems and streamlining necessary processes
- Avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy
- Focussing on where the wealth is created

We call our offices at Fareham “Central Support” and not “Head Office”. This is because the role of these teams is to support people, not to boss them around.

***Every bit of unnecessary red tape diverts effort and attention from making customers happy, and therefore undermines our business.***

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## Our Policies

We have as few written policies as we possibly can. If our colleagues understand our vision, mission and strategy, and share our values, they are likely to make good decisions on their own.

On the occasions where a written policy is necessary it must:

- Be as short as possible
- Use plain English and avoid jargon
- Be easily accessible

***Our main focus is on outcomes and values, not process.***

## Recruitment

When recruiting, we should ask ourselves two questions:

- *After an initial settling-in and training period, will this candidate perform in the top 50% of people doing similar jobs in our organisation?*
- *If I had a young relative entering the workforce, would I be happy with them working for, or alongside, this candidate?*

If we cannot answer a clear “yes” to both of these questions, we should keep looking.

Our teams expect us to hire the very best new colleagues that we possibly can, not the cheapest, or the most readily available.

We have to work hard and smart to find great candidates and then pick the best of them.

If we make a mistake in recruitment, we should recognise the fact promptly, and respectfully and generously move the individual out of the business.

***We hire for attitude and aptitude. Train for skills. We never hire the least bad candidate that shows up for interview.***

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## Pay and conditions

We aim to be the employer of choice in our industry, and to have a waiting list of fantastic people who want to work for us.

We constantly raise the bar in terms of pay, benefits, working conditions, career development and work-life balance.

We are proud to be a member of the Living Wage Foundation, but the Living Wage is a starting point, not an end state.

Teams and individuals who contribute a lot to the business should be rewarded generously.

We reward people for the contribution they bring to the business, not for the length of time they have worked here.

## Our organisational chart

Our customers

are served by

Our customer-facing teams

who are backed up by

Our support teams

who are encouraged and led by

Our senior leadership team

***If you think hiring a professional is expensive,  
wait until you hire an amateur. (Red Adair)***

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## **Health and Safety**

We want everyone to go home in the same condition that they came to work.

We will spend as little time as possible on the box-ticking exercises that sometimes pass for Health and Safety policies.

We will cut no corners in the parts of our business that cause serious risks.

**The end.**

***We look after ourselves and each other.***

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[www.williams.uk.com](http://www.williams.uk.com)