

CASE STUDY: Pre-Sale Business Improvement

Summary of our work with the leadership of a UK business within a global corporation, being prepared for sale to a new U.S. owner

Consultants: Nick Mayhew & Esther Cameron | **Keywords:** management team development; business performance improvement; growing talent; MD partnering; 1:1 coaching; Bold Moves; silo-busting & cross-functional collaboration; improving 'culture of leadership' | **Contact email:** nick@integralchange.co.uk

Client: Managing Director, retail business within the energy sector

Client issue: New MD seeking specialist support to shift entrenched management team dynamics, improve leadership skills and deliver a higher performing business into a sales/spin-off process.

Duration/Scope: 10 months, working via a monthly retainer averaging 8.5 days pcm

Value delivered:

- Marked improvements – quantitatively measured – against five Effectiveness Improvement objectives, as agreed across the extended management team (EMT) [see below]
- Greater trust and understanding established between new MD and long-serving management team (MT)
- MD leading with greater skill, confidence and traction (leading to post-sale promotion)
- MT & EMT shifting to 'one team' behaviours and accepting greater accountability and responsibility leading to much improved relationship with the wider business
- Wider business much more aligned towards delivery against a clear strategy and plan, with silo-working reduced and cross-functional working enhanced by six, new 'Bold Moves'
- Sales function turnaround in engagement, morale and results
- Talent development: individual managers with much improved leadership skills – so showing greater confidence and ambition in their ability to be retained and add value post-sale
- All the above leading to achievement of target sale price and sustained success during first year of new ownership

How this work was progressed – via 8 overlapping phases

- building trust & mutual understanding** – via a series of meetings with the MD and HR manager and diagnostic interviews with the MT and EMT populations
- obtaining explicit buy-in** - via a shared change agenda (= 5 Performance Improvement Objectives, as below) and strong contracting around our primary ways of working
- re-setting some fundamentals** – e.g. changing a few key management team structures and meeting processes, and resolving low-level, conflictual relationships between certain individuals

- iv) **aligning around a plan** – leveraging the annual planning cycle to bring particular focus and engagement to key elements of the business, while facilitating cross-functional collaboration
- v) **catalysing better line-management** – supporting improved cascade communications and better engagement of all staff through each department
- vi) **up-skilling leadership** – delivering a variety of 90 minute ‘leadership booster’ sessions on e.g. Tough Conversations, Coaching for Performance, Inspirational Leadership etc., integrated within the monthly management team agenda and supplemented by targeted 1:1 coaching as required
- vii) **measuring & upping performance** – bringing data and edge to quarterly reviews, and facilitating peer & 360 feedback processes, catalysing shift towards ‘high challenge, high support’ culture
- viii) **embedding & sustaining progress** – integrating mini-learning & review sessions within the above to enable management to take ownership of all improvements and embed them in ongoing work as we stepped away

Core Improvements: What? - How much? - How quickly?

Effectiveness Improvement Objective	Benchmark score/10 September 2010	End score/10 May 2011
More efficient decision-making – resulting in clear, aligned plan & accountabilities	3.3	7.0
People more ready to accept accountability and proactively take the initiative – and also to take the rap when deserved	3.8	6.8
We’re better at getting things done – feeling more empowered to deliver	5.0	7.3
Silo behaviours are addressed; we’re all on the same page	5.6	7.2
MT is working together without ‘drag’ e.g. grumbling behind backs. We accept we can improve some things and go for it.	3.3	7.4

* The above wording was derived from the language used by the managers themselves during the diagnostic interviews. The scores are the average of the subjective ratings given by each individual on the MT and EMT, per heading.

Testimonies: *“We are now seeing the financial returns from this work and I have no doubt that our investment in it was absolutely the right thing to do.”* **Finance Director**

“A great balance of group and 1:1 interventions, delivering a wide spectrum of improvement all demonstrably linked to the key objectives of the company. It is your approach that sets you apart: iterative, subtle changes which build up a momentum to create a surprisingly large delta in the performance of both individuals and teams.” **Managing Director**

Contact: For more information about this work, contact Nick Mayhew, Director, via nick@integralchange.co.uk or +44 (0)7753 620811. Conversations with the clients quoted above can be arranged, as appropriate.