LeaderShape
releasing potential

CASE STUDY

POOLIA
PARKER BRIDGE
RECRUITMENT SPECIALISTS

Improved Sustainable Performance through Culture Change

It is always a difficult time for staff when their company is acquired by another. Leadership styles may be different and objectives may be changed. How do you quickly bring the team together under new ownership?

Client Profile: Poolia AB, a successful European agency, quoted on the Swedish stock exchange, specialising in the recruitment of professionals for the Accounting, Finance and Banking sectors.

Background: In 2004, Poolia, with ambitions of becoming the leading recruiter of professionals throughout Europe acquired Parker Bridge Recruitment (later re-branded Poolia Parker Bridge), chosen because of its reputation of providing a quality service to its clients and its strong ethos of high standards and good financial controls.

The leadership style of the previous owners had been to instil high standards through direct control, rigorous procedures and financial incentives for reward. In contrast Poolia had a more participative style of leadership with a national culture reflecting the importance of respect and social responsibility.

The challenge was to retain the best of the UK company style whilst introducing the core values of the client. Another key objective was to develop leadership excellence amongst its managers creating a culture that would produce sustainable growth and profitability.

Method: When the former owner managers departed at the end of February 2005, a new senior management structure was put in place by promoting from within, headed by Mark Widnall as Acting MD. At the same time a search was instigated for a new Chief Executive who Poolia insisted should not only have a strong industry background at the top level but also have the people skills to drive the business forward in a way consistent with Poolia's values and culture.

- Right at the start the major issues facing the business were surfaced in a senior management workshop facilitated by LeaderShape resulting in:
  1. an immediate realisation that everyone in the team wished to change the style of the company by opening up communication throughout the organisation, empowering individuals to take initiative and decisions, to support individuals in their development and to

"The leadership development programme has not only helped me to become a better, more confident leader it has also facilitated the changes in climate and culture that the business needed to move forward. We now have team managers who are better equipped to make decisions and who understand the changes we are trying to implement." - Mark Widnall – Acting, MD

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enable people to maximise their potential.

2. A real gelling of the team and a meeting of minds.
3. Consensus agreement for all managers in the company to receive leadership development training to enable them to develop behavioural competencies consistent with the style desired.
4. Immediate commitment to live the new approach which created a new climate – one in which a performance enhancing culture could begin to be developed.

- A voluntary culture survey amongst all employees was undertaken – 85% responded indicating a good buy-in and overwhelming support for the newly created management team.
- A customised programme developed by LeaderShape was rolled out which focused on Emotional Intelligence and the relationship of EI to Leadership Styles in the context of real issues in the business.
- Planned and ad hoc coaching sessions were held.
- LEIPA 360° Assessments were undertaken to identify the contextual leadership performance of the 22 managers assessed and their further development needs towards leadership excellence.

At the same time, training, recruitment and personal development plans were overhauled to incorporate aspects of Emotional Intelligence. The purpose of this was to create the link between employing the right people, then developing and retaining them to provide an orderly career development programme and succession.

Results at the end of the programme

- The budget for 2006 was 60% up on the profit for previous year. Q1 exceeded budget.
- Workforce stability increased with staff churn reducing from 48% to just 23% by the end of the year against an industry norm of 50%.
- Sales team efficiency increased, with improvement of between five and 10% in individual gross profit of consultants with the same experience factor.
- The time that temporary consultants take to create sustainable earnings has been reduced by one third.
- More sales consultants are reaching their monthly targets than ever before.
- There are common goals and objectives. Everyone knows what they are doing; people feel more 'ownership' and are therefore more committed – whereas in a power-based culture people will only put in what they get out.
- The number of temps on the books increased from 460 to 560 in the first quarter but with no requirement for additional staff to manage the increase.

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