



Synergy Case Study: Culture & Leadership Transformation

Global Brand Completes Successful 3 Year Culture and Leadership Transformation with Synergy

Key Facts:

Target Audience:

All levels from Senior Executive to Line Staff

Duration: 3 years

Programs Delivered:

- OCI Culture Measure
- LSI Coaching
- Organisation Experiential
- Skills Development:
- Presentation Skills
- High Stakes Negotiation
- Cross-Cultural Communication
- Hot Seat Media Skills
- Business Writing

Our Client

One of the world's leading finance companies with 1.3 billion credit cards in circulation and one of the most recognized global financial services brands.

The Challenge

The organisation was experiencing a great deal of change causing turbulence to its internal and external environment.

In particular, a new Leader had just been appointed; there was severe pressure from head office overseas resulting in increased workload; and there was a cultural communication challenge.

Departments had formed a silo mentality within the organisation. People working in silos tended to develop limited perspectives and pass problems onto other departments. The silos often discouraged cooperation and coordination with other teams.

The quest for perfectionism driven by the leadership team was endemic in the culture, leading to people working extremely long hours and not achieving a healthy work/life balance.

The result was high staff turnover and low employee engagement, and was ultimately impacting on productivity and service levels.

The Goal

The new General Manager (GM), driven by a desire to build an effective team and to be a great leader, recognised a clear need to transform the culture of the organisation.

The overarching goal was to create a High Performance Team which would encourage greater performance and affiliation between staff members. The GM identified that the removal of silos and a reduction in the aggressive management culture was necessary to realise this. The current culture and working conditions were unsustainable in the long-term.



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The Synergy Solution

The organisation originally approached The Synergy Group concerned about the ethical behaviour of some of its staff. In response, Synergy designed and delivered a program called Ethical Leadership.

However, the facilitator identified other more serious problems within the organisation which were severely affecting its performance.

As a first step Synergy applied the Human Synergistics tool Organisational Culture Inventory (OCI tool) to measure the Culture.

The first OCI Tool measure was in 2004, with a follow-up measure in 2007 to measure improvement.

Once the results of the first OCI were analysed; three main areas of development were targeted:

1: Team experiential

Powerful facilitation married with practical exercises provided deep insights into the team's behaviour and belief systems. These were openly challenged by the facilitator to acknowledge the issues and start to action plan solutions.

2: Individual Coaching for Leaders

Leaders received individual one-on-one sessions with Accredited Coaches. The sessions were designed to create lasting behavioural change within individuals by encouraging constructive behaviours.

3: Skills Development

This was vital to providing the staff with the tactical skills, tools and behaviours to achieve ongoing business objectives in a positive and collaborative manner.



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Implementing the Culture Transformation

During the original off-site training, a number of inappropriate behavioural traits were identified by the Synergy Facilitator. "At the training, I observed strong energetic leaders behave inappropriately, and there was a clearly an 'in' and 'out' crowd amongst the staff. The 'in' crowd were the senior executives and the 'out' crowd were the rest of the staff. I took the opportunity to challenge the group regarding the behaviour".

Initially members of the Leadership team when challenged by the facilitator denied there was an issue. However, the organisation's HR manager expressed "The off-site activities highlighted the 'them and us' culture. The culture before the transformation was scary; for many staff their opinion didn't count and it was disrespectful.

An in-depth analysis by Synergy identified the influences behind this situation.

The first step in the transformation was to measure the operating culture within the organisation and to identify the challenges and underlying issues. Synergy used the Organisational Culture Inventory (OCI) developed by Human Synergistics. The results would form the road map to creating a High Performance Culture and to enable benchmarking for future measurements.

This tool measures an organisation's culture in 3 key areas of behaviour; **Constructive**, **Passive/Defensive** and **Aggressive/Defensive**. The measurement reported that the culture was a combination of Aggressive/Defensive and Passive/ Defensive. Aggressive behaviour by the leadership team was creating passive behaviour in the line staff. The organisation was wasting a lot of energy and sacrificing effectiveness due to internal competition and stress leading to staff burnout.

From the OCI the diagnostics moved to analysing the thoughts and motivations of the Leadership Team and how that guides their behaviour. Synergy used the Life Styles Inventory (LSI) administered by Human Synergistics. This tool, when supported by high calibre coaching, allows the Executive understand if their approach supports or detracts from quality performance. The LSI is a critical element of self-development and is a realistic assessment of the participant's strengths and areas for development.

Each member of the Leadership Team received individual coaching and the effects were deemed by the Finance Organisation to be dramatic.



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The Results

In 2007, the OCI re-measure compared results with 2004 and it showed profound improvement.

Below is the Staff response to a Climate Survey before and after Synergy's Culture Transformation.

	Comparative responses	
	2004 'to a great extent' and "to a very great extent"	2007 'to a great extent' and "to a very great extent"
To what extent do you feel you comfortably "fit in" as a member of your this organisation?	48%	72%
Are you satisfied with the way people settle their differences?	23%	34%
Do you receive feedback from your team leader/manager on your job performance?	23%	48%
Is personal accountability and contribution currently being supported in this organisation?	35%	55%
Is there an "in crowd" who behave in a manner that excludes others	39%	10%
Do you feel valued as a member of the team?	48%	59%

Although the results are very positive the leadership team recognises there is still room for improvement.

The outcomes of the Cultural Transformation are described by the organisation's HR Manager :

Change in culture.

"Before the training people would only ever come to me, if at all, confidentially or I would negotiate between 2 managers with little success. Following the transformation, everybody comes to me and everybody speaks openly and safely. They don't feel their job is on the line. They will come in and highlight things but not to the detriment of their own career. Overall, there is a more respectful environment".



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Impacts of the Individual Coaching.

"My executive coach helped me to find my voice. I feel far more empowered. My role, as a result of the coaching, has developed into a more career developmental role, people development, people engagement role rather than a standard HR role".

Improvement in the recruitment process to a much more inclusive philosophy.

"The recruitment process is very collaborative now, its not jobs for the boys. We all have input into who comes onto the team".

"I'm now absolutely involved from junior (recruitment) through to the most senior positions. Whoever the new employee will impact (on) is involved in the process. If we bring in a new Business Development Manager I would be part of this. The head of the team, then the whole team would go for lunch and quiz them. Its tough on the candidate but it pays dividends. The result is that it makes people accountable for their relationships. If you are part of the recruitment process you actually take a bit of ownership for that person settling in".

"If you don't know the person or you've not been involved you're happy to blame somebody else for recruiting them. The new staff are very engaged".

Staff Turnover:

"We had managers who caused 30% turnover in their teams. This has now been addressed".

"New managers brought in since the beginning of the cultural journey have had no turnover with the exception of transfers and promotions"



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Working Relationship with Synergy

At the end of the process in 2007 the General Manager commented:

"Over the past 3 years Synergy and my organisation have developed a Trusted Advisor relationship based on integrity, objectivity and absolute expertise"

"Synergy has worked hard to understand the environment we work within and has successfully designed and customized innovative learning solutions to reflect our culture, specific needs and service offering."

"Working with Synergy has given my staff access to the best minds in the industry from Leadership, Influence, Negotiation and Cross Cultural Communication, equipping them with the tools to perform at their best."

"..... I know that our chosen learning partner, Synergy will effectively support us during the profound effects that will occur within our operating environment".

Cultural Transformation requires commitment on behalf of the Leadership team to achieve lasting behavioural change, and the benefits are substantial. A sound organisational culture is directly linked to sustainable competitive advantage.

To learn more about The Synergy Group's approach to Cultural Transformation, please call or email The Synergy Group and speak with one of our consultants today. Telephone: 61-2-9238-6633 or E-mail: info@thesynergygroup.com.au