

UK Retail General Manager/Sales and Operations Director (Multi-site National Retailer - £250m Turnover)

Ability to integrate into the client company

The company was in significant debt and its performance negative year on year in both sales, GP and net margin generated. Previous senior management had taken a dictatorial style to extremes and the team now welcomed a more considered, composed and credible stance which, whilst open minded, was still focused on developing clear direction within defined timelines. Tactically communicated early success in the project created highly receptive teams throughout the company.

Impact on the business / bottom line

Year on year (organic) sales grew by in excess of 23% with gross margins improving by 7%. The company moved quickly towards clearing its debt and within 15 months acquired its main high street rival.

Overall contribution / achievement of objectives

All operating functions were reviewed and overhauled to improve efficiencies and outputs from all departments ranging from customer care teams, branch support teams, telesales, buying and range selection, marketing, warehouse and distribution, merchandising, branch sales development and branch operations. Headcounts were dramatically reduced centrally and a productivity based staffing formula applied to the high street and out of town branch manpower planning. Field Management were assessed deselected/reselected and re-trained in multi-site management best practice. A new KPI suite was introduced and Performance Management brought to the fore..

Working style

The need to operate effectively at 'C' level; and 'O' level was required here as strategy development needed controlling, shaping and structuring whilst tactical implementation stages required significant hands-on interaction throughout the change programme. New focus was placed on managing performance and 'the frequency is the day, the unit the branch' was the adopted mantra at field level whilst at branch level 'the frequency the hour, the unit the individual' was adopted.

Leadership / people management skills

The team was a mix of demoralized people going through the motions versus mavericks making their own decisions in an unstructured environment. A mix of coaching and counseling skills balanced with assertive instruction was highly effective once the team understood that all agreed actions would be captured, tracked and reported on. This simple disciplined approach ensured that people lacking confidence were continually given constructive feedback on performance whilst well meaning 'mavericks' realized that a corporate approach, without sapping their energy, is now the way ahead.

Any other comments about the interim manager

The success of this appointment secured the position of the company and its employees. "The Interim is a world class multi-site operator and will be impossible to replace".

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