

Results



In 2001, one of the nation's largest financial institutions launched an 18-month project to centralize three of its IT functions. The initiative called for integrating the operations of multiple separate functional divisions, each with its own IT infrastructure. The new system was intended to link global processes and data across the operational groups: Human Resources, Finance and Procurement.

IN BRIEF

Client:
Large Financial Services Company

Project:
IT Project Team

Client Goals:
Financial and Operational
To successfully design and integrate a new global IT infrastructure capable of replacing multiple silo systems and producing a 340% ROI on an investment not to exceed \$70MM over a 3-year period.

Strategic
To decrease future integration cycle time and costs, ease integration of other non-standard systems into their global network, and create a model for designing and implementing large complex projects.

SportsMind Mandate:
To consult with the core project team to manage risk and ensure performance around functionality, schedule and cost.

Result:
Successful implementation of the initial phase of the IT change initiative on time and on budget, and a new capability to manage future large projects effectively.

From a corporate point of view, the initiative would provide better access to information, improve knowledge sharing among units, reduce IT costs, and provide standardization for many work processes. If successful, the project was projected to generate an ROI of 340% over a five-year period.

From the point of view of many of the operating units being asked to participate in the initiative, the change was a significant disruption. Historically, these units had functioned with virtual autonomy. With this initiative, some of the independence that had been ingrained in their culture would have to be sacrificed.

IT Change Initiative:
Creating a High-Performing Team

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Cross-Functional Project Team

In early 2001, the company established a project team comprised of nearly 60 members, including two to three managers from each participating organization as well as several external consultants. The team was charged with planning, designing and implementing the new corporate-wide IT system – a massive task requiring extremely complex coordination.

The team became the first of its kind within the company to complete its goals on time and on budget.

Team members were expected to spend about two days a week in meetings to work through the many complex issues involved in implementing the change. Most of the participants had not worked together before; many had never met.

After the first few meetings, it became evident to Senior Management that the team would need support in order to accomplish its goals by the target date. The company turned to SportsMind for help.

SportsMind began with an analysis of issues that needed to be addressed. Key areas included conflicting objectives, unclear roles, lack of alignment on the project vision and mission, and inadequate ownership and accountability. Given the diverse backgrounds of the participants, the team was also hampered by inconsistent levels of competence in managing projects, resolving goal or task conflicts, leading teams and managing risk.

The Process

During the next eighteen months, SportsMind consultants worked with participants to instill the skills and implement the procedures and practices that would enable them to function as a high-performing team. SportsMind's approach

emphasized two of its foundational methodologies: linguistic tools to enable clear and effective communication, and emotional competence coaching to enable participants to improve their emotional intelligence and their capacity to adapt to change.

The consultants drew on the principles underlying SportsMind's linguistic and emotional competence methodologies in their work with the project team. They designed and led work sessions for project leadership and key sub-teams' "just-in-time" learning sessions, project facilitation, team and individual coaching, and the ongoing support required to establish and maintain optimal team performance.

1. Project Meeting Consulting

SportsMind consultants began as outside observers sitting in on team meetings. The consultants' training and background enabled them to recognize communications problems, ineffective practices, lack of clarity, and potential breakdowns that were not obvious to the team members themselves.

During the last hour of each meeting, the consultants actively engaged with the team members, providing feedback about the problems and issues they had observed, and offering alternative approaches to resolving them. They also introduced linguistic, conflict resolution, and procedural tools that enabled the participants to adopt more workable approaches.

2. Team Coaching

In addition, the consultants facilitated monthly "just-in-time" learning meetings with the team, coaching team members in techniques and practices for maintaining high performance as part of the actual work meetings. They worked with team

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members to streamline work flow, clarify roles, build trust, implement effective decision making and other operating procedures, assess performance, and create alignment around a shared vision and objectives.

3. Individual Coaching

Consultants also conducted coaching sessions with team leaders. Coaching sessions were aimed at empowering those individual leaders in areas such as communication, mood awareness and team-based interaction. Coaching sessions typically lasted about one hour, and continued over varying periods of time, depending on the needs of the individuals being coached.

4. Training Sessions

SportsMind consultants conducted periodic training sessions with selected team leaders on subjects including “Managing by Commitment,” “Assessments and Feedback,” and “Decision Frameworks and Practices.”

Participants forged themselves into a dynamic, productive, high-performing team, with members committed to each other's success.

Key Framework – The Action Cycle

During the group coaching sessions, consultants introduced a work management model called the Action Cycle. Viewing work and projects as a series of interconnected conversations and commitments between individuals or teams, this methodology breaks large projects down into discrete tasks. Working within this system, team members adopted standard practices designed to enable the team to achieve its objectives. For example, the system requires participants to assign a “customer” and a “performer” for each deliverable,

and to define the conditions of satisfaction representing successful completion of each task. It calls for an up-front agreement by both parties on the date by which actions are to be completed.

The Action Cycle approach provides a detailed mapping – by individual task – of all actions, and identifies potential breakdowns. It enables everyone involved in a project to track the progress of deliverables, resulting in major improvements in quality and productivity, as well as in decreased project cycle time.

Using the system and mastering the linguistic and emotional competence principles that underlie it brings team members into alignment and promotes a shared vision. It enables leaders to become more effective by clarifying the role and accountability of each team member and by establishing the conditions for success.

Results

Through the process of working with SportsMind, participants forged themselves into a dynamic, productive, high-performing team, with members committed to each other's success. The team completed the design and planning phase of the new IT infrastructure, and then moved on to implementation, installing the new system throughout the company, with minimal breakdowns, by the targeted date of late 2002.

The team became the first of its kind within the company to complete its goals on time and on budget. The company has credited the team's success in meeting its aggressive goals, in large part, to SportsMind's support.

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For more than two decades, SportsMind's business focus has been on improving human performance and productivity in organizations. We specialize in leadership development and the creation of productive work teams.

Our services are based on three core learning competencies that build strong leadership capabilities, advanced communication skills and team-focused relationship management techniques:

Linguistic Competence focuses on communication – speaking and listening – among individuals. Authentic and clear commitment-based communication builds trust, improves collaboration, mobilizes and coordinates for action, and allows for high performance and accurate fulfillment of individual and team objectives.

Somatic Competence includes a practice of mind-body alignment so that individuals can effectively self-manage in times of change and stress. We believe that self-knowledge – the awareness of one's moods, talents and barriers to improvement – is the gateway to high performance and is essential in fostering trust and confidence in one's leadership decisions.

Emotional Competence leverages self-awareness – effective mood management, empathy and adeptness in relationships – to foster success regardless of external circumstances.

SportsMind practices, tools and methodologies focus on unlocking **the potential of the individual** as the means to achieving measurable, sustainable organizational results.

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