

Integration and Partnership Working to achieve success

Background

Altro Flooring is a medium-sized manufacturing company based in North Herts. The company's mission is to be 'World Class' by 2008 and to achieve their challenging £110m sales target which means they need to double their turnover whilst maintaining the current profit level.

The Manufacturing Manager (Jon Tann) and the Customer Care Manager (Lucy Bilotto) have led the way in creating a change in thinking and behaviour within their departments. Jon and Lucy recognised that to achieve such significant growth, the way their departments worked and the culture of people within them would need to be different - people would need to be aware of the impact of what they did or did not do on parts of the business well beyond their own immediate area. This meant that teams needed to become much more integrated and the systems and processes used within them needed to be more aligned - new culture was needed to support the vision for the business.

Over the last two and half years these departments have worked on getting the fundamentals right. To do this they developed, with Q. Learning, the 'Bronze' programme which focussed on every department getting their own house in order.

As part of this programme they also integrated the production, logistics and engineering teams under Manufacturing to streamline these operations. The next stage in the plan to ensure 'World Class' status, was for Manufacturing and the Customer Care Centre (CCC) to work much closer so that promises to customers are delivered. The 'Making Silver Happen' programme was launched to achieve this very important customer focus objective.



The Solution/Process

In partnership with Altro, Q. Learning designed and facilitated the 'Making Silver Happen' programme with a three stage approach - Leading, Learning, Living.

1. Leading

Communicating the Vision

With the managers holding a very clear outline of what working in a 'silver' way would be like, it was essential to communicate this to their teams, their colleagues in other departments and the Board in order that they had the support and recognition from everyone to ensure the changes could be sustainable. As soon as these people understood the vision they would be able to contribute to the more detailed picture of what silver would be like - and this in itself would ensure they felt it relevant to them and had an ownership of it.

Initially everyone attending a fun and high energy briefing session in which they were taken into the 'vision room', the 'reality room' and the 'from the heart' room. The outcome of these briefing sessions was that everyone was talking about silver! 3 weeks later every member of staff worked within a smaller team made up of people from across CCC and Manufacturing and had a task to achieve. Once everyone had achieved their task and had reviewed their learning in the context of Making silver happen they were given a vital part of a jigsaw. Later that afternoon, everyone attended Letchworth Hall Hotel for the final construction of the World Class Mountain Jigsaw and a buffet supper.

With word getting around about the positive impact these events were having, a team of representatives from CCC and Manufacturing were asked to present to the Board in order that they could understand and support 'Making Silver Happen'.

Getting the Right People in place

A fundamentally new structure was needed across manufacturing if the department were to be able to scale itself up enough for the future growth that would be required. Within this structure it was clear that Managers and Cell Leaders would need to be of a certain calibre in order to be able to deliver the challenging targets ahead. Following a carefully planned and well communicated process a number of people within the department applied for new roles. Adverts were also placed externally and all candidates (external and internal) went through a rigorous process which included attending a development centres, completion of a culture questionnaire and an interview. In all cases everyone was given 1:1 feedback, and for internal candidates, support to complete a Personal Development Plan.

Getting the 'Rocks' in place

Now was the time to ensure everyone knew what results they were responsible for achieving and how this would be measured. A process of identifying the Key Deliverables of the entire Manufacturing and CCC departments was started, and then over a period of two months, this was cascaded to every manager and every member of staff so they could see clearly what was expected of them, how it would be measured and how this contributed to the overall picture.

2. Learning

Building the skills and relationships

A series of skills sessions have been and continue to run covering all sorts of topics such as How to motivate your team, Assertiveness and Powerful Communication. These are aimed specifically at managers and cell leaders although all staff are also invited. These sessions are either half day workshops or 1.5 hour high energy Power Learning sessions. Combining CCC and Manufacturing team members in these sessions has helped them gain a better understanding of each others roles and brought them closer together. The feedback from these has been great and the short sessions fit well with the needs of shift work and keeping the business running.

Building relationships and Cross Team Working

Every member of staff from within manufacturing and CCC attended a 2 day programme in which they worked on a project with colleagues from across the departments. The purpose of the programme was for people to develop relationships and for individuals to challenge their own thinking about the attitudes they hold and whether this was what would be needed to achieve silver. All attendees left with a Personal Development Plan to support them to achieve their 'Rocks'.

3. Living

Culture Champions Learning Set

A team of staff representing all parts of Manufacturing and CCC are meeting every 2 months. Their challenge is to be role models of the 'silver culture' and to support the managers to achieve the new culture throughout the departments. This means challenging and praising behaviour they see every minute of the day in their workplaces, organising regular communications to staff and interim progress events that celebrate the achievements to date. This has been and continues to be a great opportunity for budding leaders to develop themselves still further.

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Silver Celebration Day

This is planned for December 2005 and will be a celebration of the achievement of the silver standards laid out just 1 year ago. The journey has been relentless and will need to continue to be so. The first 6 months of 2006 will be a time to consolidate what has been achieved so that it becomes 'business as usual'. And then the launch of Gold!

Outcome

Managers, Team and Cell Leaders are now in place and developing according to their Personal Development Plan and the needs and demands of their role. Their progress is regularly reviewed in 1:1s with their line manager and any additional support given where necessary. Every member of staff within Manufacturing and CCC also have a Personal Development Plan which is based on what they need in order to fulfil their role and meet their performance indicators as identified through the 'Getting the Rocks in Place' process. Everyone throughout CCC and Manufacturing now has a shared goal, clarity about their responsibilities and the confidence to step outside their area and work with each other in order to improve the way things work.



A group of Culture Champions meet regularly and represent different parts of the Manufacturing and CCC teams. Their purpose is to support the management teams and lead the cultural evolution. This includes organising various 'Silver' review events to highlight progress.

Other departments are coming to Jon and Lucy and finding out more about how they have achieved what they have and are looking at ways so be involved. And so the focus is moving onto Gold and what that will be like. This is still evolving and yet it is clear that gold will mean closer working between Manufacturing, CCC and other key parts of the business.

With leaders setting such challenging targets and such visionary and motivated managers leading teams of committed and loyal staff, it is no wonder that Altro continues to lead the way in its industry.