CASE STUDY - Australia
Industry - Building maintenance
Problem - Poor productivity causing loss of contracts and business opportunities

1. SNAPSHOT

A building maintenance company was experiencing exploding market demand. The growth appeared to have happened too quickly and new staff were hired hastily. The additional workload was assigned without consideration of whether the staff had the right tools, procedures and skills to continue delivering quality work. If nothing changed this situation would quickly lead to loss of more contracts and bigger accounts.

2. PROBLEM

Staff were often exhausted, "firefighting" was a daily routine. People no longer knew what was expected of them, or how to do the new work they had been delegated. The stress became more intense and the frustration grew. Absenteeism increased resulting in not enough staff on sites to do quality work and to keep up with the new jobs that continued pouring in. The company started losing contracts, the culture began to change to one of complacency and chaos.

3. IDENTIFIED CAUSES

- There were no adequate systems in place that would support rapid business growth; staff was doing the additional workload based more on guessing and gut feeling than on a set of policies.
- The disconnect between the executive vision, the operations, and business development meant fulfilling KPI's for bringing in more business irrespective of the capacity to service the increased workload, building and maintaining customer relationships, etc.
- Conflicting information coming from different sources within the company; lack of effective communication at all levels.
- Managers micromanaging, having no time for proper planning and implementation of strategy; existing staff largely unable to make the right decisions.
- New recruits with insufficient skills and inappropriate attitude.

4. SOLUTION

1. Meeting with the leadership team to get their commitment to the change process.
2. Conducting a series of interviews, observations and surveys as part of diagnosing the company's climate and culture followed by a detailed report with recommendations.
3. Design of an action plan for cultural change involving behaviour and procedures; selecting a task force among staff from all levels in charge of incremental improvements, "grass-root" innovation and driving the implementation of change over time.
4. Update and design of new, suitable processes and procedures (e.g. for managing people, quality, work, customer feedback, measuring performance, business planning and implementation); introducing ways to effectively deal with the increasing amount of work while reducing stress (balanced effectiveness and efficiency); ensuring the new contracts are comfortably serviced and there is still capacity for growing the business.
5. Implementation of the action plan in collaboration with the designated task force; surveys to gauge the progress and the desired outcomes for each stage of the process; troubleshooting sessions to address any emerging challenges.
6. Quarterly personal and professional development training for key staff; a system in place for the knowledge acquired in the training to be passed on among staff.

5. OUTCOME

- Value alignment - staff feel fulfilled and committed at work.
- Staff engagement - voluntary participation in various continuous improvement workplace projects; there is a platform for regular exchange of ideas, challenges, successes, solutions, sharing stories and cross-cultural experiences.
- Optimised work processes - ensuring that people with the right skill-set do the right job at the right time. There are new processes in place to optimise the workflow, collect customer feedback, address challenges early on, and more.
- Accountability - staff deliver what is expected of them and take responsibility for their actions. They are happy to contribute to solving problems both within and outside of their area of expertise.
- Customer experience - strengthening the relationships with clients is back in focus, problems are handled early on and in a professional manner.
- Company image - the company is attracting more suited staff and more clients, the staff retention is stronger.
- Growth and profitability - future growth can happen sustainably .