

BUILDING A WINNING CULTURE

*If you're having fun,
you've already won.*

Once your business is on the growth journey and starting to show results you need to review progress against the Strategic Business Plan (SBP) every quarter. The key is to link these quarterly meetings into a process of building a winning culture by taking your TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) away to develop an 'owner's eye'.

QUARTERLY MEETINGS

An important component of working ON the business is to hold quarterly meetings with your senior TEAM to assess progress with the SBP and whether it needs tweaking to remain relevant to changing business conditions. This is the time to drill down into the details of what has been promised to see what's been achieved and to reinforce individual and TEAM accountabilities.

The most effective way to build this culture of accountability during the quarterly meetings is to have each head of department present a review of the past quarter against what they said they

would achieve compared to budget and an outline of their next 90 day commitments for action. One of my former senior managers Jake Lowing described the meetings like this:

"It was quite confronting to present to your peers. There were some serious moments and if you hadn't achieved what you should have achieved, you were made aware of it (very honestly) in front of everybody.

"There was no bad blood; however, and you got on with it the next day. I realised later that those meetings were a good motivator and they kept me in the loop of the whole business. The quarterly meetings had their moments of sheer terror (the presentations) but were always followed by a lot of fun."

At Brumby's we took the whole senior TEAM together with key suppliers on the quarterly retreat usually to a resort venue. We deliberately went into different markets and undertook added value training for the local franchisees. This

approach was part of a philosophy of gaining maximum value from travel expenditure.

The usual routine for these retreats involved all arriving the night before and spending two quality, uninterrupted days working through the SBP to establish priorities and common focus for the next quarter.

BUILDING YOUR COMPANY'S CULTURE WITH THE FUN FACTOR

The quarterly retreats really worked in that everyone looked forward to them as part of the 'be in the moment and enjoy the experience' approach. Without their family responsibility around them the managers became closer as a group of friends who could let off steam together, get to know each other better and bond.

We incorporated celebration of success along the journey with reward activities such as rock concerts (including the Rolling Stones, The Eagles and James Taylor), canoeing, clay pigeon pistol shooting, abseiling, rock climbing, paragliding, tai chi and horse riding. From my perspective, the rock concerts were part of the fun factor and a culture of having fun at work so that fun after work was a continuation of the experience – the mucking around philosophy based on the idea that you're only young once but you can act

immaturely any time you like (don't take yourself too seriously).

Once when the TEAM went canoeing I noticed that one pair couldn't paddle together and one of them decided to walk back instead. I used that observation to reinforce the need to understand other's strengths and weaknesses and show more patience and tolerance. At the pistol shooting one of the managers just couldn't hit the target and some others observed that if he did have a gun, the safest thing would be to stand still! That manager was just like that in meeting quarterly targets, so the FIFO (Fit in or...) principle soon kicked in.

RELATIONS WITH SUPPLIERS

I realised the importance of linking our suppliers into the quarterly meetings (and the business more generally) because in most cases they became unpaid loyal members of our TEAM. The outcomes were strongly positive because we received assistance with new product development, access to their market research and consumer trends. We were also given first preference with new product launches they were planning because they understood the needs of our business intimately.

Some of our quarterly meetings were held at the



supplier's head office where they supplied the venue, meals and the evening function. On one occasion we held our quarterly meeting in Coca-Cola Amatil's (CCA) boardroom right on Circular Quay. The boardroom table was built within a huge replica bottle of Coca-Cola and during the day we were joined by CCA's CEO and senior managers such as Brett Viertel and Paul Gunn. The discussion with such senior players meant that we all formed an in-depth understanding of the mutual benefits of the relationship to drive success.

So in order to drive improved business performance, I suggest that you develop a winning culture through well-constructed quarterly meetings that are challenging yet fun and forge strong linkages with your key suppliers.

Michael Sherlock is the former CEO of Brumby's Bakeries and is currently a consultant to franchisors.

He is the co-author of growth strategy book *Jumpshift!* which has taken the franchise industry by storm.

Contact Michael at

Phone: 0412 747 111

Email: michael@michaelsherlock.com.au

Web: www.jumpshift.com.au

