

Change Leaders Accelerate at Toyota



Over the course of 1998, Toyota embarked on an ambitious investigation of ways to achieve genuine, revolutionary cultural and leadership change throughout its manufacturing operations in AsiaPac. The objective was to preserve the company's leading position in the global automotive industry by staying ahead of current best practice in the areas of change leadership and organizational climate.

Following a number of experiments, some in conjunction with Team Results, the company settled on an approach based on creating a Change Leadership team of six carefully selected supervisors. The cornerstone of this approach was to empower the "Change Team" to research alternative approaches, to set its own agenda within well-defined terms of reference and to create a new spirit based on new learning outcomes at every level.

The Change Team began its mission in April 1999 with a four-day Team Results program at "Silver Wattle", a beautiful rural venue in Australia. Then at the "forming" stage in its development, the team was provided with a very challenging, multi-phase project that faithfully simulated the core challenges, opportunities and barriers awaiting members back at Toyota throughout the AsiaPac.

Through project management, reflection, discovery and further planning, individuals were able to create and refine well-tested strategies for managing the formidable challenges of motivating and inspiring new initiatives in company culture and practice.

On return to Toyota, the team implemented its discoveries and proven strategies within a changing career and remuneration structure and in an organisational climate committed to raising the effectiveness of all work teams through instructional and inspirational leadership at the shop floor level.

Using the approaches developed on the Simulation-based program, with some support from a tertiary institution partner in redesigning business processes and also with support, regular follow-up, strategy review and measurement from Team Results, the team created dramatic changes in the effectiveness of the two major AsiaPac manufacturing plants within two months.

As the process continued, the Change Team successfully set itself the target of "Motivation" for year 2000/2001. The shop-floor planning and involvement process was redesigned and implemented throughout the company with unprecedented success, and also with clear productivity savings and benefits. Follow-up actions included a further boosting of mentor effectiveness and employee achievement.

"It has been a remarkable journey", says Toyota's Executive and Supervisory Development Manager, Mr Don Trewin. "We have all been amazed by the fantastic success of both the Change Team and the Team Results approach". Human Resources General Manager, Mr Alan McGarrigle, agrees. "It's been one of the great success stories", adds Mr McGarrigle. "They have been going long enough now that we can say the process has worked."

The final word comes from the President of Toyota Australia, Mr Ken Asano, who in December 1999 set the tone by saying "What this team has achieved in the last six months has put the rest of the company to shame".

Team Results' work with Toyota continues to this day.



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