

THE CLIENT: SOBEYS ONTARIO

Sobeys Ontario, a pivotal division of Canada's 2nd largest grocery retailer Nova Scotia-based Sobeys Inc., is a regional multi-billion dollar grocery retailer. With 5 banners in Ontario including; Sobeys, Price Chopper, IGA, Commisso's, and Foodland, Sobeys Ontario employs directly and indirectly 30,000 people at over 300 stores. The Region's head office is in Mississauga. FOCUS' primary client was newly appointed Sobeys Ontario President, Craig Gilpin who has over 20 years experience in the grocery retail business.

THE GOAL

Initially enlisted by the Vice President of Operations, FOCUS Management was engaged to assist in evolving his leadership style and to improve execution. The assignment involved working with his direct management team to provide the VP with leadership style feedback/coaching, to enhance teamwork and to focus Operations' alignment to both the Regional and National goals. Having successfully achieved these goals, FOCUS was then engaged by the new Sobeys Ontario President to help improve the strategic focus and alignment of his top 200 leaders, to optimize the execution of the National and Regional strategies and ultimately to enhance bottom-line financial performance.

"Once I started talking with Fred Pidsadny (President, FOCUS), I wanted to use the company to bring focus to the organization through their strategic alignment process and allow each functional area to actually talk through what they do."

– Craig Gilpin, President, Sobeys Ontario

THE CHALLENGE

The grocery market is a fierce battleground and the advantage goes to those that are singularly focussed and who execute merchandising strategies flawlessly. Senior level turnover and a natural disasters-filled 2004 business environment (SARS outbreak, ice storm induced power outage, mad cow disease) helped to create the epic challenges facing Gilpin, the newly appointed Regional President.

"I think the senior group within Ontario was still struggling to know who it was. Within this organization, there had been quite a bit of turnover and change...the organization had a shotgun approach. They had a lot of objectives spread wide and I wanted to narrow them in and get a few things done well to see business benefits. It's interesting that even within functional areas at the senior level, there were still people that didn't realize what other people did within the same area."

– Craig Gilpin

THE SOLUTION

To help the senior management teams develop strategically clear direction, increase their focus and become a truly results-driven organization, FOCUS customized and applied their Accelerating Results Process to Sobeys Ontario's challenges. Those involved, included the Ontario Leadership Team and the top 20 Management teams across all Banners and Functional Support Teams (HR, Finance, Real Estate, Legal, etc).

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THE SOLUTION (...continued)

The actions began with one-on-one planning sessions with Craig Gilpin to help him lead the process effectively and rigorously. FOCUS then supported the management teams in developing output-oriented accountability descriptions that increase clarity of responsibility and alignment to Sobeys Corporate Vision for the Region. Next came the design and facilitation of tailored strategic alignment meetings – including in depth, pre-meeting preparations for the highly engaged participants. Finally for relentless execution, FOCUS designed and facilitated progress check point meetings to keep track of hits and misses, to celebrate wins and to update action plans to ensure commitments were achieved. In short, an ongoing cultural evolution.

“What FOCUS does is really bring structure to performance management. All organizations say ‘What are your objectives for the next years in the embedded performance management system?’ But you don’t know if those objectives for 4 or 5,000 employees are going to accomplish what senior leadership wants. With the FOCUS process, you know it’s all aligned because every meeting is filtered back up; you review the objectives and know exactly what every single group is doing. Companies are very good at using organizational charts; at understanding what each does within their own box. FOCUS allows you to understand what happens between the boxes – in the white space – at all levels within the organizations. That’s where the real work is done, where business comes together. So you don’t end up with two work streams, you end up with one work stream trying to accomplish with one objective.”

– Craig Gilpin

THE RESULTS

Craig believes the FOCUS process has delivered significant hard and soft benefits to the Sobeys Ontario organization. The Leadership team now has clearer, more achievable plans, tighter focus, and a greater feeling of unity and confidence, with increasing candor and trust levels. In terms of the hard benefits, Gilpin is confident that FOCUS has been able to help them develop a vital competitive edge.

“FOCUS MANAGEMENT is ultimately creating a strategic advantage within the Sobeys organization by making us more efficient, quicker to the decision making, better executors, better at delivering against objectives, and that’s something we need vitally”

– Craig Gilpin

Craig’s final word on the value and integrity of FOCUS Management?

“Really, the name says it all. What they do is bring focus to what you do day in, day out. And they put a process in place that allows feedback for continuous improvement. The group is grounded in reality. They’re not hard sell people. They are very interested in improving your business in a cost effective manner.”

– Craig Gilpin

For more information on how FOCUS Management can help your organization achieve a clear direction, a winning strategy and a results-driven culture that will keep you far ahead of the competition, contact:

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