



Coca-Cola HBC – Towards A World Class Selling Organisation

The Client

When Coca-Cola HBC committed to a listing on the New York Stock Exchange in October 2002, the practical implications for the business were enormous.

Athens-based CCHBC is one of the largest bottlers of non-alcoholic beverages in Europe and the third largest Coca-Cola bottler in the world by sales volume, operating in 26 countries and reaching more than 500 million consumers. Market analysts' projections for the group were ambitious, to say the least, and CCHBC would need to meet the targets to satisfy the market. As Managing Director, Irial Finan, put it, "This listing marks a very important stepping stone in the company's continuing growth and expansion in the international market place".

Buoyed-up by a strong performance in 2002, with earnings growth of 17% in the first 6 months alone, CCHBC set about generating a further step change in achievement throughout its 35,000 strong organisation.

The Challenge

CCHBC already had an unrivalled philosophy for operational excellence – one that underpins their approach across all 26 countries, and which they summarise as 'the 4As': Availability; Affordability; Acceptability and Activation. The way they define the 4 A's bears testimony to the rigorous attention which they pay to all their activity in the market place - 'Relentless supply chain reliability... lowest appropriate costs to serve....strong relationships...superbly efficient...great value....highest quality standards...always within arms reach.' As Irial Finan explains, "Everyone within the CCHBC system is encouraged to carry out their responsibilities to the highest standards possible."

Now the challenge was to support and sustain a still greater level of endeavour across the whole group. As Irial Finan stated in an address to his General Managers: "

Some key considerations for us all are these: 'Business as usual' will not deliver this level of growth. This is not a one-off action - the pace of change will continue to be rapid for the foreseeable future. We need to have a hard look at our capabilities – both organisationally and individually."

The Brief

The Operating Committee defined their end goal as “A World Class Selling Organisation”, and set about shaping the culture and capabilities which were at the heart of their vision. This work was both the context for OPDC’s involvement and the driver for key elements in the design of the programme. The Operating Committee determined that, as the Group aspired to outperform both their competitors and the financial markets, long term, regular, high quality coaching was required throughout the organisation. The following overarching objectives were agreed with OPDC:

- To develop coaching as a core leadership competence in what is to be a “World Class Selling Organisation”;
- To establish a capability in coaching which is itself world class;
- To transfer OPDC’s capability to CCHBC.

Why OPDC?

According to Cynthia McCague, HR Director, OPDC ultimately won the contract because she felt the methodology and the experience of the OPDC coaches would have the necessary impact to create a sustained ability across the General Manager population. “OPDC certainly weren’t the cheapest,” Cynthia stated, “but we decided that they would deliver the best value – and I must say that they are exceeding our expectations.”

The Intervention

OPDC and CCHBC put together a programme whose main elements were:

- A mix of learning and action over a period of 3 to 4 months for each team, which enables participants to rapidly develop a high level of proficiency as coaches and generates a sustained level of coaching activity across the organization from the outset
- A coaching framework which is practical and focused on results, and aimed at developing the talent and initiative of people who are already achieving
- Focus on live business issues throughout the programme, delivering immediate benefits to the business
- The use of experienced business coaches to train and coach the participants so that a) they experience excellent coaching, and b) they experience at first hand the advantages that coaching can bring to the business, by resolving their business issues.

The Operating Committee led from the front, going through the programme as a team. Several healthy sceptics at the outset left the first workshop convinced that this was the right approach, and the whole team gave the programme their stamp of approval. The next phase was for the Senior Management Team of each country to go through the programme with OPDC, in the same way. Finally, CCHBC’s internal trainers, certificated by OPDC, roll out the programme to the wider management population.

The Outcome

Each team's programme concludes with an assessment of the return on investment (ROI), which they have gained from their own coaching activity. The participants assess the financial return from specific outcomes and compare it with the entire cost of their programme, direct and indirect.

Teams are reporting ROIs in multiples of 1000%. This is entirely consistent with the ethos of the programme: the participants are there because they can be expected to exert significant leverage on the organisation's performance; in a complex and driven working environment, they are selective with their coaching; they focus on issues which are impacting the business.

As Irial Finan puts it, 'By striving to be world class in every single aspect, every person within CCHBC can contribute to the goal. What you can expect to see are concrete results.'

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