

CASE STUDY

Professional Services Firm

THE CHAILENGE

The client's industry experienced a rapid change in regulation that dramatically affected their business. The client responded by implementing internal controls and oversight that adversely affected the internal climate of the firm. This in turn had a negative effect on client relationships and overall performance. SaintOnge Alliance was tasked with researching and synthesizing the underlying issues and set forth tangible recommendations for action by the leadership team that would place the firm in a position to enhance client relationships and attain a new level of performance.

THE APPROACH

SaintOnge Alliance implemented a five-step process to research, synthesize and formulate tangible recommendations for action.

STAGE 1

Creation of Task Force

STAGE #1: CREATION OF TASK FORCE

In order to effectively move forward with the proposed approach, SaintOnge Alliance worked hand-in-hand with an internal task force of key stakeholders within the client company that together executed all aspects of the project plan from data collection and analysis to proposing action steps.

STAGE 2

Data Collection & Analysis

STAGE #2: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In collaboration with the internal task force, SaintOnge Alliance interviewed business leaders, developed a set of hypotheses and then carried out a custom-built survey across the firm. The analysis of the survey results served as the basis for a 'deep dive' with internal focus groups to validate the identification of the most significant underlying issues.

STAGE 3

Diagnosis

STAGE #3: DIAGNOSIS

This stage consisted of synthesizing and interpreting the data and identifying the main issues and their implications. As well, a diagnosis of the leadership and cultural aspects of the challenges was carried out. An analysis of the success factors for change helped delineate a course of action that would ensure sustainable results.

STAGE 4

Desired State

STAGE #4: DESIRED STATE

Through extensive consultation, a consensus was created regarding the "desired future state" of the firm. This "vision" of what was to be achieved served as the foundation for the formulation of action steps bridging the gap between the current reality and the desired future state.

STAGE 5

Concrete Action Steps

STAGE #5: CONCRETE ACTION STEPS

A comprehensive set of recommendations covered three main areas: the articulation and communication of the leadership commitment to make the changes required, immediate action steps to address urgent issues and longer-term initiatives focused on changing business processes and leadership approaches to renew and reinvigorate the culture of the firm.

INDUSTRY

Professional Services

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

- Rapid industry changes in regulation led to internal responses that were counter-productive.
- Loss of strategic focus and emergence of trust issues.
- Negative effect on customer relationships.
- Constraints placed on the overall level of performance.

APPROACH

- Task Force Creation
- Data Collection and Analysis
- Diagnosis
- Desired State
- Concrete Action Steps

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Need to shift from compliance-driven behavior to foster the exercise of judgment.
- Need to build the level of trust for more effective collaboration.
- Need to ensure business processes are aligned to strategic focus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

 Recommendations on leadership commitment

Clearly articulate and communicate leadership commitments and concrete action steps to realize the strategic intent.

- Immediate Recommendations
 Remove unnecessary obstacles
 preventing the exercise of judgment and realignment of key processes
- Long-Term Recommendations
 Develop well-defined leadership principles and measure the adherence to these principles in order to renew the culture with a higher level of trust across the firm.



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MAJOR FINDINGS

Through the collection and analysis of information, SaintOnge Alliance worked with an internal taskforce to identify the underlying causes of issues that became impediments to enhancing the overall level of performance of the firm.

THEMES UNCOVERED

- The application of professional judgment was being subjugated to compliance-based procedures.
- The emergence of a more imposing leadership approach eroded the trust level in the firm.
- Key business processes were not aligned to the strategic intent and did not have broad staff support.

CONSEQUENCES

- Team members didn't feel empowered to exercise judgment and adopted a compliance-driven, "play-it-safe" attitude.
- A reduction in the level of engagement and initiative had a negative impact on productivity.
- Preoccupation with inadequate internal processes took the focus away from client relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The path to effective change required the firm to first show it's commitment to change (symbolic changes) and then implement immediate and long-term changes.

AFFIRMATION OF LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

The SaintOnge Alliance recommended that the senior leadership clearly state its strategic intent and support this commitment with a set of concrete action steps to affirm its resolve to drive forward with immediate or long term changes.

IMMEDIATE CHANGES

SaintOnge Alliance recommended immediate actions to address urgent issues. This was designed to bring visible changes that would confirm the commitment of the leadership. It was also geared to create the credibility and momentum required for the deeper leadership and culture change.

LONG-TERM CHANGES

Long-term recommendations were focused on changing business processes and developing well-defined leadership principles. For instance, it was recommended that the client implement a 360 degree feedback process to measure the progress being made.

RESULTS

The consultative approach adopted throughout the project resulted in the introduction of incremental changes as the study unfolded. These changes gave the work credibility and confirmed that the firm was serious in responding to the issues that were identified.

