

# Strategic Alignment

Leading  
Change



## Implementing 'The Art of Action' to catalyse change in an international pharmaceuticals company

### Synopsis

Vifor, the pharmaceutical business of the Galenica Group, researches, develops, manufactures and markets medical iron deficiency products worldwide. Vifor Pharma has a growing global presence with a network of affiliates and partners in more than 100 countries. Over several years Vifor Pharma has integrated and grown a coherent speciality pharmaceuticals business with tight management control from the top of the organisation, but plans for further growth depended on building a leadership culture that balanced clear direction with empowerment.

### Key Issues

- > In 2012 Vifor's global staff engagement survey 'Opinio' revealed that there was a weak alignment between staff at all levels and the company's strategic goals, resulting in low levels of staff engagement.
- > In common with many fast-growing companies Vifor had developed tight control mechanisms necessary in a complex and dynamic global business, but aspired to become an organisation where managers at all levels have a solid grasp of the company's strategic intent and develop a culture where all feel empowered and responsible for taking purposeful action in line with that intent.
- > Vifor realised the need for a change programme to develop and embed distinctive leadership capability that would enable managers to take

quick and effective decisions at the lowest appropriate level, making the organisation more coherent, agile and providing sustainable competitive advantage.

### The Solution

Working with Dr Stephen Bungay (author of 'The Art of Action') we designed and implemented a strategic alignment programme throughout Vifor Pharma. This programme commenced with pilot workshops in the UK affiliate, central QM and industrial operations management teams. An executive level programme sponsor was then appointed to lead implementation of 'Art of Action' principles throughout Vifor.

The implementation programme was delivered by Leading Change to the senior Executive Committee and, in a series of facilitated workshops, to each of their management teams. Throughout the implementation we worked with a team of facilitators selected from all area of the business and developed their capability to take over delivery of the programme which they did very successfully as the programme transitioned into full scale implementation.

The initial round of strategic intent workshops was successfully completed in May 2014. Executive committee direct reports and in the large international business organisation at 2 and 3 levels below the executive committee were briefed on the strategic intent and used our proprietary strategy briefing tool to



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develop ways to implement the strategic intent in their own areas of business.

We provided licensed copies of all programme and facilitator development material including facilitator handbooks, customised video presentations and evaluation tools as well as 2nd line support once Vifor assumed responsibility for programme delivery

### The Results

Our strategic alignment programme was delivered to executive committee and EC-1 levels spanning around 30 managers then working with facilitators from the business, trained and supported by us, to a further 160 international managers at EC-1 and -2 level. The programme is now approaching its second year, has been handed over to the internal facilitation team and is being integrated with the business performance management framework.

In May 2014 Vifor held a leadership conference in Milan with around 200 senior managers. Prior to the conference the independent staff engagement survey revealed that 88% of senior managers 'understood the company's strategy', whilst managers below this level improved to a score of 73%. Vifor's CEO commented: "The latest Opinion survey demonstrated a massive impact on the motivation and understanding of the participants and a successful start to the development of an effective operating model within Vifor".

The key challenge Vifor face is essentially now behavioural as the company looks to build on the success of the 'Art of Action' to develop effective leadership so that adaptive and empowering behaviours are identified and rewarded in order to strengthen the engagement of staff below senior management levels.

"On behalf of our International Business Operations Team I would like to sincerely thank all of you for the great job you've all done in helping us implementing the Art of Action... the feedback I got spontaneously out of the meeting was all positive about your respective support and dedication".

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