



MISSION LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

At Diageo Moët Hennessy Japan

Stocking bars and shelves around the globe with champagnes, wines, and spirits, Diageo Moët Hennessy is the world's largest producer and distributor of alcoholic drinks. In Japan, the company has a workforce comprising 315 employees.

In 2004, Mr. Jin Iwamoto-San became president of Diageo Moët Hennessy Japan and was tasked with re-motivating a badly demoralized workforce. Despite the company's extensive range of premium big brand beverages, successive decreases in performance over previous years had destroyed employees' confidence in the company's ability to exploit the brands within the region.

We asked Iwamoto-San to share his experience, explaining the value and impact of McKinney Rogers' Mission Leadership® and Mission Analysis® to his strategy and organization and give his insights on how employee morale was drastically improved and ensure that set targets were met.

Facing ingrained challenges


From month to month, failing to achieve performance commitments had become a company norm for the Japanese operation, with no resulting consequences. Having reached an absolute crisis point where employees actually expected to miss their targets, Iwamoto-San was faced with an onerous task – to improve employee morale, turn the company around by ensuring performance targets were consistently met and ensure seamless, meaningful communications of corporate policies and strategies.

Iwamoto-San explains: “With a clear understanding of the intricacies and sensitivities involved in doing business in Japan, McKinney Rogers was enlisted to help improve employee morale and improve performance. Working in close partnership, it emerged that the slipping performance targets had resulted from company-wide ambiguity concerning employee's individual duties and responsibilities. In order to change this, it was agreed to apply the Mission Leadership® and Mission Analysis® tools.”

The secret power of words

“The first challenge that we faced was the unseen power of words, crucial in facilitating thought processes and allowing people to communicate. The world of business, however, does not attach sufficient importance to words. For example, if a new corporate policy and subsequent strategies were developed at Diageo Moët Hennessy America, to be rolled out across the globe in various languages, special care needs to be taken to ensure that the same meaning is maintained across all translations. Understanding also varies among individuals, so announcing a new corporate policy is just the beginning. Ensuring a shared understanding and meaning is crucial and this can be achieved through multi-directional discussions.





“Everyone in our company had a different understanding of what our corporate strategy meant. For multi-lingual companies, Mission Analysis® rigorously reviews word selection until the different languages have a seamless and identical meaning. Once decided, the specific choices of words are then committed to rigorous usage. As such, organizations working with multiple languages whether domestically or internationally will see a real business benefit,” comments Iwamoto-San.

Creating assertive leaders

The next challenge entailed a review of the company’s leaders. One of the key problems identified was the lack of strong and assertive leadership, a vital component for successful strategy execution. Leaders must drive accountability throughout an organization providing rapid alignment to the company vision, goals and strategies, together with increased prioritization, focus and drive towards simplicity.

“While those with weak leadership styles do not turn into effective leaders overnight, we wanted to find a way to help them evolve and come to share a conceptual model of outstanding leadership. Leaders at all levels need to be able to share.

Establishing a clear vision

The next step that Iwamoto-San and McKinney Rogers took was to define the required performance targets and align them to the company’s overall vision using McKinney Rogers Mission Analysis® tool, which enables leaders to project themselves as both strong and assertive. This started with a top-down approach as well as thorough group discussion and feedback with the team, allowing the information to flow in both directions: top-down and bottom-up. These open talks shed some interesting light on the situation.

Iwamoto-San explains: “Through this multi-directional discussion, it came to light that the existing 50-page document defining our company’s vision and subsequent strategies was not clear enough for employees, who were still uncertain as to who was responsible for what and the reason behind it.

“Through the application of Mission Analysis®, work began to simplify and clarify strategies. Consequently, we were able to assign personal responsibilities and accountabilities to each and every employee in a very structured and transparent way so that everyone understood their individual role and how they contributed to the overall success of the company.

“With company leaders improving assertiveness and employees ready to rise to the challenge of their duties and responsibilities, all that was left was to put it all into practice.”

Achieving real results - three years of growth

The real crunch time for the project came during the final month of the last fiscal year when Diageo Moët Hennessy Japan was at a critical divide as to whether the goal to achieve three years of continuous growth would be achieved or not. With enough momentum to ensure a winning result, but





with only eight business days remaining, all were on tender hooks.

“At this point, I used my own leadership skills to encourage managers. The senior manager in charge of the Kanto area subsequently issued a daily countdown email encouraging each employee to play their part in achieving continuous growth for a third year running. At this point, the benefits of Mission Leadership® and Mission Analysis® became clear – the voice and action of each leader directing the company’s mission was in synch. Each and every employee had a clear understanding of the organization’s mission and the vital role that they needed to play if the company was to achieve its goal.

“As a result of adopting Mission Leadership® and Mission Analysis®, we saw a marked change for the better in the actions and behaviors of employees, resulting in continuous growth over the last three years. Having set a clear vision for my team, seamless alignment was achieved throughout the organization. After 14 years of continuous decline, the company’s fortune had turned around; set targets were being exceeded 18 months after implementation,” concludes Iwamoto-San.

