

## BUSINESS IMPACT

Achieved outstanding  
top line/bottom line growth

Significant increase in engagement  
with employees, customers, & partners

Won an organization-wide  
award for a top performer

# CASE STUDY

## Putting the Fizz Back Into Flattening Performance: Creating High-Performing Teams at a Coca-Cola Hub

### The Challenge

When the numbers arrived in late 2015 at Coca-Cola's Turkey, Caucasus, and Central Asia (TCCA) hub, it set off alarm bells. While still profitable and achieving acceptable levels of engagement, the regional unit was in a downward trend month over month. Engagement had dropped along every measurement. And it had become clear that the leaders of TCCA's disparate regions had goals and missions that were not productively aligned.

At this point, many organizations might wait out the numbers, hope for a market change, or throw some interventions at the wall to see what sticks. After all, the regional unit was still profitable and solutions like cultural and organizational change can be painful and complex. But, instead, they made the bold and courageous move to act immediately.

Coke's regional marketing director recommended McKinney Rogers (MR), a division of GP Strategies® and an innovator in performance improvement, to partner and work through strategies to reverse the downward trend. The director knew MR for having a distinct talent for initiating cultural mind shifts that permeate every level of an organization, close the gap between strategy and execution, and establish lasting change.



Improving  
ENGAGEMENT and  
PERFORMANCE  
by aligning and  
closing the gap  
from STRATEGY to  
EXECUTION

## The Solution

### **Take responsibility for shaping your own destiny.**

Coke's regional unit desired to shape change, not react to it. The unit's goal was to reverse their performance and engagement trends, and bring the leadership into alignment. The overarching goal was to set up the company for long-term, sustained success.

But is there something else that can form the root of that change? Something everyone can rally around, thereby inspiring engagement, performance, and alignment? Together, the regional unit and MR would find out.

### **Agree upon a goal that sparks the imagination.**

The work started by initiating a workshop with company leaders to develop goals and performance metrics to reduce and ultimately improve the trend in profitability. They discussed challenges and strategies, roadblocks and opportunities, and processes and implementations. They also honed in on a vision everyone could get behind. This vision was to win the Woodruff Cup.

Each year, Coca-Cola global identifies a regional hub with the best performance over a 3-year period and awards them their most distinguished prize—the Woodruff Cup. To be eligible, hubs have to enter and present their case. The winner is announced at a huge gala and has bragging rights within Coca-Cola for the year. Named for Robert Woodruff, a Coca-Cola president who served more than six decades of active leadership in the company, the award is the envy of everyone who works for this ubiquitous brand. Although not the main purpose of the project, the Woodruff Cup would symbolize the achievement. So it was determined that, in 3 years, Coke's regional unit would transform from an underperforming hub to the top performer in the company; winning the Woodruff Cup.

### **Reach beyond what you imagine possible.**

Many may consider the Woodruff Cup goal to be lofty to achieve in just 3 years, since it is based on 3 years of performance. That means they had to start turning around immediately in order to achieve that goal. But part of what they learned in their workshop is that if you limit your goals to, say, a certain number, then the best you will achieve will be that number. But if you create goals without limits or set conditions, you can achieve beyond what you might imagine possible. You can surprise even yourself with what you can achieve.

The results of reaching beyond your comfort zone include elevated performance, inspired action, extreme confidence, and profound engagement. So the goals you choose create a foundation for the excellence you want to achieve. Ask yourself if you'd be more inspired by a goal of increasing revenue by 50% or a goal of winning the Woodruff Cup. Both may result in heightened performance, but the former limits your potential results, and the latter sparks the imagination and sets the salivary glands in motion.

### **Do the important work of culture change.**

It is not enough to know where you are going. You need to have the right culture in place to get you there. A high-performance culture is one that has the ability to run at the pace of the fastest person, with excellent behaviors and operating standards. It is not so much about team building as it is about instilling the behaviors needed to achieve extraordinary results.

Based on MR's proprietary ASPIRE® methodology at the heart of their High-Performing Teams workshops, 2016 was spent cascading a new philosophy of what performance means to everyone within the hub. ASPIRE gives employees a way to be both inspired leaders and courageous followers who understand and embrace their unique role and importance in the process. ASPIRE reminds each individual to consider:

- What is the **A**im or goal I'm reaching toward?
- What is the **S**ituation we're working to correct?
- What is my **P**lan for achieving those goals?
- How do I **I**nspire myself and others along the way?
- How can I **R**einforce the established goals through my actions?
- How do I **E**valuate my progress and achievements?

### **Tie your new behaviors to your goals.**

Once the high-performing teams were established, 2017 brought the new behaviors together with the Woodruff Cup goal. What would that require of the marketing team? The financial team? The operations team? And so on. How would each group be accountable to that goal?

The workshops cascaded down from leadership to the front line, defining how each individual was empowered and responsible to the team. Alignment and interdependency were the main objectives at every workshop. Once complete, it was up to Coke's regional unit to operationalize what they learned.

### **See your organization in context.**

As much as this is a story about McKinney Rogers, Coke's regional unit, and the Woodruff Cup, it didn't happen in a vacuum. Coca-Cola corporate was also undergoing change. The regional unit's transformation dovetailed perfectly with that, making it one of the first hubs to adopt a more agile, inclusive, resilient mindset.

In early 2018, a big celebration was held within the business unit and the new president of Coca-Cola TCCA was there. She asked an intriguing question: "What is TCCA's identity within Coca-Cola?" Although a seemingly simple question, this proposed a fresh take on TCCA's challenge, and they turned back to MR to help them define that. Two years earlier, their identity might have been different, but in 2018 they decided their identity was "fluid"—agile, inclusive, curious, resilient, and adaptable.

## **Business Impact**

### **Achieve goals you never thought possible.**

By the end of 2018, TCCA's performance had dramatically turned around. The hub had become more tightly united through the transformation process, despite its disparate locations on the globe. Engagement was at a peak. The numbers beat the initial goals, and the mission and vision were achieved:

- Grew business KPIs double-digit year on year with outstanding top line/bottom line growth
- Grew significant double-digit value share
- Achieved significant increase in engagement with employees, customers, and bottlings partner

Then, in early 2019, the phones and emails blew up around Coke's regional unit, TCCA, as they learned the news—they had won the Woodruff Cup! The most coveted recognition in all of Coca-Cola around the world now belonged to a hub that, 3 years earlier, had found themselves in a downward trend and far from a top performer.

### Learn from the lessons of others.

At its root, lasting change relies on everyone from the president to the front-line workers understanding they are both an inspirational leader and a courageous follower. Transformation is not as much a destination as it is an ongoing process. Coke's regional unit is no longer the organization they were at the beginning of this process.

The journey was not a success-only journey. Many lessons were learned and best practices were established along the way, including:

- **Approach change holistically.** From vision and strategy to process, culture, and behaviors, TCCA left no stone unturned. It was the first time they attempted to transform everything. It was also the first time they achieved lasting results.
- **Be lexible.** You have to be big enough to admit that something is not working. If you get too invested in your way, you're going to get in your own way.
- **Be prepared to take risks.** Not everything is going to turn out the way you'd hoped. That's OK.
- **Plan everything.** It's not enough to have good thought processes. You have to know to take action.
- **Get people on board.** And you can't just cascade your strategy once. You have to do it over and over again. There were times when Coke's regional unit lost momentum. Those were opportunities to refresh their approach, establish a team of influencers, and innovate other solutions to keep the transformation moving.
- **Put new eyes on your challenge.** When the new president asked Coke's regional unit about their identity, it inspired new ways of thinking. So don't be afraid to seek a fresh take on your challenge.
- **Stay calm.** There are times the process may roll off the tracks. Remember that alignment and clarity are key. As senior leaders, it's up to you to pull everything back together.
- **Celebrate everything.** Not only does frequent recognition keep motivation and morale high, the gatherings provide an opportunity to remind teams of the goal, how they align to it, and how everyone plays an important role in the process.

### About Coca-Cola TCCA and MR

Turkey, Caucasus, and Central Asia (TCCA) is a business unit of the Coca-Cola Company, managing the ubiquitous brand's presence in the TCCA region of Eurasia. Although best known for Coca-Cola, the Coca-Cola Company also manufactures and distributes popular brands such as Sprite, Dasani, Fanta, Fairlife, Gold Peak, Honest Tea, Minute Maid, Odwalla, Powerade, and more.

McKinney Rogers (MR) is a UK-based business strategy and execution division of global performance improvement provider GP Strategies. Inspired by how special forces are able to effectively execute strategy in highly complex and challenging environments, McKinney Rogers applies a philosophy called MISSION LEADERSHIP to equip business teams with the tools and capabilities to deliver results no matter the challenge. Founded in 1966, GP Strategies is dedicated to delivering innovative strategies that empower organizations to perform above their potential.

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