



Turning Point at the Top: An Executive Team Takes Charge in a New Way

A global manufacturer was in a downward spiral, underperforming and missing targets. Two years later, the company's "turnaround" would be featured in the *New York Times*.



The Challenge

A global manufacturer based in North America requested that JMW provide coaching and consultation for its executive team.

The engagement was prompted by several years of underperformance and missed targets. The company's president engaged JMW for the purpose of gaining alignment within the executive team and better leading the organization, particularly in business areas where performance was below expectations.

Among other factors, it was the president's impression that individuals on the team were not communicating or cooperating as effectively as they could with one another, which was hindering their collective capability to address performance issues.

The Work

An initial assessment of the factors limiting performance indicated that the leaders did not view the new future direction and growth targets as possible and, therefore, could not commit to them.

The first phase of work involved coaching and consulting at the highest levels of the organization, including intensive off-site sessions with the executive team and one-on-one coaching with the president and COO.

After this work produced greater alignment of executive team members, a stronger sense of individual and group accountability, and a culture of commitment, the company broadened its work with JMW to a slightly larger leadership group.

The next phase of work was based on the theory that if the company's top leaders approached their jobs in a manner consistent with the senior team's rigorous new commitment model, the rest of the organization would follow. At the senior team's request, JMW designed and led a two-day offsite leadership development session with company leaders at the director level and above.

The session was designed to:

- Enhance the capabilities of the broader top leadership team
- Build a broader leadership team that operated from a sense of 100 percent responsibility for the organization's success
- Foster a culture of commitment in which people say what they will do and do it

The Results

After what the company president described as "a critical off-site" with the organization's top leaders in the face of a "high level of resistance and cynicism," a key shift occurred. The shift occurred as team members began to see how the president's actions and behaviors embodied the principles being discussed—and that theirs could as well. Leaders now saw the future direction and growth targets as possible, and also saw new pathways for achievement. They began to see themselves as key instruments of change in the company, versus victims of change, and turned the tide in terms of how they worked together and led their teams.

Less than two years later, the company's performance was described in a *New York Times* profile as a "turnaround" story. As JMW's work with the organization continues, its performance is marked by product innovations, priority brand growth, record market shares for four key brands, and market performances that are coming in above target—in some cases double-digit percentages above target.

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