

Turning a Turbulent Corporate Take-Over into a Positive Experience for Staff. How do you get your team to overcome their fear of change?

Stoves plc case study

Guy Weaver, Stoves, Former Sales and Marketing Director

Background/challenges for Stoves:

Stoves the specialist manufacturers of cookers had been through a turbulent time before asking the Graham Keen Partnership to help it find its feet again. Up until 1997 sales were doing very well. The company had gone through a flotation in 1995 and following this hit a period of tremendous growth.

However, this expansion could not be sustained by the company's infrastructure. There were no processes in place to deal with the soaring numbers of customers, so its service levels slipped and Stoves began to lose business. Meanwhile, some competitors from overseas were hitting the market and making quite an impact. The effects of these two factors on Stoves and its employees took its toll and sales began to fall.

The end result was that Stoves' performance declined until it was forced into a take over situation. This sparked widespread fear amongst all of Stoves

employees - redundancies often accompany take-overs. Not only were they depressed about the state of the company, but they feared for their jobs too. Morale hit an all time low.

"Many Sales people seem to naturally lack self-worth," explained Guy. "Much as comics seem to suffer from bouts of serious depression, sales people can be a pessimistic bunch with little self-esteem to take them through the hard times. Add to this the fear of redundancy with falling sales and the atmosphere becomes very black indeed."

Guy needed some external aid to help his team overcome their fear of the recent take-over, to help them move beyond it so they could focus on their future rather than linger on the past and all its problems.

Solution

Guy saw that something radical needed to be done to raise his team's feelings of self-worth, get them achieving once again and working together as a team. He was very clear in his objectives, the problem was finding someone who could help realise these goals.

"The team were taken by surprise when they heard they were to go on the New Impetus® course run by the Graham Keen Partnership," Guy continued. "Previously the company hadn't made training a priority and had spent very little on the team's development. So many of them were looking forward to the course and saw it as a welcome change, although of course

there was the inevitable hard-core of cynics. Amazingly the Graham Keen Partnership managed to convert all of the cynics except for one - quite an achievement!"

New Impetus® runs for two days and then six weeks later a third consolidation day. This enables the delegates to try out the material in their everyday lives and see how they get along. On the third day they discuss their progress and what they found easy or difficult to implement. This is essential if people are going to be successful at working it into their everyday lives.

Why the Graham Keen Partnership?

"I was invited to a breakfast briefing by Graham Keen, the founder of the Graham Keen Partnership," Guy explained. "He was very convincing. He has had an enormous amount of experience in business, having worked for one of the big 5 management consultancies, run his own business, been betrayed by an adviser through fraud, then picked himself up and started all over again. It was obvious he really knew what he was talking about."



"And then he practices what he preaches every day of his life and is obviously thriving on it – the argument is very convincing, and I know sales talk for sales-talk's sake when I see it. It is part of my job!"

"Following a meeting where I outlined my objectives, Graham wrote me a very succinct letter setting out what he understood the issues Stoves was facing to be, and what he could achieve with my team. He showed enormous understanding of both my business and the people involved."

Results on the business...

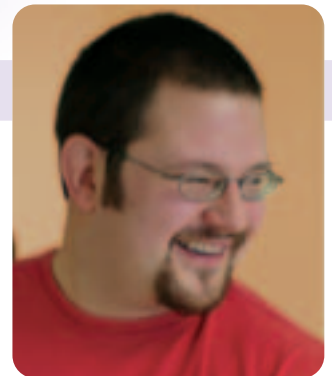
"We are now consistently hitting sales targets for the first time in a very long time," continues Guy. "The first month following the training we exceeded our targets very convincingly. I cannot release exact figures at this time, but performance within my team has improved very significantly. Not only that, but the people working in my team have completely reinvented themselves."

"Whereas before everything was a struggle and seemed impossible to achieve, now confidence is at an all time high. My team believe in themselves and each other and they have a very positive view of the future – the difference to this time last year could not be more stark!"

The reactions of the team:

"Shocked!" Guy tells us. "There were huge issues amongst the team, some personal, some professional and they were all addressed by the course. In the period immediately after the course, and on-going since, there have been some quite dramatic changes within some people. For example, one lady lost her husband to cancer a month before the course. Following the Graham Keen Partnership's work with us she managed to pick herself back up and begin doing things that she never thought she would be able to do again, such as travelling the world. The Graham Keen Partnership has helped her to get through a tremendously difficult time. Another of the team has lost 1 stone in weight since the course and has become incredibly focused at work and much happier at home. The results have had a profound impact on our business, but also on the team as individuals."

Part of the success of the Graham Keen Partnership is that they impact corporate performance by focusing on the individual. They address issues that confront us all - even successful people - such as self-doubt, limiting beliefs, lack of motivation, and frustration. They give delegates the power of knowing why they feel a certain way, and what mental processes are involved in creating their behaviour. In this way they teach people how they can alter these patterns and become altogether more constructive and positive, and achieve stretching goals which previously seemed unrealisable. Self-doubt is replaced by self worth, limiting beliefs by awareness of their true full potential, motivation reaches an all time high, and frustration is wiped out by a deep conviction that they can take control of their own lives, and a growing sense of achievement.



The end result is that the person is happier not just in the work environment, but in every sphere of their life. People who are happy at home and fulfilled in their personal lives are always more productive at work and make better team players.

"We did have to make two people redundant following the take-over," continues Guy. "But following the course they both managed to turn it into an incredibly positive experience. One went on to a more senior role in another company, while the other decided to use the opportunity to realize a dream of his – to run a B&B in Devon."

"The course also enabled me as the director implementing a programme of redundancies to deal with the pressure in a constructive way. By using the skills taught to me by the Graham Keen Partnership the stress has been kept well under control."

"It is now my policy to put all my new recruits through the course as soon as they join my team. It has become an essential support mechanism for us all. Sales are up, self confidence and team spirit continue to improve and my team is self assured and productive. The Graham Keen Partnership has helped Stoves to turn an incredibly difficult time into a positive period of opportunity."

Summary

Problems faced by Stoves:

- Sales were dramatically down
- Sales and Marketing team were very depressed due to the company being take-over
- Self esteem of team members at an all time low
- Widespread fear of redundancy following the take-over
- General fear of the changes that were being thrust upon the team

Sales and Marketing Director's objectives:

- To restore team's feelings of self-esteem
- To get team members to start looking at the take-over as a positive thing for them and the company
- To furnish the team with personal skills so that they could cope with the imminent period of change
- To bring the team's concentration to the future rather than lingering on all the bad that was now in the past
- To improve performance and productivity

Solution:

- Bring in an external consultant and change specialist to help turn the situation around
- Enter the Graham Keen Partnership, a company specialising in helping corporations work through periods of change, whilst improving morale and motivation and bringing stunning results to the bottom line
- All the team went through three days of New Impetus® with the Graham Keen Partnership employing easy to use models based on cognitive and behavioural psychology, modern mind-brain and goal theories, and 1990's break-throughs in neuroscience. The impact on the individuals, the team, and consequently on sales were staggering.

Why did Stoves choose the Graham Keen Partnership?

- Graham Keen, the founder and managing partner of the Graham Keen Partnership is an experienced businessman, having worked as a senior manager with Ernst & Young, and been managing, financial and commercial director of several companies. He has an in-depth understanding of modern organisations and an intuitive insight into business issues.
- He lives and breathes what he and his colleagues teach. Once you meet him, you see how well he looks on it, and you can't help wanting a bit for yourself and your team.

