



# CASE STUDY

## WOW – Taking the Bite Out of Change



### SITUATION

Fundamental changes in the global business environment, specifically in the snack-food industry, had a profound impact on performance. These changes shook this newly spun-off global company's confidence as they faced multiple industry-specific economic challenges:

- Between 2008 and 2012, growth in snack-food categories slowed from over 6% to about 4%.
- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in emerging markets lagged; with that change, consumer demand slowed dramatically.
- A strong dollar competed against almost every major foreign currency.

### The Challenge

To mitigate external challenges, the company focused on what could be controlled internally, driving top-tier financial performance and creating a great place to work. In 2014, four key areas were targeted for transformation:

- Focus on portfolio.
- Reinvent the supply chain.
- Create best-in-class cost leadership.
- Change how the company works.

A **BOTTOM-UP/TOP-DOWN** approach was taken to build HR WOW, striving to **ENABLE ENGAGEMENT** across regions and build **NEW CONNECTIONS**



Achieving these goals required every function, department, and business unit to look in the mirror and ask, “How can we be better fit to win? How can we improve operations, drive more standardization and simplification, provide cost savings, and still create a great place to work?”

The company’s human resources (HR) department looked inward and found:

- Confusion resulted from a lack of global alignment in standard protocol. Typical “ways of working” weren’t working.
- HR processes had not been completely mapped, creating variation in the application of guidelines and processes.
- Clarity and communication on future-state roles and responsibilities had not been provided consistently across the regions, resulting in inconsistencies in how future-work state was defined.
- The interactions and responsibilities between the HR operating model functions and the internal business units were not clear and created disconnections.
- Interaction between the line managers and the HR functions differed, creating inconsistent responses to business needs.
- Many repeatable, standardized operations were moved to shared-service delivery centers, creating confusion with who would be doing what.

The longer the company delayed in defining ways of working, the more customization, complexity, and uncertainty were created for HR and their business unit colleagues.

It was clear that a solution was needed to bring the regions together for consensus; the company needed an evolved operating model. The call was for a global strategic change management program: HR Ways of Working (HR WOW).

## GP Strategies® Solution

GP Strategies acted as a trusted advisor in the change management program and process, supporting the development of the HR core content and responsibilities. We partnered with the snack company on design and created collaborative, interactive virtual instructor-led training (VILT), and in 2017, GP Strategies’ HR WOW solution received a Brandon Hall award. Brandon Hall is a research organization focused on excellence.

A bottom-up/top-down approach was used to build HR WOW, striving to enable engagement across regions, build new connections, and foster internal, region-specific change agents who can support the program’s adoption pre- and post-rollout.

Subject matter experts (SMEs) from global regions were selected to participate in the development of HR WOW across several HR processes, resulting in the production of core content responsibilities, alignment assignments, decision-making matrices, and role and responsibility summaries. The respective HR process owners reviewed and approved all core content and training materials.

The VILT modules use real-life scenarios and interactive activities to enable dialogue across HR functions. This empowers colleagues to develop greater individual and collective clarity on the evolving standards of working. The training supports individuals in exploring the activities they may need to implement or curtail to work effectively and efficiently as “one HR function” within the HR Operating Model.

When the first course, Fundamentals, was created and delivered, the program aligned everyone in the HR organization. It provided an overview of the program and introduced and reviewed the decision-making matrices and HR Operating Model and its roles. Real-life scenarios fostered dialogue on previously sticky topic areas. Regular opportunities for self-reflection were threaded throughout, allowing participants to create a personalized, adaptable action plan to power them through the changes.

We followed Fundamentals with six individual HR functions VILT courses. These courses focused on the new ways of working and how they impacted specific processes, illustrated role clarity, and provided an opportunity to review new WOW through scenarios and decision rights matrices. These courses also provided self-reflective opportunities to create personalized action plans.

The training was delivered regionally to all HR colleagues; more than 26 countries within North America, Latin America, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Asia Pacific participated in the training. Regional SMEs facilitated the sessions, which served as an excellent method of building engagement locally and empowering leaders to live the new ways of working. All HR colleagues were invited to participate in training.

The company had a newly launched internal learning university; to this point, the HR function had not used it for any interactive VILT courses. The HR WOW curriculum was the first training curriculum deployed using the university. University participants received credit, which could be tracked in the learning history, as an incentive to take the courses.

Many regions provided the same HR WOW training sessions in multiple languages (in Latin America, for example, many sessions were offered in both Spanish and Portuguese). All of the training content was made accessible on a central site, allowing local HR colleagues content access for use in ongoing training or review.

#### Details:

- Number of employees involved with the implementation: 1 HR Change Management Program lead, 1 HR executive sponsor, 2 learning administration specialists, and approximately 50 SMEs
- Number of contractors: 1 from GP Strategies
- Timeframe to implement: 9 months to design and develop core materials and training; 6 months to roll out training

## Business Impact

As defined HR WOW emerged, colleagues were supported to better understand how HR is evolving as a function (its future state) and what to start and stop doing individually and collectively to work as “one HR function.” This empowered colleagues to deliver against business priorities and needs. Clarifying HR roles and responsibilities is also a prerequisite for building HR capabilities—a critical priority for the function and fundamentals to building a great place to work for all, including HR colleagues.

Implementing the HR WOW program with GP Strategies provided the opportunity to work with SMEs to review and assess the roles and the decision-making rights for many HR processes. This approach provoked challenging conversations that illuminated previously murky processes and helped delineate clear decision-rights matrices. These matrices defined HR responsibilities with their business partners. By creating the learning program, HR fostered the business conversations that drove the pursuit of clarity and resolution.

This clarity of function, process, and role has proved value to the individual employees, the HR function, and global regions. This clarity has helped the company to:

- Design “one version of the truth” of HR WOW for HR processes end-to-end (E2E).
- Provide absolute clarity on roles and responsibilities across all three functions of the HR Operating Model.
- Define the new WOW along with roles and responsibilities as employees and line managers interface with HR.

Because it has impacted the HR teams’ ability to perform their roles, as well as the effectiveness of business units around the globe, the HR WOW program has been a high-priority strategic initiative every year. Since the release of the HR Operating Model, the success of HR WOW enabled the company’s leadership to remove it as a strategic priority to address as business critical—a result of achieving its goal.

#### Details:

The program was successfully launched to a global audience in 26 countries. The development process created regionally centered advocates of the HR WOW program, processes, operating model, and roles. These advocates supported the facilitation and implementation of the program, at times holding ad hoc working sessions after the training to explore the decision-making matrices to ensure alignment and understanding. The learners found the program highly beneficial to their everyday role activities. The clarity around roles and responsibilities for processes enabled HR to work effectively, better serving business unit colleagues.

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The company recognized the benefits of bringing together geographically dispersed HR personnel to learn the “one version of the truth” on how colleagues should work within the HR Operating Model now and in the future.

Level 1 evaluations confirm that learners have increased awareness of the key HR WOW program and generally rated the programs as “effective” or “very effective.” Comments obtained on the evaluation indicated that content was relevant and added value, including:

“Great and interactive!”

“Great session! Outstanding versus previous Lync training sessions!”

“Great induction and reminders for HR colleagues on role expectations, gives, and gets.”

“Great to get everyone on the same page using consistent language!”

“Great session for HR managers, HR generalists!”

“Great stuff! Love to see the alignment of the HR team!”

“Good information for a newcomer like myself!”

“Very useful real-life situations and examples!”

“Engaging, timely, and relevant!”

Since the training rollout, many HR regional leaders have leveraged the HR WOW training content to further train intact teams and to onboard new HR colleagues from recently acquired companies.

The company also saw benefits in an increased collaboration with HR leadership to align and live within the defined decision rights. Because previous change programs did not always have senior leadership as the approvers, leadership appreciated the opportunity to provide input and reflect on what their new roles and decision rights would be. Engaging senior stakeholders throughout the process also allowed for buy-in and sponsorship of the program that, in turn, helped increase attendance.

In light of the clarified benefits and vision for the program, HR employees and functions became more engaged in the change-management process, developing a willingness to engage in difficult conversations and working sessions. By taking the time to prioritize and secure agreement on different organizational levels and across regions, the company produced sustainable, integrated change with clarity and buy-in from HR colleagues. SMEs, stakeholders, employees, and leadership agreed that the result was valuable to the individual HR employees and functions by enhancing their working life and that of their business unit colleagues.

HR WOW, the change management process we co-created, is now embraced as the best-practice model within the company. Other functions use the process to help clarify their new ways of working as a result of major organizational transformation, furthering the reputation of HR as a valued business partner.

The company learned that having a trusted advisor in learning and change management program implementation was valuable for insight, brainstorming, perspective, and clarity in the internal process creation as well as learning development and deployment.

For more information on designing effective  
**CHANGE MANAGEMENT** programs, visit  
[www.gpstrategies.com/solution/organization-leadership-development](http://www.gpstrategies.com/solution/organization-leadership-development)

## About GP Strategies

Founded in 1966, GP Strategies delivers performance improvement programs that strategically align with your unique business objectives and differentiate your global workforce, leaders and salespeople to ensure business excellence. Our sole focus is performance improvement, and everything we do, from technical and compliance training to process improvement and human capital technology integration, is focused on helping your organization deliver meaningful results. Visit [gpstrategies.com](http://gpstrategies.com) for more information.

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