

Case Study - Thomas

CHALLENGE

Thomas was a multi-unit manager for a national retailer responsible for more than 20 food and beverage outlets in the south-west of England. When the development programme commenced, sales in Thomas's region were almost £500,000 lower year on year and profit was more than £350,000 below budget.

ACTION

The programme helped Thomas to identify both the root causes of the negative trends and the profitable growth opportunities in his units. At the same time, Thomas began to reappraise his own approach to managing his team using the Critical Impact Activities essential to his role as a Multi-Unit Manager.

- Joint analysis with MMU revealed that Thomas's unit managers lacked commercial awareness and did not 'own' their financial results. It also identified the 'Big Rocks' that needed to be prioritised in units showing the most negative trends.
- Thomas began to actively involve his managers and their teams in all aspects of the business trading plan he was developing. By introducing regular 'You talk, I listen' sessions, Thomas captured ideas for local improvements and influenced initiatives from head office.
- Early on, Thomas realised there was an opportunity to improve the quality and margin of several lines (such as muffins and cookies) bought in from external suppliers. By taking production in-house the team reduced costs and improved quality, resulting in higher sales. Another benefit was the real sense of pride it created amongst the team that in turn led to higher sales from suggestive selling.
- Adopting a more structured approach to unit visits, Thomas spent time reviewing each manager's daily checks of operational standards. Significantly, this revealed that staff on some shifts did not know their sales targets. Thomas went about correcting this by coaching his managers to focus on these gaps in their internal communication and to follow-up afterwards.
- Using MMU's 'People Inventory' process, Thomas identified strengths in his management team and areas requiring development. He adopted the 'Rule of 7' approach to succession planning and encouraged his managers to carry out their own people inventories to identify development goals achievable within a clear time frame. The resulting pipeline of more able managers helped consolidate and sustain the gains flowing from Thomas's own development as a leader of managers.

OUTCOME

Spurred by Thomas's proactive and engaging management style, unit managers instigated their own initiatives, based on their better understanding of their business. They also showed greater commitment to implementing these ideas effectively.

The financial year following the programme saw a sharp turnaround in the performance of the south-west region. Sales rose to almost £280,000 above target, while the previous year's loss turned into a profit of £70,000.

The impact on staff development was also dramatic, as the proportion of internal promotions more than doubled from 35% to 90% of all manager appointments.