

DEVELOPING ALIGNMENT DESPITE GROWTH AND CHANGE

Case Study 117

The Situation

One of the **largest parking and transportation services corporations in North America was experiencing growing pains**. Over the previous several years the corporation had expanded significantly through mergers and acquisitions. They now operated almost 2000 parking facilities for major airports, property owners, medical centers, educational institutions, and special events providers.

Though the corporation had a solid customer base, it was struggling financially; it had accrued a considerable debt as a result of its rapid growth. Additionally, although the corporation prided itself on its entrepreneurial spirit, encouraging regional managers to be accountable for the facilities in their areas, this proved problematic when the **newly acquired parts of the organization expected to continue to do business as they always had**, and prevented consistency and economies of scale. There was a **significant lack of alignment and momentum** when it came to achieving expected economies and producing future results

Work of Best Year Yet

We began to work with the executive leadership team of this corporation with the **objective of strengthening their performance**. The breakthrough for this company occurred during the Best Year Yet planning session when the team identified the limiting paradigm that was underlying their business practices. That entrepreneurial spirit was a positive force, and may have been locally advantageous, but it was also causing **an ongoing sense of “us vs. them”** among groups in different regions or from different parent organizations. **Trust levels were low, and employees were not empowered to take ownership for results** (ironically, the opposite of their entrepreneurial intentions).

During the Best Year Yet Team Program workshop, the leadership team created a new paradigm of *“We win when we trust, empower, and commit to each other.”* With this paradigm as a context for their work together, **the team acknowledged that they were using their differences as excuses for not achieving results**, rather than viewing them as assets that could add strength to their performance together.

The Results

The direct results produced in the first three years included **significantly reducing the corporate debt levels, and successfully taking the company public**. Furthermore, the corporation was able to sustain its growth through predictable operational results.

Other results were equally as valuable to the success of the company. The **corporate culture shifted from a hierarchical, command-and-control model to a more collaborative, empowering team model**. This shift contributed to the practical, effective development of its leaders, and **strengthened team behavior**. **In the words of the CEO, they “narrowed the gap between what they say they will do and what they actually accomplish”**.

Their continued progress since they began the program has helped them **gain respect and confidence from their investor community, their clients and their own employees**.