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# THE IMPACT OF COMPANY CULTURE ON TEAM PERFORMANCE WITHIN A SMALL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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— *I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value.*



*Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., Former CEO of IBM*

A private accounting firm expanded its business and hired a few remote working consultants to assist with the overflow of work. The director of the company had started the business seven years ago. She had always managed office-based employees or people who were known to her before them acquiring positions at the accounting firm. A company culture was undefined in its time of existence and the company began to experience a few communication issues and team conflicts. Those issues then impacted negatively on customer service. The business owner called in HappyFactory to investigate and advise on best practices.





## Executive Summary

This case study follows the cultural management process of an accounting firm based in South Africa. The firm focused on supplying accounting services to other small to medium-sized companies within Africa. The recent acquisition of consultants to aid the increasing workload of the growing business led to internal staff disputes. There was also an increase in customer complaints due to poor service delivery. There were many differences in the expectations of consultant's vs employees viz: HR practices, markets served and leadership philosophies. Implementation of a HappyFactory people strategy was integral to the culture change and the rapid increase in performance.

Melissa Subban has a long history with working with teams and change management within different environments. This report aims to share this experience with you, in the hope that it will help you develop or revise your team engagement protocols and company culture.

## Challenges

- The team was accustomed to "just getting it done" and doing what needed to be done which meant that they were in a constant state of crises management.
- Previous engagement practices were weekly team meetings and daily engagements as and when it was required.
- All items that needed to be discussed or disputed were presented in a Monday morning meeting. A single laptop was utilised to connect the team that were office-based to those that were remote based.
- Customer complaints started trickling in, which was managed by the business owner and not shared openly with the team.
- Differences in operating styles, as well as a natural disconnect due to the blended team, was prevalent.

## Approach & Solution

HappyFactory applied its proven methodology to establish an overarching culture and unify any team members that felt excluded:

"NO COMPANY, SMALL OR LARGE, CAN WIN OVER THE LONG RUN WITHOUT ENERGISED EMPLOYEES WHO BELIEVE IN THE MISSION AND UNDERSTAND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT."

Jack Welch, former General Electric CEO

- CEO engagement commenced, and she was requested to start from scratch to develop a set of core values, purpose statement and goals. To ensure buy-in, the operations manager was included in the process and a survey was sent out to obtain feedback from the employees.
- A separate coaching style engagement was held with the leadership team on the connection between culture, values, and the new identity elements as well as Organisational design. A [team canvas](#) was utilised for the leadership team to fill in.
- A virtual meeting was held where all the delegates that attended were required to use their video conferencing software to ensure an even playing field and to knock down any silos that may have been created.
- Concurrently, a [personal values](#) session was incorporated into the team gel session to ensure that individuals understood what their personal attributes were before guiding them to relate it to that of the company. As this was a small business, the employees could be engaged on what was holding them back from being fully present and to thoroughly understand their personal motivations for staying with the company. Some were motivated by money, others were not. Some were motivated by meaning and purpose. Others had difficulty letting go or faced the fear of the unemployment rates in South Africa.
- One on one coaching was available to the leadership team during the implementation period to ensure that any issues that arose were dealt with immediately. The one on one coaching included communication style, tonality, virtual visible leadership and communication planning for the sustainability of the team canvas that was implemented.



## services

