



Achieve Breakthrough

# Case Study

## HP Bulmers Cider Makers – A Higher Purpose For Business

Bulmers is a leading player in the 'Long Alcoholic Drinks' (LAD) market. The business formerly focussed solely on financial visions, seeking much of its growth latterly from acquisitions. Despite market pressures, Bulmers has 60% of the cider market in the UK and its leading brand Strongbow is the only non-beer in the LAD top 10. However margins continue to be eroded and their products commoditised. Overseas especially, competition is ferocious and margins are declining while market expenditures are increasing.

Bulmers, in order to redefine itself from competitors, searched to adopt a wider focus for the business beyond profit. The possibility that presented itself as a higher purpose of the business was Sustainability, making it a defining feature of Bulmers, a core source of competitive advantage and increasing shareholder value.

### The Challenge

The challenge to engage employees and encourage the whole company to embrace sustainability as a higher purpose for Bulmers was a steep one. On a 'values level' the company was largely there. But the biggest hurdle Bulmers could see was establishment at a strategic level. That meant making it relevant to the internal and external strategic business promises.

### The Building Blocks

Breakthrough supported Bulmers through the development of the foundation for the journey on sustainable development by designing and researching stages of the program, facilitating workshops and developing and coaching Breakthrough projects.

- Developed a 'Greenhouse' Paper, exploring the meaning of Sustainability for Bulmers, its business opportunity, support to financial targets and the critical infrastructure needed.
- The two-year Achieve Breakthrough Culture Change Programme already in place formed a foundation for further development – "the culture had transformed dramatically from a fixed, slow and bureaucratic culture to an empowered, energised and innovative culture allowing the company to be more fluid, responsive and act with pace." (Rob Garner)
- Formation of a Research Group involving employees across all levels of the business - to explore further the meaning of sustainability in every area of the business.
- Six Breakthrough Projects were generated including 75% reduction in transport, a Zero Waste initiative, Renewable Energy targets and 20% of Bulmers workforce involved in community projects, all to be achieved within 3 years. Achieve Breakthrough trained coaches, facilitators and teamed up with project owners to engage teams, engender 'out-of-the-box' ideas and co-ordinate strategic and focussed action.
- Engagement of Senior Managers through a series of facilitated workshops enquiring into Sustainability as a real business opportunity, establishing its criticality to staying in business and creating relevance to current business challenges.

- Four-day Sustainability Event – a workshop to engage external expertise to brainstorm ‘what transforming to a sustainable enterprise would entail’. The event, facilitated by the Rocky Mountain Institute, attracted some top names in corporate sustainability, one hundred Bulmers employees and community representatives. Achieve Breakthrough supported the design and co-ordination of the event and led breakout workshops.

### **The Results**

- Bulmers took giant leaps on the journey of Sustainable Development:
  - Created a new vision/strategy created based on consumer insight, being different and delivering wealth on a triple-bottom-line of corporate responsibility
  - Compiled the first green accounts compiled to begin to measure the impact of Bulmers on the triple bottom line and also to stimulate new investment funds for future sustainable projects
  - Dedicated resources allocated to the initiative - a sustainability director and a sustainability manager
- Engaged and inspired staff - by entwining personal values with those at work, the company has opened up a culture in the organisation where employees challenge and demonstrate extraordinary commitment driven from their integrity to deep and aligned values.
- Established a Bulmer Foundation to investigate sustainable ways of living and working whilst prompting a shift in human understanding and values. It also holds a vision for Herefordshire being a model rural sustainability county and for H P Bulmer to be a model sustainability organisation, both to be replicable elsewhere.

### **The Future Possibilities**

- Opportunities from the four day Sustainability workshop emerged including:
  - A partial switch to rail for incoming materials and outgoing stocks, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 80%
  - Consumer recycling initiative
  - Effluent on-site treatment scheme
  - Development of a new revenue stream. The culturing of Shiitake Mushrooms using apple tree pruning from Herefordshire’s orchards as a substrate
  - New product innovation and creative routes to market

*"Several factors appear to have made the crucial difference in Bulmers – one of which being the chief executive, who signalled his arrival by launching a culture change program with Achieve Breakthrough, which encouraged employees to bring their values to work. This allowed people in the company to connect at a new, different level, questioning and challenging the purpose of our business."*

#### **Charlie Bower, H P Bulmers Ltd, Sustainability Director**

*"Embarking on a profound culture-change program, we inevitably began a dialogue around corporate purpose, with the enticement and support of Achieve Breakthrough, this lead us to ‘Purpose and Sustainability’ as emerging themes for Bulmer’s future."*

#### **Rob Garner, H P Bulmers Ltd, HR Director**