



Achieve Breakthrough

# Case Study

## **Smith & Nephew Wound Management - Hull Site Operations**

*Achieve Breakthrough provided a leadership Programme to enable a high-performance culture and achieve ground-breaking results. This case study shows how Smith & Nephew applied Breakthrough thinking to address a significant setback in achieving an ambitious business plan.*

Smith & Nephew Hull Site Operations, the largest manufacturing site for Smith & Nephew Wound Management, embarked on a substantial transformation agenda to produce a breakthrough in productivity, create a right-first-time culture and high Service reputation whilst making a 20% cost-base reduction over 3 years. Midway through the 1st year of business plan delivery they found themselves behind the cost-base reduction plan with a £0.6m overspend in operational expenses.

### **The challenge**

To continue with the Transformational Business Plan they needed to uphold confidence in delivery to maintain ongoing support and investment from the Global Business.

The real challenge was to find creative solutions to the problem that would deliver fast results, challenge team behaviour and approach to issues, disrupt the status quo by uncovering assumptions and thinking that had become locked in operational processes.

The Site Culture was characterised as 'treacle' in that it was constrained, functional, bureaucratic, short-term, focussed around fixes, fire fighting, a sense of people 'making do with what we have' and elements of mistrust at various levels.

### **The Solution**

From embarking on Achieve Breakthrough Leadership development programme, the team generated a tough joint commitment and a way of working to close the cost base gap to hit budget which set the scene for a future way of operating.

### **The Team and New Thinking**

With the support of Achieve Breakthrough one-to-one and group Coaching: -

- The team dropped any functional territorial behaviour and approached the problem from a group and process perspective
- Generated a joint tough commitment that focussed and prioritised opportunities that would collectively make a big enough impact in a short space of time
- Developed the relationships across boundaries to implement ideas in breakthrough time
- Identified and confronted setbacks quickly without blame
- Challenged spending habits, assumptions and behaviour patterns that inhibited progress
- Managed their promises and made powerful requests of one another increasing accountability and 'delivering on what we say'

## Monitoring and Focus

- The team adopted a mechanism to focus and coach teams, this allowed for: -
  - Focussed conversations that impact 'the gap' - cutting out unhelpful conversations such as justifications, rationalisations and excuses that can distort the picture and replacing them with specific fact-based, possibility and committed conversations
  - Activities to be valued and acted upon appropriately within a determined timescale
  - 'Inactivity' to be quickly identified and rectified
  - Empowerment of the team through enquiry, learning, making decisions, allowing them to change direction quickly and consider taking action that may previously have been seen as 'risky' or 'impossible'
- The Project Champion and his team had regular reviews with cross-functional sub-teams weekly to support people to make sustainable changes to ways of operating, by:
  - Spreading energy and enthusiasm to maintain momentum
  - Uncovering limiting assumptions and blocks to foster unconstrained thinking
  - Holding people to account for delivery and results

This culture and way of working was a long way away from the 'treacle' they felt they had to wade through to make changes.

## The Results

The results were extraordinary as traditionally the team would have focussed on their individual functions and numbers to deliver isolated improvement ideas, with little understanding of the big picture. The benefits were as follows:-

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Permission to Play</b>       | Results were noticeable within 2 months and spending was in control and delivered its target, retrieving £600k predicted overspend for the year – allowing for the continuation of the World-Class Vision and Business Plan. |
| <b>Sustained Improvements</b>   | In mid year two, cost-base savings were ahead of target, allowing us to react to unanticipated events and support other areas of the Business Plan.                                                                          |
| <b>Responsiveness and Focus</b> | The team confirmed the new approach as the 'modus operandi' for the future – embedding team behaviours, committed focus and measurement on all key business measures.                                                        |
| <b>Organisation Capability</b>  | People have been developed at all levels through active participation and learning.                                                                                                                                          |

*"The Breakthrough way of working has become normal practice for us now and the rigour and behavioural change would not have happened in the past if we hadn't embarked on the Achieve Breakthrough Leadership Programme; it's a way of life that is impacting our approach throughout the whole site."*

**Peter Connor, Smith & Nephew Operations Finance and Transformation Manager Hull Site**