

# CEO Worldwide Success Story

*Sharing experiences is the best way to learn faster and make lesser mistakes. When your boss is a real leader, he inspires you, he trusts you, he mentors you. I had that chance several times across my career and appreciate to share an experience of a lifetime with you.*

## The Challenge:

The multinational organisation active in 100 countries was delivering the reliable traditional barcode solution every shopper knows, and quite successfully. While the best business books authors agree on 2 things:

- a) **to succeed**, a company must have an helicopter view on what it is doing and how
- b) **to survive**, a company must have a Strategic Planning process that forces a constant business transformation process.

In fact, in 2001, the organisation had none of the two.

For 25 years, the barcode you see on the products in the supermarket had been THE solution and it would stay that way for ever, people thought. Reality was that while the organisation was researching ways to introduce more technology in the barcode, it had not seen the need to partner with the inventors of what has now become the Radio Frequency based barcode, set to replace one day the good old black & white stripes.

## So the mission was... Turnaround the organisation.

Sure, but what does this mean? It meant making it capable to respond to customer expectations (we were too slow), remove bureaucracy (that's what our clients said), bring in talent, introduce performance measurement, make staff customer-satisfaction oriented, introduce strategic planning, restructure to make the company more agile and inspire people!

## The Approach:

I used a methodology that had done wonders at previous employers: the conduct of an Internal and External Audit for my first "100" days combined with another 100 days of very Hard Work.

**Step 1: time to listen and understand.** Talking with staff of ALL management layers and many countries, identify opinion leaders and showstoppers within the network, assess the talent level of the troops, inventorise all core activities and identify targets for suppression.

**Step 2: time for action.** Set up a worldwide Strategic Plan Task Force of 12 Country CEOs from all regions. We gave ourselves 6 months to come up with a 360 degrees assessment of the company and so we did. All activity areas were listed, weighed and prioritised. As a group, we eventually all saw the trees that were covering the forest.

## The Solution:

- The organisation went through a worldwide strategic planning process, involving both the Headquarter and the offices across the network.
  - 3-year Strategic Plan with Business Plans for each core business units.
  - Implementation guidelines pushed through the country level.
- The organisation became truly global when the US partner, who historically stayed outside the network, eventually decided to join in 2003.
- The organisation signed a joint venture with the MIT for commercialisation of the RFID barcode, called EPC (electronic Product Code), hereby securing for decades the existence of the organisation.

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## The Results:

Transform the organisation into a world-class service led multinational. This has proved to be an “Everyday and Everywhere” type of effort, which requires relentless commitment from the Board and the Senior Management team.

## The Learning Points:

- 1° What matters most is not so much to BE right, it is that stakeholders believe that what you do really IS right.
- 2° Question “Status Quo”, and while driving the train of change, make sure your passengers have not left the carriage under way.
- 3° Believe in your-self and in others.

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