

CQ Case Study:

Cross-Functional Project Teams at a Food Manufacturer Implement a New Learning Strategy to Enable Business Expansion

Wells Enterprises Inc., which produces the Blue Bunny[®] brand of ice cream, is based in LeMars, Iowa, making that town the “Ice Cream Capital of the World.”

With nearly a hundred years of history and 2500 full-time and temporary employees in Iowa and Utah, Wells has faced challenges common to most manufacturers: the press of daily deadlines and crises interferes with their ability to plan for the long-term; their cyclical business’s peaks and valleys of demand places stress on staffing levels and bench strength; and distinct facilities that operate independently make it difficult to effect change efficiently and uniformly across the company.

One key way Wells is overcoming these challenges is by launching a mission-critical initiative. They chartered Learning and Development Teams to create standard tools and supporting materials that will enable company leaders to initiate needed projects, quickly train new employees and keep day-to-day operations in line with the overall company strategy.

And, to enable them to more effectively lead this Learning and Development initiative, they are utilizing the CQ[®] System.

The CQ System begins with a 15-minute CQ Assessment that analyzes an individual’s change leadership style, followed by a workshop that explains how the results affect the company’s culture and approach to change and what can be done to ensure that future outcomes do not repeat past mistakes or frustrations.

Clarence Trowbridge, Manager of Learning & Development at Wells, asserts that the CQ System is the only one he has ever participated in that focuses on the combination of change management and leadership. “None of the people on the teams were surprised by the results of their CQ Assessment. They were surprised that the CQ System showed them how to do something about it to improve their effectiveness as leaders. Barbara’s CQ System takes the CQ Assessment to an entirely new level, drawing insights out of the tool and out of the individuals who take it.”

As Trautlein explains, “I met with the Learning and Development Teams at Wells to deliberate the results of their CQ Assessments. The Assessments established that the company was very people-centered but had very few Executors and Drivers to plan and complete projects efficiently. This finding led to insights about why so many at the company were frustrated with ‘flavor of the month’ dynamics where change just doesn’t seem to stick.” Together, Trautlein and the team members discussed these tendencies and ways to deal with them.

“There are many hidden costs in a change that goes wrong,” says Trautlein. “There’s the cost of damage control; of repeated failed attempts, draining both resources and morale; and of missed opportunities.” By using the CQ System, Wells was able to:

- Define the company culture in regard to change intelligence
- Look at how existing leadership styles and skills could be leveraged to benefit the team and the company
- Identify leadership gaps and then fill them
- Plan for successful change

Define the Company’s CQ Culture

When it comes to long-term planning, Trowbridge explains, “Wells is a go-get-it-done kind of company. It doesn’t mean we don’t look at the long term, but halfway through one project we often need to shift gears into something else that needs to be done. We have most of the key decision makers on board with a 3-year learning and

development strategy. With the CQ Assessment, I'm trying to understand everyone's fears and focus on talking to them. When I understand, I can negotiate with them: 'Let's do this much now and then see what we can do next.'"

The CQ System also delivered immediate practical results for Jim Zynda, Freezer Supervisor. "Most assessments, you receive information and ask, 'Now what do I do to get where I need to be?' Barbara's process was different. For example, I tend to get caught up in the day-to-day and lose sight of the long-term strategy. We had a project where we were floundering a little bit mostly because we needed to drive harder toward the long-term goal. I followed up with Barbara on some time management skills. Now we're making really good progress."

He continues, "I've worked with other consultants and they were very focused on their own process. Barbara looks at the processes we're already using and how we can make them better. She does due diligence; she understands where we are going and she gets people moving in the same direction. We have engineers, managers, factory people, supervisors—and our goal is to standardize what hasn't been standardized. She's been instrumental in getting us there."

Leverage Existing Strengths

The CQ Assessment identified Chris Healy, Human Resource Business Partner, as an Adapter, someone who is flexible about working in changing environments and able to see multiple viewpoints at once. In the past she had felt that her abilities were a drawback; thanks to the CQ Assessment she was able to see them as strengths that were essential to the team. She says, "Now I know that I can act as a conduit between people with different views of change and bring them together. I'm a mediator. I'm open to listening to ideas and seeing the merits of both sides. I can say, 'Let's pick the best approach and make it happen.' The CQ Assessment tells you who you are and what you can do; it's a very empowering document."

Healy is eager to bring the CQ System into the Wells facility in Utah. "We have changing personnel, changing policies, changing lines in the plant, and our growth initiative is a huge change. Because we're a remote site, it will be helpful to know what styles and skill sets we have right here to help us get through the changes."

Identify and Fill Leadership Gaps

Senior Director of Reliability and Engineering, Lyle Loutsch says, "The CQ Assessment gives you an awareness of the people you're working with and how different players are thinking about changes. You might view other people as not being on the same page. In reality, we all want the same thing but we're not talking about it in the same way. The CQ Assessment and the follow-up meetings let us get aligned. In the past, if my message wasn't received in a positive way, I would be scratching my head over why it went so poorly. I ended up doing damage control."

Loutsch states, "When you go through the CQ process, you get an awareness of the people you're working with and where their reference point is. You understand how different players are thinking about change. Change Intelligence measures how broadly you look at the different constituents of the change and how you frame it with team members or the people you're delivering the message to. You have the greatest success when you look at all the components."

Trowbridge himself discovered through the CQ Assessment that "I'm pretty good at strategy and vision but I need to pay attention to people's feelings. I'm trying to ask the questions that give me more information about the attitudes and perceptions of others toward a change. There are people on my team who are better at that. I've told them I need you in our meetings to remind me to find out what people are feeling. I'm enlisting others to help."



Plan for Successful Change

For Wells, the CQ Assessment and the workshops led by Trautlein provided a new outlook on change leadership and opportunities for success that did not exist before. “The Learning and Development Teams are well poised to achieve the company’s vision within their ambitious timeframe – and moreover, to sustain the changes into the future,” says Trautlein. “The CQ Assessment gave the teams a language for discussing change and looking objectively at the past. The workshops guided the teams in using the resulting insights to the company’s best advantage. We looked at training, budgeting, personnel and leadership issues before they could become crises. The team developed their Change Intelligence, enabling them to deliver ‘heart, head and hands’ messages at the right time, to the right people, in the right ways. The CQ System allowed Wells to plan for change in a way that helps ensure success for everyone involved.”