

Innovative Management Consulting and Training Solutions to Optimize Organizational Performance for Global Companies



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- Michael Stanleigh

CEOCFO: *Mr. Stanleigh, what is the idea behind Business Improvement Architects?*

Mr. Stanleigh: We formed the company over 20 years ago to provide innovative consulting and training solutions to optimize organizational performance. In our experience, we have found that we can incorporate research learning and knowledge of global best practices in our work to ensure the effectiveness of how organizations are performing. That includes strategic planning, strategic management, quality management and some in the area of innovation as well. We work all over the world, not only in North America. We have worked in Malaysia, in the Middle East, China and in Europe. All of our associates have quite a bit of global experience.

CEOCFO: *What are a couple examples of when a company might turn to you and what their situation is, what you look at and how you come up with a solution?*

Mr. Stanleigh: One example is Zodiac Aerospace, a French company that's a world leader in supplying aeronautical systems for commercial aircrafts and a major player in aviation security. Due to their highly specialized market, not everyone has heard of them, however, they have a huge global reach. When Boeing was making their new Dreamliner aircraft, which was considerably larger than anything prior, they asked Zodiac to make their safety slides much larger and stronger but lighter as well. For Zodiac, this was an incredible innovation challenge and they struggled with it. So they asked for our help. We went in to lead them through an effective innovation process that would allow them to develop this new slide. We worked with them closely to create the business structure and processes they would need to support and sustain an innovation strategy for their organization. Within ten months of our work with them they had managed to come up with the solution for the Dreamliner and filed for a patent.

Another, more recent example is with Ventana Medical Systems, Inc., which is a division of Roche Diagnostics. They are a world leader and innovator of tissue-based diagnostic solutions for patients. Ventana realized that their projects were extremely well-managed but in the pharmaceutical industry there are a lot of risks and they needed a very specific customized approach to analyze and reduce risk management in all of their projects. We provided them with a custom designed project risk management process that was uniquely suited for their needs. As a result, they have saved a huge amount of time, resources and cost in the manufacturing of all of their products by applying our project risk management approach.

CEOCFO: *How much do you need to know about an industry to be effective for a company and how do you learn about the unique characteristics to lead a company in the right direction?*

Mr. Stanleigh: So often organizations will ask if we have really worked in their industry and every time we work with an organization it is often the very first time that we may have worked in that industry. Whether it is manufacturing, pharmaceutical, technology or government, the very first thing we do is go in, and it depends on what the specific need is

but, we will spend two or three days to really understand and examine their documents, history, and philosophy. And we will also interview some of the key members of the team that we are going to be working on just to get a feel. We just seem to have a great knack of getting in there and understanding their culture and approach and appreciating the uniqueness of it rather than coming in with a more packaged approach. With Ventana Medical Systems we did go in and spend two days with them and only then could we properly design something that would be very unique for them. We also worked with The Chamberlain Group and Ingersoll Rand in the same way. We do the same thing with all of them. We go in and have interviews and it is quick but I have found that we are quite adept at managing to truly understand the uniqueness of the organizations we work with regardless of the industry.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to potential clients and jump off the page when someone is looking?*

Mr. Stanleigh: It's challenging. We have tried so many different approaches to marketing as a consulting firm and have found that the only thing that has truly worked for us is having a fabulous website and excellent references. When we ask people how they came to us they often say they found us through the web because they read one of our articles and were looking for something very specific. When I was approached by Roche Diagnostics they told me that they had read our articles about Project Risk Management and found them to be amongst the best that they had seen on the subject. They found our articles through a Google search. Other times, our clients will refer us to another customer and the new company will call us directly explaining that they were referred to us because of the work we had done for the client they know. We have tried hiring marketing people, salespeople and it has never been affective for us. We rely heavily on those two and that is it.

CEOCFO: *Are there types of projects you like or would prefer given a choice?*

Mr. Stanleigh: Each of the resources in my firm has different skills and strengths and so as a firm we are pretty diverse. Just talking about me as a management consultant, I like going in and doing some in-depth analysis in areas where a customer is facing a real challenge, problem and concern. Whether it is on a key business process, on a strategy or on a project. I love to go in and analyze their situation and get to the bottom of the issue. It doesn't take me long; I find within two or three weeks, I can come up with very solid recommendations and actions for how to get the problem situation turned around.

CEOCFO: *Do companies tend to follow your recommendations?*

Mr. Stanleigh: Yes. I find for a couple of reasons, we do not just give recommendations because it is often hard for people to know where to start. So we take it down a level and give the actions to take in order to ensure the recommendations are successfully implemented and give them the order in which to do it. Then we always follow up. We never say here's the report and then that is it. We always follow up to find out how it is going, where the challenges are, what opportunities they have realized. We strive to ensure success. When we do that, there is no charge, we do not look at a clock ticking and there is going to be a cost for how many hours they are spending but we do it because success is so important for them and we want to make sure that they realize those things.

CEOCFO: *Are there some common problems you find that are pretty easy to identify but people miss?*

Mr. Stanleigh: Not really. What I do find to be a common problem is that managers will overlook asking their people what they feel is necessary in order to improve how they work, how they impact their customers (whether they are internal or external) and the level of service they are doing. In my experience, most often, the workers know what the problems are and also have a good idea for possible solutions. For example; if you ask employees about problems in their work environments they will quickly identify that the printer is in the wrong location and question about the way their workstation can be made more ergonomically efficient. Employees have the answers but leaders don't engage them in discussions on how to improve work processes, strategies and so on. Leaders often design new buildings and offices without engaging employees in decisions around their work spaces. Then the employees arrive in their office and complain. If they had the opportunity to view the architectural drawings before the final office design, they'd have ideas on how to improve layouts, the flow of people, work and so on. Employees always feel that leadership makes these decisions because they believe they know exactly what is best for employees – which is rarely the case.

CEOCFO: *Are you still surprised at that?*

Mr. Stanleigh: I am. I do not know why they do it, it does not make any sense, it is costly, and in some situations, the employees are so unhappy because of the situation, because if we listen to them, they often leave, so they lose good people too.

CEOCFO: *How is business?*

Mr. Stanleigh: Business is great. It did not seem to have mattered even going back to the last big recession. We were fine and I think in part because we have long established customers. When our customers start with us, they stay with us

for years. We have some of them that we continued to work with for 20 years. They are long standing and know that whatever we do will often impact the bottom line as well as customers and they like that kind of stuff. I think they are more global than local, so that also helps. If the economy is poor in one country other countries will seem to pick up the slack, we so will end up doing more work over there as well.

CEO CFO: Are there areas of types of services you provide that do not get the traction you think they should?

Mr. Stanleigh: Yes. We get many requests for work in the area of project management; both for training and consulting and not as many requests in the area of Quality Management, which could bring about immediate bottom-line improvement. It seems that organizations are currently trying to move more into an Agile approach for managing projects but recognize that they should not go all Agile nor should they take a more traditional Waterfall approach. So they come to us to help them integrate into a hybrid approach in managing projects. It's a surprise that we do not get as many requests in the area of Quality Management in terms of improving key business processes and reengineering business processes. Such effort would bring immediate bottom line improvement and improve the way in which people work. It would also engage the employees and have a direct impact on customer satisfaction. So I am always surprised that we do not have more requests in that particular area.

CEO CFO: Why is Business Improvement Architects noteworthy?

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