

Case Study:

Johnsonville Sausage
Kohler, Wisconsin

Developing Leadership to Manage Growth

Wisconsin-based Johnsonville Sausage is the number one national brand of bratwursts, Italian sausage, smoked-cooked links and fresh breakfast sausage links. Their products are available in 39 countries including France, Japan, Canada, Hong Kong, China, Mexico and the United States. The company remains family owned today, with over 1,000 employees (known as members within the firm).

The Background: Johnsonville Sausage was founded in 1945 when Ralph and Alice Stayer opened their own butcher shop, naming it after their home town in Wisconsin. The sausage was made from an old recipe handed down through their family from 19th century Austria. The 1970's and 1980's brought tremendous growth to Johnsonville. Under the direction of second generation Ralph C. Stayer, now President, and his sister Launa, the company established a wholesale operation throughout the country. By the 1980's, sales were 20 times greater than the decade prior, and Johnsonville Sausage had distribution in 47 states.

"Leadership is not an out-of-reach thing that looms 'up there,' something done by the people in absolute power. It's the everyday thing that people do. It's taking the initiative."

*Don McAdams
Director of Member
Development and Training*

Johnsonville Sausage commits itself to the development of their employees, and in return, expects personal growth and superior performance from all employees. The company's core values of integrity, commitment, innovation, continuous learning, and teamwork are the foundation that has enabled Johnsonville to manage their tremendous success.

The Challenge: By the mid to late 1990's Ralph C. and Launa realized everyone was relying on them to make all the decisions, a roadblock to continued growth. They needed to get other people engaged in managing the rapid expansion the business. They made the decision to build from within. The challenge for Johnsonville Sausage was to identify the strengths of their members to further develop the leadership and management within the organization.

The Process: During this period, Ralph C. had learned of the Predictive Index (PI) from an outside resource and encouraged members of Johnsonville's Leadership team to evaluate the instrument. According to Mr. Don McAdams, Director of Member Development and Training, Johnsonville's management team was "intrigued with the instrument," finding it "uncannily accurate." The commitment was made. All the key senior managers, Ralph C. and Launa included, were formally trained in the Predictive Index.

In addition to incorporating the Predictive Index Process in their general management practices, Johnsonville Sausage has applied PI in focused leadership initiatives. It has become an established part of their "Learn to Lead" program, which is a nine month leadership program for first line managers, coaches and project leaders. PI is used for identifying each manager's behavioral traits in relation to themselves and the team dynamics.

In a separate initiative, Johnsonville's Customer Focus Team (mid-level managers and above) met with their PI consultant in the spring of 2003 to discuss how both leadership and management are vital components to the growth and success of an organization. The discussion intrigued the managers and to learn more, Johnsonville turned to the PI based Leading vs. Managing workshop as the vehicle to provide the additional insight they sought.

According to Mr. McAdams "The workshop was an effective way of getting in front of people to create a "soft awareness" of themselves and those around them. We have a tendency to see leadership in others but not as clearly in

ourselves. At Johnsonville Sausage we want all our members to recognize these characteristics to allow them to explore other areas of leadership. The seminar module provided the vision to allow the people attending the workshop to identify where they fall in the spectrum of "Leader or Manager." The workshop allowed the participants to quickly understand the PI factors and identify their natural behavioral strengths in relation to these factors and how they can modify their behaviors to be more effective. The workshop reinforced that everyone has traits that allow them to lead."

Johnsonville Sausage has found the Predictive Index to be an invaluable component of their comprehensive leadership programs. By helping managers identify and understand their own management and leadership styles, PI provides a roadmap for enhanced teamwork, professional growth and organizational success.

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