

CLIENT:

ConAgra Foods

One of America's largest food companies with consumer brands found in 96% of US households, including: Healthy Choice, Chef Boyardee, Slim Jim, Hunt's, Orville Redenbacher's and Peter Pan.

**A minimum
of \$1 million in
productivity gains**

"...helped us devise a comprehensive productivity strategy... designed specifically around the issues our employees were facing...the change was not only a good economic decision—we very conservatively estimate a minimum of a \$1 million in productivity gains for our employees—it was a terrific business decision."

David Dart
Human Resources

SITUATION

A needs assessment at ConAgra Snacks Division which included a combination of observations, onsite interviews with 10 staff members, an interview with an IT representative, and an online survey of 132 employees revealed:

1. An over reliance on internal email had led to a reduction in productivity because:
 - Employees spent more than 3-1/2 hours per day reading, writing and responding to an average of 82 emails per day, of which almost 20% are typically irrelevant.
 - Employees were working longer hours as a direct result of email.
 - Email increased constant, unnecessary and time-consuming interruptions.
 - Email was an effective communication tool for sending information, but not for dialogue or discussion.
2. Too much unproductive time was spent in internal group meetings. These meetings were expensive and were over utilized at the expense of quick one-on-one meetings and phone conversations.
3. Collaborative tools such as shared drives and the Intranet were under utilized resulting in lost corporate knowledge; redundant work spent creating and finding information; and the risk of basing decisions on outdated versions of reports.

ACTION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the needs assessment, 132 employees of the Snacks Division participated in 8 Communication Productivity training sessions with the goal of achieving the following:

1. Reduce the amount of unproductive time spent on excessive or inefficient email.
2. Reduce the amount of unnecessary time spent in meetings and conduct more effective meetings.
3. Create intuitive and standardized file structures for shared drives and Intranet to eliminate redundancy and confusion.

Employee input was critical in establishing standard operating procedures and protocols that maximized results and increased commitment on all levels.

RESULTS

Approximately 60 days following the last of the training sessions, a time savings of almost a half-hour per day, per person were realized through meeting and email efficiencies. In addition, the quality of email and meeting communications had improved.

- **Time spent on email per day decreased by 9%.**
- **Number of emails in Inbox decreased by 16%.**
- **Number of "Inbox is Full" warning messages decreased by 25%.**
- **Time spent in meetings decreased by 9%.**

FACT:

The cost of the irrelevant emails can exceed \$15,000 per employee, per year (based on an annual salary of \$50,000).

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ConAgra Foods (Page 2)

EMAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Time wasting email problems decreased and there was a lessened sense of urgency surrounding email. Some of the improvements included:

- “Reply to All” was used less frequently.
- Fewer people were being cc'd on unnecessary emails.
- Fewer emails were used as “paper trails”.
- Fewer unnecessary emails were received.
- Fewer emails were received when phone calls or meetings would have been more appropriate.
- Fewer complex decisions were being addressed through email (more through face to face discussions) and fewer lengthy attachments were being sent when less information was needed.

MEETING IMPROVEMENTS

Meeting inefficiencies also decreased across a wide spectrum, including:

- Written agendas were distributed in advance of meetings to ensure that meeting participants understood their expected contributions, the meeting format, and specific meeting objectives.
- Meetings started on time.
- Only the right people were in attendance.
- Action items were identified, attendees were empowered to execute meeting decisions and follow up was conducted on action items.
- Meetings ended on time.

Time savings of almost 1/2 hour per day per employee

ConAgra realized an improvement across the board in email and meetings, with more than \$1 Million in productivity gains.

BARBARA BERGERON AND SHAWN KERSHAW – A POWERFUL TEAM

After growing successful productivity and organizing businesses for more than a decade, Barbara and Shawn joined forces in 2004 to solve the growing corporate problem of overwhelming volumes of email, meetings and information. Their combined strengths and first-hand knowledge of the productivity drain in corporate America gave them the insight to develop solutions which provide corporations with powerful, cost-saving tools.

A few of the clients that have already benefited from their practical, meaningful and impactful training programs include: Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Rohm and Haas, Coca-Cola, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Mellon Bank.



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