



INTERNATIONAL



## Quest Worldwide with AkzoNobel

Quest Worldwide is the award-winning global management consultancy founded by Dr Steve Smith in 1988. Quest focus on working with multinationals across all industries to enable strategy implementation, operational excellence and people engagement to enhance business performance. Quest has a wealth of experience and expertise that has been translated into proven techniques and an engagement process that delivers measurable results for clients.

In late 2014 AkzoNobel Decorative Paints was experiencing negative growth in business performance in the Dutch and Belgian economies. Yet, as volumes continued to decline, the Benelux MD, Kees Ekelmans, believed further cost cutting would be counter-productive. Kees had a clear vision but also realised that the prevailing culture, characterised as disengaged, inward-looking and not focused enough on customers, had to change. To make further progress, he needed to engage all his people rapidly with a new strategic plan.

Quest Worldwide was brought in to help. With the ambition to engage and mobilise everyone, the chosen approach integrated the deployment of goals and objectives with involvement, empowerment and commitment. A sense of urgency was created through a series of workshops and high impact events. The workshops created a structured opportunity for people to hear and be heard. Many ideas for improvement and progress were generated and implemented. All employees had a role in shaping and owning the strategic plans and improvement projects.

The disciplines of strategy execution, programme management and project management were strengthened to convert the engagement into hard results. The following year, a second round of workshops re-energised and re-committed people. The emphasis now was to build internal capability, so that AkzoNobel could become self-sufficient in running and maintaining the engagement and improvement process.

Engagement scores, measured by the Gallup organisation, went up significantly - the overall Belgium percentile benchmark position improved by 50%, while engagement scores in The Netherlands' Sales Department shot up by more than 20%.

In turn, the business results were dramatic with the top-line decline turned around to a 7% growth within nine months, whilst the bottom-line increased by an exceptional 27%, despite an on-going market decline. By year end, the combined operation delivered results 15% above budget.

As Kees Ekelmans reflects: "Our business results have been transformed. We manage in a more effective way and we connect strategy to project improvement in a way we couldn't do before. The marrying of hard strategy with team engagement is a killer app."

*"The Quest system is special and truly valuable. Quest has a well proven and structured approach to involve multiple layers of the organisation in making and executing a shared plan. I do not know another method that has such an impact on engagement and shared focus." Kees Ekelmans, MD*

*"I love working with Quest. They know their stuff. It has been tremendous added value having Quest support us in doing the process the right way. We could not have done it without Quest at all!" - Suzan Haenen, Programme Manager Netherlands*