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WHEN CEO ANDREW LEPAN TOOK OVER BSC FIVE YEARS AGO, IT WAS PLAGUED BY INTERNAL POLITICS AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE ONE-UPMANSHIP. TODAY, BSC'S COHESIVE CULTURE HAS HELPED IT OVERCOME THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS AND EXPAND ITS OPERATIONS.

Andrew accepted the CEO position at BSC after working in various sales and marketing roles and receiving a graduate diploma from the University of New South Wales. "It was daunting and out of my comfort zone. When running a distribution company like ours, we do not manufacture; we buy and distribute product. Therefore, sales and marketing are key elements in our business. Early on, though, I was able to understand that the logistics were just as important as sales. A lot of the systems and operations of the business had to be overhauled."

A company-wide structural and cultural change has transformed BSC into a unified business that expects to double its revenue growth in the next three to four years. Andrew says it has been a lengthy process. "BSC is a national organisation that had 36 branches when I took over. Each branch was like a little island; the state managers had their own profit and loss statements. It was very political and there was a lot of in-fighting. I walked into an environment that was not working from a head-office point of view and an individual branch perspective."

This process involved replacing selected state managers and reorganising the management team. "I brought in a couple of externally hired people that I had previously known. I was very conscious about making the initial structural changes early. Once we worked through that, it was about getting the team engaged and working together – even the ones that were sitting on the fence. I had management-type retreats and used an external facilitator to help me. We now have a stable team at a senior management level, and we are working on funnelling that stability down into our branch network, which is very centralised," explains Andrew.

Andrew visited every single BSC branch when he assumed the CEO role. "I wanted to make sure that I listened and followed through, even if I could not deliver everything that I was asked. I engage the store people and I shake their hand each time I visit a branch. I want to position myself as a figurehead who lives and breathes the values of BSC." ❦

Revolutionising Workplace Culture