

# Aligning an Entire Organization around Ambitious Goals

## A Partnering Resources Case Study

In 2003, a new CEO assumed leadership of a financial software company. The organization had a solid product and a dedicated customer base, but also critical issues. Distracted by a goal that was no longer feasible, employees needed to refocus. Internal processes were ad hoc and disjointed. Cost management systems were ineffective and the P/L trend was troubling.

The CEO knew that turning the company around would take more than just operational restructuring. He says, "I was looking to engage the company's management team to define our vision and strategy. I wasn't looking to simply define a business plan, I wanted to look introspectively to determine fundamentally who we are, what is important to us, and where do we want to go."

### Response

The CEO launched an initiative to build the vision and strategy for the company. He engaged Partnering Resources to develop the initiative, facilitate the process, and coach leadership. He explains that the work began with "a plan to get the executive team to think creatively about our company and its future." The executives researched the industry and the market, completed pre-work activities, and attended two full-day working sessions. By the end of the second session, he explains, "we had agreement on the Core Values and Core Purpose of our company, as well as our 'Big Hairy Audacious Goal.'"<sup>1</sup>

The leadership team realized that the entire company needed to accept the core values, core purpose, and audacious goal in order to succeed. The team began by validating their work with middle management. The CEO describes this process: "For the third session we invited [middle management to] get their buy-in and participation on the next step in the process, defining the actions necessary to achieve our audacious goal. With Maya's [Townsend of Partnering Resources] great facilitation skills, we were able to get everyone involved in a very interactive and productive session."

Leadership and management presented their work to applause and enthusiasm from employees in an energetic, creative town hall meeting. Then leaders and managers cascaded the organization's strategies through the entire organization so each employee could see how their individual goals helped achieve the core purpose of the company.

### Results

The company engaged its entire workforce, producing a workforce 100% aligned and focused on its goals. The CEO describes the results: "This initiative has been an unqualified success. We have a clearly defined strategy and the management of the company is more energized than I've ever seen them. They have personal ownership of our strategy and are committed to our success. We have built the foundation to be a truly great company."

### Client Profile

**Industry**

Financial Software

**Annual Sales**

\$9.7M

**Staffing Level**

100 employees

**Key Responsibilities**

- Develop and deliver financial software
- Increase client sales through technology support

**Strategic Goal**

Refocus the organization after an executive transition

**Critical Success Factors**

- Active CEO and executive team leadership
- Core purpose and values identification
- Strategic planning
- Employee engagement
- Cascading goals

<sup>1</sup> The term "Big Hairy Audacious Goal" was coined by Jim Collins & Jerry Porras in their 2002 book, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*.