

Relationship Audit at a Consumer Technology Company

Client Profile: A leading Midwest consumer technology company.

Situation:

Client was engaged in a critical partnership relationship with a large marketing services provider. The relationship had begun in the midst of significant management changes and turmoil at the Client organization. Client needed take stock of the expectations of both parties, and determine the initial success of the relationship 6-months into the contract.

Contribution:

- Designed a benchmarking study to examine five core aspects of the relationship. Conducted in-depth personal interviews with senior managers following a quantitative Internet-based survey
 1. **Interpersonal Relationships:** There were 20 managers between the two companies actively engaged in the relationship. The study examined the quality of the relationships and probed for any specific behavioral issues.
 2. **Services Delivery:** The perceived quality of delivery of services was rated. Significant disparity in service delivery performance, versus ideal, was explored in-depth.
 3. **Relationship Factors:** The Bedford Group used proprietary relationship calibration factors to analyze the intangibles in the partnership.
 4. **Relationship Ratings:** Using the most important factors (12 in this case), The Bedford Group benchmarked client self-ratings and partner ratings. In-depth discussion occurred where there was significant disparity in factor delivery.
 5. **Reflection:** Finally, each party was asked to reflect on what they could do and what their partner could do to improve any aspect of the relationship.

Findings:

The study revealed significant issues within the client's organization, work processes/style and manager skill training. Both parties had significantly differing expectations of how each should operate in the relationship and what the ultimate outcome of the relationship should be. Individuals within the partner organization were exacerbating tensions in the relationship by vocalizing their frustrations.

Recommendations:

- 1) For the client, create new marketing program development processes and a new marketing organization structure that binds product marketing silos into a single organization for the purposes of creating marketing programs.
- 2) Engage senior managers from both parties in extensive personal counseling (provided by The Bedford Group) on priority actions required to gain full benefit from the relationship.

Client Impact:

Client recognized several issues that could have derailed the relationship over time if not addressed and resolved.