



StartSampling's growth fueled by POWERSHIP®

The Power of POWERSHIP®

POWERSHIP® takes a very complex process of running a business and makes it understandable for each and every employee. The entire organization has a role in leadership and the delivery of results.

Since implementing the POWERSHIP® methodology in 2006, StartSampling has:

- Developed a shared vision, mission and strategy that all employees understand and support.
- Quadrupled in revenue.
- Grown from 35 employees to over 70.
- Implemented an employee lifecycle process that incorporates policies, procedures and guidelines for recruitment, onboarding, performance review and career development.
- Implemented a project management methodology to ensure new initiatives were completed on time, on budget and according to plan.
- Established a consistent sales process with tools and techniques to support the sales team.

“POWERSHIP® provided the solid foundation we needed to accelerate the growth of our company. It was the unifying structure that enabled StartSampling to build our vision and mission, and develop and implement a strategic plan. Since implementing the model, we've doubled our staff and quadrupled our revenues.”

- Larry Burns, CEO, StartSampling, Inc.

The Client

StartSampling, Inc. is a digital marketing services company that facilitates the creation of a direct link between brand owners and interested, engaged consumers. StartSampling works with brands from the consumer packaged goods and other industries to reach consumers who are eager to 'try something new' across a broad spectrum of online and offline venues. StartSampling's services span the entire promotions process from design & development, fulfillment, data handling, cleansing and storage-related activities, online reporting and information tools to understand consumer reactions to customers' brand marketing efforts.

The Challenge

StartSampling was launched in the late 90's with a small but committed staff that shared responsibilities and did whatever was needed to meet client needs and build the business. “Our innovative, Web-based service was ahead of its time and quickly caught on. We had a lean staff and relied on heroic individual effort to meet the needs of our growing customer base,” said StartSampling CEO Larry Burns.

The employees' dedication, teamwork and passionate belief in the company not only fueled its growth, it created a close-knit, fun-loving and collaborative culture in which employees laughed a lot, supported each other and celebrated each other's accomplishments. By 2006, the company had reached millions of dollars in revenue and served a wide range of well-known clients including Wal-Mart and Procter & Gamble.

As demand for its services continued to escalate, it was clear the informal business model that served StartSampling so well during its formative years would not support its growth over the long term. The company lacked a clearly articulated vision, mission and strategy for the future, and had few documented business processes and procedures in place. “We didn't have a solid, shared foundation that our employees understood upon which to build our business,” noted Burns.

Communication was also an issue. “Our employee survey indicated there was lack of clarity about where we were going and how we would get there,” said Burns. “We clearly needed to improve the way we were operating our business in order to achieve our goals.”

The Solution

MPS Partners, a respected management consulting organization, was engaged by StartSampling in 2006 to help guide the company's growth. StartSampling wanted MPS Partners — through its consulting expertise and proven POWERSHIP® model — to assist the company in becoming a more strategic, structured and process-driven organization without losing its unique culture.

The POWERSHIP® implementation began in 2006. Together, MPS Partners and StartSampling adapted the POWERSHIP® model to fit StartSampling's specific needs and environment. Next, StartSampling's entire 40-person team was introduced to the POWERSHIP® model by CEO Burns and MPS Partners leaders at a kick-off meeting. During this meeting, Burns emphasized that POWERSHIP® was team-based methodology that required involvement and accountability on everyone's part in order to be successful.

Soon after the kick-off, a cross-functional POWERSHIP® team was created, including remote employees from across the country. While MPS Partners provided the team with on-the-job coaching and mentoring, POWERSHIP® team members began to address key organizational needs on behalf of their colleagues. Starting with the development of a vision, mission and strategy, the team moved on to help create and implement process maps, policies and best practices needed to support projected growth. Along the way, the POWERSHIP® model evolved into a StartSampling-specific methodology, and the POWERSHIP® team transitioned into a StartSampling Strategic Accountability Team (SAT). "We were able to customize the model in a way that works for our company's unique needs," said Burns. "Our employees now simply see the results of adopting the POWERSHIP® model as our way of doing business, not a one-time initiative."

The Results

The adoption of POWERSHIP® enabled StartSampling to transform from an informal and reactionary to a visionary, strategy-driven business while maintaining the positive and supportive culture that makes it so special. Today, employees at all levels are actively engaged in company strategy, and new employees from entry-level workers and up have assumed significant leadership roles and flourished.

Since implementing the POWERSHIP® model, StartSampling has:

- Developed a shared vision, mission and strategy that all employees understand and support
- Quadrupled in revenue
- Created a common language
- Resolved many communication issues that impeded progress
- Grown from 35 employees to over 70
- Implemented an employee lifecycle process that incorporates policies, procedures and guidelines for:
 - Recruitment
 - Onboarding
 - Career Development
 - A formal Performance Review Process that includes quarterly meetings and a focus on employee satisfaction, recognition and development
- Implemented a project management methodology to ensure initiatives were completed on time, on budget and according to plan
- Established a consistent sales process with tools and techniques to support the sales team
- Developed custom Web portals that provide clients with real-time access to project status — permitting real-time event monitoring and adjustment

"POWERSHIP® not only enabled StartSampling to develop a solid operational infrastructure; it allowed our managers to give employees the tools they needed and then get out of their way. The ability to work smarter, not harder, also gave employees a healthier work/life balance since they no longer needed to consistently put in 60-hour work weeks to meet customer demands," concluded Burns. "POWERSHIP® gave us the impetus we needed. The investment we made in POWERSHIP® was a direct and substantial contributor to our significant growth and had we not embarked upon this process I do not believe we would have been able to accomplish all we have."