

An integrated and strategic approach of a well planned and executed major change at Sobeys reap all benefits... and honours

Context

When Sobeys decided to implement SAP across Canada, 75 business processes required revision, including financial services, purchasing, merchandising, logistics, and in-store operations. After a few attempts to implement the solution for the Quebec division, Sobeys Quebec finally accepted to start a new project, the actual system having reached its full potential and needed replacement. The new solution brought about a major change marked by significant impacts on working methods, tools, roles and responsibilities but also on the organizational culture, both for the employees, the managers, as well as for suppliers and retailers. The project affected more than 700 employees, a number of business lines, and more than 1,000 retailers, as well as the suppliers. Sobeys called upon Brio to help prepare stakeholders for the introduction of these large-scale changes while minimizing the impact on operations.

Approach

The main objective of the intervention was to support the implementation of the SAP integrated management software package, using an integrated change management approach to create harmonious organizational change while mitigating any decline in productivity or other adverse impacts. The recommended approach was based on four keys to success.

The first key: Shared and firmly established change management **governance**, positioned strategically within the organization.

The second key: the use of a structured approach with planned activities considering the **human factor** of change.

The third key: The creation of a **change management dashboard** including eight dimensions critical to meeting change management objectives. This continuous monitoring was conducted before, during, and after implementation to ensure the organization's state of preparedness and provide feedback to managers on the state of their teams.

The fourth key: Systematic learning assessment prior to implementation. Following training, all employees and managers affected by the system were rigorously assessed to ensure that they were capable of effectively fulfilling their duties as soon as the system was put into operation. Managers were also equipped to support the management of the transition toward the target.

Results

The client successfully maintained excellent financial results throughout the course of the project and following implementation, and performance and productivity remained unaffected. The retailers confirmed that their operations experienced only minimal disturbance. The project received SAP's Implement Better Gold Award and Sobeys was awarded the International Trophy of the ESSEC Chair of Change Management (France). Sobeys continues to use the approach and the steps adopted for this project for change management and other large-scale projects, owing to the systematic transfer of knowledge from Brio. A white paper presenting the best practices applied to this project, was selected as one of the three best white paper on the subject by the Association of Change Management Professionals (ACMP).

For employees, their continuous involvement and participation helped them recognize the necessity for change and enabled them to take responsibility for and increase their involvement.