

Gucci Group

Business challenge: Gucci Group maintains nine world-famous brands which operate relatively discretely and in an autonomous manner. The organisation's central HR function came to OPP® seeking the means to identify and develop talent and create greater inter-brand mobility for talented individuals. The solution had to fit with Group HR's role in the organisation: guiding and supporting the brands without imposing itself unnecessarily on their business activities, identity or culture – what Gucci Group refers to as its 'DNA'.

Against this backdrop, Group HR commissioned OPP to work with the top 50 senior managers across the brands in Europe, the US and Asia. Initially, this took the form of a 360-degree feedback and coaching programme based on a bespoke competency framework. The aim was to help participants understand their strengths and how they might stretch themselves further, the mantra being "What got you here may not get you where you want to go."

Background

Gucci Group comprises several world-renowned brands: Gucci, Bottega Veneta, Yves Saint Laurent, Alexander McQueen, Balenciaga, Bédar & Co., Boucheron, Sergio Rossi and Stella McCartney. Some have existed since the 19th Century; others are still young enough to have their founders as Creative Directors. These businesses create and sell ready-to-wear, leather goods, shoes, jewellery, perfumes and other high-quality luxury goods. The operating environment demands a fast pace, a competitive edge and an ability to balance creativity with an entrepreneurial spirit. Together, their 14,000 staff generated over €3.8 billion in revenue during 2007.

Group HR wanted to recognise these great qualities and encourage them, rewarding those who model the desired Group DNA. However, in an environment characterised by entrepreneurship and high performance, where business cycles are measured in months, rather than years, professional and personal development rarely rank highly in managers' priorities. In order to future-proof the organisation and continue to get the best out of its people, the Group needed to strike a balance between "getting on with the job" and taking time for visioning and the development of its people.

Solution

A bespoke competency framework

Group HR initially commissioned OPP to help create a competency framework that would capture the essence of the various brands. It was intended throughout that this framework would then underpin performance appraisals across the Group, and form a foundation both for recruitment and selection, and for people development.

In its design, the framework drew on a variety of sources including key themes from within the Gucci Group organisation, Michael Gelb's insights into the work of Leonardo Da Vinci and OPP's expertise in leadership behaviour, competency design and personality. The result was a model that weaves the seven key attitudes the

Group seeks in its people into observable, measurable behaviours under the headings: Vision, Entrepreneurship, Passion and Trust. These four themes and the behaviours within them form the criteria against which leaders within the Group are evaluated.

Karen Lombardo, Group Executive VP of Human Resources, first met OPP when the project team came to present the model to her. "Da Vinci's words really resonated with us," she says. "They captured the need for connection, the balance between art and science, the need to embrace ambiguity and the requirement to be fit for purpose in a lean organisation like ours. What struck me most, though, was OPP's ability to understand our business and work within our priorities and constraints."

360-degree feedback and coaching for CEOs and their direct reports

"The 360-degree programme was viewed as a gift to the participants," Karen remembers. "It was our first leadership development initiative at a Group level and - by touching over 350 people - it was a great signal to the business."

The brand CEOs and many of their direct reports took part in the first round of 360° feedback and coaching, using an online 360-degree questionnaire that OPP developed for Gucci Group in partnership with the US Center for Creative Leadership® (CCL). The questionnaire was tailored to the Group's new competency framework and benchmarked its leaders against thousands of managers across the globe.

Many senior figures at Group level also took part and Karen herself was keen to lead the way. "As a participant myself, I was scared. Like most of the others I had never done it before. But the tool itself was very easy to use and offered me the kind of feedback you just don't get in these top level positions in an organisation."

Karen and her colleagues across the UK, mainland Europe, Asia and the USA all received feedback and coaching from a team of experienced executive coaches focused on understanding their individual context and brand identity. "The coaching sessions were a conscious investment," says Barbara Mastoroudes, the Group's Worldwide Learning and Development Director. "A 360-degree tool raises self-awareness and coaching helps make that feedback more useful. We wanted to use coaches to challenge and support participants, offering alternative perspectives and in some cases suggesting activities to accelerate participants' growth as leaders."

Cascading the competencies throughout the organisation

Following the success of the competency work with senior management, Group HR asked OPP to design a programme to help roll them out to staff at various levels across the organisation. OPP's consultants developed a short interactive workshop, then trained Gucci Group's own HR staff to deliver the workshop across all brands and throughout the numerous geographical regions. In Barbara's eyes "The workshops helped local HR and staff to identify with the competencies and buy into the benefits of using them across the organisation."

Business benefits

"The 360-degree feedback and coaching programme itself has been very well received," Barbara says following her team's evaluation of the impact of the programme. "Ninety five% of participants say it has raised their self-awareness and 100% say they would recommend the programme to their colleagues as it has helped them identify ways to build on their strengths and work on their development needs."

OPP also provided Karen and Barbara with an anonymised summary of the key themes arising from both the 360-degrees and the coaching sessions. A mixture of statistical data and qualitative evidence, this report offered broad-ranging insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the senior management cadre across the Group and compared this with managers in other organisations.

"This work has been the foundation for subsequent leadership development programmes," Karen reflects, and since then she has involved members of the OPP team in the design and delivery of further development activities for the Group's leaders.

Since its beginnings in 2006, the relationship between OPP and Gucci Group has gone from strength to strength. "It's a fun relationship," says Liane Hawthorne, Gucci Group's Key Account Manager at OPP. "We trust each other enough to really challenge each other. I think the relationship itself embodies the competency framework we created together. There's the mutual Trust, there's the shared Passion for personal growth, there's OPP helping make Karen's Vision a reality and there's the Entrepreneurial spirit we share that means we're all willing to try something different – even if it takes us all out of our comfort zones!"

Karen agrees. "OPP's consultants listen to us and create something around our needs. They'll push us, offer their advice and expertise, but their priority is always to serve the needs of our business. I find that a unique quality among the consultancies I've worked with."

For information about how we could work with your organisation for individual, team or leadership development, please contact our Sales team on 0845 603 9958 or by email at: enquiry@opp.eu.com.