

SHERWOOD TRANSFORMATION ADVISORY

CONSULTING • COACHING

CASE STUDY: STRUCTURING LEADERSHIP AND OPERATIONS EFFICIENCY (HOTEL IN SABAH)

Contract Period: 2010 to 2011 • Services Model: Consulting and Coaching Services (1-Year Contract)

EXECUTIVE RESUME

An executive case review highlighting Sherwood's comprehensive, hands-on hotel advisory, leadership, and operational restructuring turnaround. Guided by the 4-Layer Transformation Process and coaching process interventions, Sherwood supported the Managing Director and the Family Enterprise Business Owner to enhance the strategic thinking of executives, raise self-awareness, improve teamwork, and align the entire leadership team towards the hotel's core strategic objectives.

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1. The Client and The Transformation Mandate

1.1 : The Client | Corporate Entity:

A highly successful Family Enterprise Business Owner with a core business in plantation and property development, mainly in Sabah. Operating with a traditional, conservative approach to business and management, the Enterprise stands as one of the pioneer hotel owners in the city. After navigating numerous operational obstacles over the years, the Managing Director (MD) in-charge, together with the Hotel Leadership Team, recognised the critical need for a structured business transformation.

1.2 : The Hotel Asset and Management Team:

The hotel is managed under an Owner-Operator model, where the Owner and MD in-charge entrusts day-to-day operational empowerment to the Hotel Leadership Team. While the business was sustainable for many years post-launch, the subsequent entry of new hotel openings into the local market significantly heightened competition. Both the MD and the Hotel GM recognised that the Hotel Executive Leadership Team lacked in-depth experience in strategic thinking and planning. A restructuring in operational efficiency was therefore vital to secure professional consistency, long-term sustainability in all operating aspects, and cohesive teamwork fully aligned to hotel objectives.

1.3 : The Transformation Mandate:

To address these strategic gaps, the mandate was structured around three key focus pillars: • Strategise Sales and Marketing > Facilitate Coaching process for Individuals and Team Leadership > Strategise restructuring process to align towards Operations Efficiency.

The Mandate: Through dedicated consulting and coaching interventions, the ultimate outcome was to enhance the strategic thinking of Executives to make them better leaders. By raising self-awareness, clarity in thinking, communication, and workflow processes, the intervention process was designed to dramatically improve teamwork, with all departments fully aligned towards the hotel's commercial and operational objectives.

2. Structuring a Pragmatic Transformation Action Plan

To realize the MD's vision, Sherwood structured a pragmatic, phase-by-phase action plan tailored around the client's existing organizational resources. This roadmap focuses on driving operational accountability, commercial sales, and executive capability over the contract duration:

Key Focus Area	Strategic Objectives	Target Outcome
2.1: Restructuring for Operational & Cost Efficiency	Implement operational policies, check-and-balance protocols, and departmental scorecards to drive professional consistency and organizational alignment.	• Each department's efficiency is relative to its operational deliverables. • Productivity output is based on efficiency in work and service delivery. • Standard operating policies and check-and-balance guidelines put in place to improve work behavior towards professionalism. • Progress measured using performance scorecards (Self-Awareness, sales revenue, and service delivery).
2.2: Sales and Marketing Optimization	Develop and execute a strategic marketing plan, communicate product identity and brand experience, and improve customer engagement and relationship management.	Established brand recognition, clear product positioning, and captured the right business mix and community support in rooms, Food & Beverage, and events.
2.3: Human Resource Output Productivity	Structure clear policies and strategic actions to improve workers' work culture, attitude, overall productivity, service delivery, and community engagement.	• Improved productivity measured with less wastage of man-hours, absenteeism, and medical expenses. • Improved delivery of services seen from feedback and strong support from the local community.
2.4: Facilitate Coaching Sessions & Workshops	Conduct targeted individual and team coaching sessions to provoke a mindset and behavior shift, focusing on raising self-awareness and clarity in thinking.	• Outcome is a better version of self and increased confidence in handling challenges. • Clearer and more structured thinking process for Leaders and Team Executives.
Contract Mandate	Complete hands-on executive management and advisory within a defined timeline.	Comprehensive delivery within a one (1) year contract.

3. The 4-Layer Transformation Process

To bring the hotel to a successful transformation and align with the MD's mandate, the restructuring program was executed via the 4-Layer Transformation Process. This rigorous, tracking-oriented methodology moves systematically from identifying gaps and friction points to implementing sustainable structural outcomes.

LAYER 1: THE ISSUES

- **Restructuring for Operational & Cost Efficiency:** The vision and strategic direction for the hotel operating business were not well communicated and implemented by the Hotel Leadership Team; the desired outcome was not achieved.
- **Sales and Marketing Optimization:** The Hotel Leadership Executives lacked experience in strategic thinking and planning in marketing, particularly in creating new products in rooms, food and beverage promotions, and events.
- **Human Resource Productivity Output:** Significant communication gaps existed at different levels of the Hotel Executive Team. HR productivity policies needed immediate review, as gaps were directly reflected in poor work output, lagging service delivery, and slow response times to customer needs.
- **Coaching Sessions and Workshops:** Scheduled coaching intervention was required to provoke a fundamental shift in mindset and behavior. Raising self-awareness was essential to support individual and team thinking, aligning motivation with their respective focus areas.

LAYER 2: THE CAUSE

- **Leadership Mentoring and Team Guidance was Lacking:** Empowerment granted to the Hotel Leadership Team was based on the strength of their existing knowledge and skill sets, which was insufficient. This gap was reflected in frequent friction in day-to-day operations. Leadership mentoring was lacking when needed in dealing with internal issues and operational crises. Teamwork needed structural strengthening.
- **Communication Gaps:** Communication among Hotel Executives in discussions and meetings lacked cohesiveness due to a lack of a strategic agenda to move forward action plans.
- **Hotel Work Culture:** The overall executive and frontline team was not seen as proactive, lacking the right service culture behavior.

3. The 4-Layer Transformation Process (Continued)

LAYER 3: THE PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY (The Transformation Intervention)

- **Hands-On Intervention by Hotel Consultant:** Sherwood's scope of work, timeline, and mandate were clearly defined in concrete, target-oriented outcomes.
- **Team Communication Workflow:** Developed cohesive communication workflows at all levels. Gaps in communication were identified, establishing a clear way forward to a better communication system emphasizing the 'end-in-mind'—common goals, common journey.
- **Consulting Process targeting Key Focus Areas (2.1 to 2.3):** Structured the action plan process to address the key focus areas. Pragmatic SMART option initiatives and strategies were put in place for implementation. Discussed with the Hotel GM before implementation. Thereon, the Consultant hands-on implemented with the respective Team Leader.
- **Coaching Process targeting Key Focus Area 2.4:** Facilitate a structured three-part coaching process: Mentoring Coaching with the GM > Executive Coaching > Team Coaching Workshop. This focused heavily on patience and coaching, as we were dealing with the entire Hotel Executive Team.

LAYER 4: THE OUTCOME (Transformation Outcome)

- **Successful Hotel Transformation:** • Hotel Executives underwent a profound transformation as individuals, becoming a significantly better version of themselves as Executives and Team Leaders. • Realised a direct improvement in sales, driven by strong community support for local events, food & beverage, and room bookings.
- **Operating & Business Model:** Reviewed and improved best management practices to establish a more consistent and sustainable hospitality operating framework. Operational and cost efficiency were fundamental to ensure cash flow was never stressed.
- **Marketing Optimization Strategies:** Implemented successful marketing strategies focusing on the right business and market mix with the right pricing strategies. The Marketing Team adopted improved communication skills, both verbal and in correspondence, and most of all, the right timing in follow-ups to close proposals on MICE events. Enhanced product identity and branding through better communication and media promotions, especially to the local community and corporate sectors.
- **Cohesive and Professional Teamwork Culture:** Established direct, transparent, and respectful communication. This facilitated a massive shift from working in silos (among some executives) to delivering integrated team outcomes as one unified team.
- **Established Clear Information-Sharing Oversight with the MD:** With a clear mandate and target deliverables to be achieved by the Hotel Leadership Team, ownership and accountability of performance were clearly defined. The goal is about transparency in reporting and information sharing.

The Tracking Tool is to recognise progress and status of transformation. Based on the 4 Key Focus Areas (2.1 to 2.4), it is then strategised in simplicity into a 4-Layer Transformation Process: Issue -> Cause -> Process -> Outcome. The ultimate goal is tracking the deliverables, which is the Outcome.

4. Key Working Relationship Insights on Role of MD & Consultant

The success of the Hotel Transformation relied heavily on the roles and responsibilities between the company MD and Hotel Consultant. This work collaboration translates into trust, understanding, and transparent communication at all levels.

MD in-charge Responsibilities	Hotel Consultant Responsibilities
Clear Outcome Mandate: Based on the 4 key focus areas as identified.	Target Outcomes: The 4 Key Focus Areas have outcomes described. Based on past records, customer reviews, and client feedback (MD GM and Hotel Team).
MD Role Defined: Give space, allow discretion and 'quiet enjoyment' to the Consultant to discharge his responsibilities.	Consultant: Check-and-balance in place, with MD oversight fully recognized.
New Hotel Operating Policies: Formal approval before implementation.	New Initiatives: Introduced and presented to the MD GM for consent before implementation. This applies to all initiatives in the Key Focus areas.
Final Approval: All CAPEX procurement, Human Resource Count, and Payroll.	Consultant Compliance: In support and compliance as per approved guidelines.

5. The Bigger Picture: Transformation of Hotel Leadership Work culture and Behavior

The Leadership Legacy and Work Culture Transformation: What was most welcoming was the Hotel Executives' willingness to give themselves the opportunity to be coached, raising self-awareness to be better executives, the team alignment towards hotel objectives, and the mindset to challenge themselves to be better leaders. The strategic motivation was to identify their respective Key Result Areas (KRAs) and link them directly to their performance appraisals. Most importantly, what the expected Outcome would mean to everyone—the hotel, the staff, and the customers. Working alongside the team was crucial as they needed to be guided through hands-on leadership.

Case Study : Structuring Leadership and Operations Efficiency | Hotel in Sabah

Contract from : 2010 to 2011 - one (1) contract

Services Model : Consulting and Coaching Services

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