



 **Business Impact**
Achieved culture shift
to a mission mentality

EABL is now one of
the **top-performing**
divisions at Diageo

CASE STUDY

Distilling the Pathway to Success

The Challenge | Aligning a leading spirits manufacturer around mission

2017 had been a difficult end of year for East African Breweries Limited (EABL). EABL is one of the markets that form Diageo PLC, which manufactures and sells globally recognized brands such as Johnnie Walker blended Scotch whiskey, Baileys Original Irish Cream, Smirnoff vodka, Captain Morgan rum, Guinness beer, Serengeti Lager, Tusker Lager, Bell Lager, and other ubiquitous brands across East Africa. Despite employee engagement being high, the management team was not happy with the overall business performance in several areas across the business. This begged the question: How do progressive organizations gain a significant performance dividend by leveraging high employee engagement?

EABL invited a consultancy named McKinney Rogers (MR) to a meeting with the senior leadership team to speak on the concept of mission leadership. MR is a business strategy and execution division of GP Strategies,® a global innovator in performance improvement. The EABL Managing Director was intrigued by the possibilities that mission thinking created and found MR's approach to the mission interesting, and thus invited MR to do a workshop with the executive leadership team at EABL.

 Driving a **performance culture** by aligning people from the floor to the top **leadership** around mission.

The Solution | Laying the groundwork for change

During the session, the EABL leadership team learned about how Diageo's Nigeria division had leveraged mission leadership to turn the business around and had managed to create sustainable results. So, the leadership team selected strategies and goals from the Nigeria division to emulate its successes. From there, MR interviewed leadership and gained a deep understanding of EABL's businesses and challenges. One finding was that there was an opportunity to work together to deliver amazing results by leveraging a culture shift using the mission mentality. While the three operating units within EABL operate distinctively, the mission thinking allowed for greater synergies and even better ways of working.

From this effort, a 2-day workshop was developed around how EABL could operationalize its strategy so that everyone understands the contributions they need to make to achieve breakthrough results. In addition, workshop attendees discussed how EABL can adjust internal mindsets from just caring about individual lines of business to being part of the larger business. The EABL team left the workshop with renewed energy to drive the business strategy but with greater executional focus and unconditionality to win. But a strategy only becomes a plan when it is operationalized, and the team knew that there was a lot to be done.

Finding a mission and putting it in motion

Looking back on it from a place of its now-improved business performance, turning EABL around came back to two concepts outlined in its workshop sessions—mission and unconditionality.

Each of the leaders returned from the workshop and set up a mission council made up of senior leaders. They created a ritual of weekly meetings where key decisions would be made and difficult issues that needed broader thinking could be discussed. This group selected cross-functional teams to work together on individual missions. The teams were cross-functional to embed the missions in every corner of the organization. Then, if roadblocks occurred that would hinder the mission, the teams could approach the mission council of leaders to remove those roadblocks. In this manner, support across every function, all the way to the top of the organization, was in place for every individual mission.

The workshop sessions about mission also cascaded down through every level of the organization, so each individual understood their part in the plan, their operating boundaries, and what their priorities were to achieve their mission. This included five questions that everyone on the team should ask and answer in pursuit of a mission:

1. **What is my part in the plan?** What is my individual mission and how am I going to measure that I've delivered it?
2. **How do I align my mission to the bigger mission?** What is my boss's mission and what is their boss's mission? It's not enough just to deliver your part of the mission, but you need to have an understanding of how your mission fits into the overall goal.
3. **How am I going to deliver on the mission?** What are the mission-critical activities I need to undertake to deliver on this goal? What is my critical path and what are the interdependencies I need to consider to succeed in my mission? Each path involves other people to get the job done, so you need to consider how you will work with others to achieve your mission.
4. **What are my boundaries?** Knowing your boundaries gives you the certainty to make critical decisions in the moment. What are your freedoms and constraints in the path to achieving the mission?

5. **Do I commit to this mission?** These questions become very powerful because they require you to visualize the path of your mission before you undertake it. They ask you to think through your strategy and know your place, not just in your efforts, but in the larger effort. Ultimately, they ask you to agree to all of the conditions before you take up the challenge. They make you accountable, empowered, and a critical player in the whole. This, in itself, creates a mind shift for everyone in the organization. But it's only part of the mind shift EABL experienced.

Making your mission limitless and unconditional

The concept of unconditionality set off light bulbs in the heads of folks at EABL. The premise is pretty simple. If your goal is to collect 100 beans, you'll collect 100 beans and be happy with the result. But if you raise your sights higher to, say, collecting 150 beans, you might collect 130 beans, which is more than 100.

So, if a person defines their potential and then meets it, they're happy. But if they raise the bar—or, better, don't place any limits on how high the bar can go—chances are they will deliver beyond what they thought possible. With no conditions as to how far you can go, you can go farther than you would in a world constrained by conditions.

So EABL began reconsidering what was possible. It stopped limiting itself to a reasonable goal. And if it met the "unreasonable" goal, it celebrated, sending team members on dream trips, throwing elaborate parties, and the like. EABL also understood that meeting 90% of the goal was not reaching the goal. Hard work is good, but it is fruitless if you don't reach the goal. The goal itself was unconditional. So, while all achievements received recognition, unmet goals became opportunities to see how employees could work smarter instead of harder.

Business Impact | Surpassing all expectations and changing the way goals are achieved

As a result of the mind shifts, culture changes, and hard work operationalizing strategies within EABL, it is now one of the top-performing divisions at Diageo. EABL is not just engaged, but is now driving a performance culture. Everyone, from the floor to the top leadership, is aligned on strategy and goals, and strategy has become simplified and easy. It has completely turned the culture around.

Moreover, unconditionality has become a way of life, and so has mission. In fact, "mission" has become a verb at EABL. Whenever there is a goal to meet, people say, "Let's mission it." Then, they scramble to be part of the top missions because they know it will bring them recognition and rewards.

Here are some of the unexpected lessons and approaches EABL has experienced as a result of mission and unconditionality:

- **Everything can be missioned.** EABL puts a wide variety of things into mission, from increasing sales to improving the food in the cafeteria. If it impacts culture, teamwork, or environment in a positive way, it is worthy of mission because it all ultimately impacts performance.
- **Rewards are not monetary.** EABL believes that financial rewards are not sustainable, but experiential rewards are. When big goals are met, a team may travel to a Formula 1 race or go on a Scottish whiskey tour, for example. So it's no wonder why employees compete to be on the bigger missions.
- **Team composition is key.** EABL found that it's important to bring the right people to mission. A successful team is about selecting the competencies required and creating the right conditions for everyone to succeed. Also, executive participation is critical.

- **Language and communication is important.** Instead of being part of a mission, individuals “own” the mission, for example. The buy-in and accountability of mission should be verbalized as such.
- **Talent will be exposed.** EABL now has talent it never knew it had because of the way mission engages individuals. Mission is not only a way to expose one’s talent, but it is also a way to grow talented individuals who aspire to be like others in the organization. People who wouldn’t have otherwise been recognized by executives are now being seen and heard because of the organizational structure of the missions.
- **Everyone is accountable.** With cross-functional teams reportable to a mission council, if failure occurs, everyone has failed. Accountability is now driven at all levels of the organization. This requires executives to be present and responsible at levels they weren’t before to drive solutions.

Today at EABL, the business and culture have turned around, and mission and unconditionality give the organization a sustainable way of continuing that trend. From all levels of the organization, people are performing better, dreaming bigger, and going home proud of the work they are doing. What began as a workshop has now become a way of life—and the pathway to success—at EABL.

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About GP Strategies

GP Strategies is a leading workforce transformation partner—one of the few truly dedicated global providers in the marketplace providing custom solutions. We believe our transformation focus, when paired with deep listening, a customer-centric approach, and innovative expertise, enables our clients to routinely achieve superior business and operational results from our evidence-driven and technology agnostic recommendations.

Whether your business success requires a change in employee performance and mindsets, learning technologies, or critical processes, GP Strategies is the transformation partner you can trust.

About EABL and MR

East African Breweries Limited (EABL) is East Africa’s leading branded alcohol beverage business with an outstanding collection of brands that range from beer, spirits, and adult non-alcoholic drinks (ANADs), reaffirming their standing as a total adult beverage (TAB) company. They are a division of Diageo, a manufacturer of ubiquitous brands of distilled spirits, such as Johnnie Walker, Baileys, Smirnoff, Captain Morgan, and Guinness.

McKinney Rogers (MR) is a UK-based business strategy and execution division of global performance improvement provider GP Strategies. Inspired by how special forces are able to effectively execute strategy in highly complex and challenging environments, McKinney Rogers applies a philosophy called MISSION LEADERSHIP to equip business teams with the tools and capabilities to deliver results no matter the challenge.

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