From Siloed to Cohesive:
VF Asia's Journey to Agile, High-Performing Leadership

acumen
GLOBAL PARTNERS

Company Name: VF Corporation – Global Supply (Asia)

Industry: Apparel, Footwear and Accessories

Location: China, Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia

Size: Approximately 1000 employees

ABOUT

VF Corporation Asia Product Supply is the regional supply chain and sourcing division of VF Corporation, a global apparel and footwear company headquartered in the United States. VF Corporation owns a portfolio of well-known lifestyle and outdoor brands, including The North Face, Vans, Timberland, and Icebreaker.

VF Asia Product Supply oversees vendor management, product sourcing, manufacturing, and supply chain operations across Asia. It ensures efficient development, production, quality control, and timely delivery of products to global markets. The division is critical in VF's global operations, as it manages relationships with manufacturing partners and optimises regional logistics.
Operating in a highly competitive global apparel and footwear industry, VF Asia Product Supply serves both developed and emerging markets, supplying more than 80% VF products sold globally. Its strategic presence in Asia, particularly in countries like China, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Bangladesh, positions it to leverage regional manufacturing strengths, cost efficiencies, and proximity to key raw materials. This enables VF Corporation to respond quickly to market trends and maintain product quality and sustainability standards.

THE CHALLENGE

VF Asia were facing a highly complex organisational transformation that demanded structural redesign, cultural alignment, deeper leadership commitment, risk-sensitive decision-making, and the ability to balance strategic execution with relational respect — all in a context where the current leadership team lacked the depth of trust, alignment, and operating discipline to lead the change effectively.

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Issue Area	Specific Challenges	Business Consequences	People Consequences
Strategic Imperatives	• VF Strategy demands, bigger/bolder thinking and acting differently • Redesign VF Asia: restructure, relocations & standardization • Rethink operating principles & manage risks	• Misaligned operations • Reduced clarity & agility • Risk of not meeting strategy	• High uncertainty • Role anxiety • Leaders must model direction
Leadership Team Effectiveness	• ELT ~ 9 months: rapport but not deep enough • Shallow Collaboration – no follow through • Shift from preference driven to aligned practices	• Weak strategy execution • Fragmented decision-making	• Inconsistent leadership perception • Reduced trust
Ownership & Accountability	• Some leaders distance from responsibility ('The leadership has decided…') • Others insensitive to context	• Slow or poor decisions • Strategy coherence risk	• Tensions & blame culture • Low collective commitment
Cultural Sensitivity & Risk	• Asia's relationship-focus risks avoiding sensitive issues • Need psychological safety for respectful firm leadership	• Risk-avoidance could stall change • Competitive edge loss	• Damaged relationships • Loss of dignity/morale

> "Individually, nobody was satisfied with what we were experiencing as a leadership team. But until that point, it had been very hard for us to verbalise that, and without being able to talk about it, it was hard to work on it."
>
> Gareth Brooks, Managing Director, VF Asia Product Supply

THE APPROACH

- **Walking the Talk** – Commencing with the executive before he became the MD and then through the transition into the role, one-on-one coaching to ensure he evolved his leadership to enable the change required and to become a living example. This was extended to a group of influential and committed leaders from key points of influence, who received one-on-one coaching over 9–12 months to ensure they role-modelled and evolved their leadership to embody the desired change. This was a key support used during Covid.
- **Creating alignment and robust collaboration in the ELT** – a range of executive workshops (from 2 hours to 2 days) over time. These sessions embedded a shared learning language that leaders applied to address strategic challenges in real-time.

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- **Breaking Down Silos** - Working the next level leaders from previously siloed areas working on enterprise-wide key initiatives that they had invested in by learning how to host generative conversations that foster effective collaboration to achieve clarity, focus and results.
- **Transferring Capability into the Business** - Leaders developed the ability to notice when patterns were emerging that were limiting and then determined which resources they had, from the Acumen portal, that could be activated. They then initiated interventions that they could execute themselves. This included growing others' capability to host the conversations.
- **Evolving Resources** - As needs were identified, new resources were developed by Acumen and added to the portal that could be shared across the business in small groups by the convenors.
- **Accelerating Change in Critical Areas** - As specific needs were identified, the same approach to achieve the business outcome and cultural shift required was activated.
- **Endorsing and Reinforcing the new desired behaviours and success outcomes** – this was achieved using conversations, events, and leadership stories shared as they evolved their individual and collective effectiveness.
- **Generating Momentum with a Group of Committed Leaders** – MD was a strong advocate and achieved a strong culture of open, transparent and robust conversations, not just about business priorities, but most importantly about their leadership and the culture. It is integral to their way of operating.

This project evolved in response to several major changes and significant events over the course of 10 years. The initial alignment of the ELT, followed by engaging the next level leaders, spinning off part of the business, all in preparation for the first major transformation. That was navigated through COVID. There was a post-COVID reset of the business, followed by new leadership and another major transformation.

THE RESULTS

VF Asia achieved what many global enterprises struggle to deliver: significant business growth, improved business performance with a leaner organisation and a stronger culture.

Business growth with efficiency:
The value of the business under management increased by one-third, while the organisation operated with 30% fewer people, demonstrating that a cohesive, accountable culture can unlock performance and scalability.

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Agility and resilience:
The leadership team learned how to adapt in real-time to global shocks and shifting conditions, sustaining high levels of operational performance even through COVID and major organisational transformations.

Cultural transformation at scale:
Silos gave way to collaboration, leaders role-modelled new behaviours, and micro-practices embedded a common leadership language, creating a culture where accountability, trust, and shared purpose drive momentum.

Sustainable capability:
Leadership practices are no longer dependent on external facilitation. VF Asia's leaders now own the methods and continue to cascade them across the business, strengthening resilience for the future.

> "Our business today is one-third larger in value, while our organisation is 30% smaller. We're far more cohesive, less siloed, and more agile — yet still delivering the same high levels of operational performance, in a much more complex environment than when we first started this journey."
>
> Gareth Brooks, Managing Director, VF Asia Product Supply

CONCLUSION

VF Asia's transformation shows what becomes possible when leadership and culture are unlocked at scale. By shifting behaviours and embedding systemic practices, the organisation now manages a business one-third larger in value with 30% fewer people. A powerful demonstration that when human potential is fully mobilised, performance and efficiency rise together.

Acumen's role was to catalyse this shift by partnering with leaders in real time, equipping them with practical tools, and growing capability in the system. The result was not a temporary initiative, but a self-sustaining leadership culture: cohesive, accountable, and resilient in the face of disruption.

For VF Asia, the return is both tangible and enduring. They are now a larger, more complex business being led with greater efficiency, clarity, and collaboration. With these capabilities now embedded, VF's leaders are equipped to continue scaling impact, navigating uncertainty, and shaping a flourishing future.

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> **"The insight and support we had from Acumen have always been very practical, not abstract. The tools and practices were easy to apply in our context, which is why they've endured. That's what I've valued most — it's helped us evolve as leaders, and more importantly, as a leadership team."**
>
> Gareth Brooks, Managing Director, VF Asia Product Supply

Are you ready to unlock the full potential of your organisation? Discover how Acumen partners with leaders to create cultures that flourish, scale performance, and deliver lasting impact.

Contact us to explore what's possible for your organisation.

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