

Susan
DUNLOP

Case Study

Studio Movie Grill

GROWING A COMPANY BY GROWING PEOPLE

*How the 3 Vital Questions® (3VQ) helped turn around turnover
at Studio Movie Grill*

THE CHALLENGE: BUILD A CULTURE OF LONG-TERM SHARED PURPOSE

Studio Movie Grill's mission is to "open hearts and minds, one story at a time." Maybe it's because they are in the business of in-theater dining, with stories unfolding on the big screen daily. But their mission runs much deeper. Studio Movie Grill is a company that walks the talk about putting people first—about valuing their employees' experiences at work and putting those personal stories above profits.

With a 30 percent year-over-year growth rate, the company was experiencing some inevitable friction between new voices coming in and internal experience. "We realized our growth was creating the conditions for drama and we needed a compass to help navigate the waters of this change," says Brian Hood, vice president of operations.

Brian was familiar with The Power of TED* (*The Empowerment Dynamic) from a Stagen Leadership Academy course he took and eventually facilitated with Sheri Lawrence, now Studio Movie Grill vice president of organizational development. When the 3 Vital Questions® (3VQ) work was launched, Sheri made the introduction to principal facilitators David Emerald and Donna Zajonc. "We attended a 3VQ workshop and the rest is history," Brian says. Brian and Sheri were drawn to the organizational applications of 3VQ and the connection with the more individual focus of TED*. They understood how they could change mindsets individually, but not organization-wide. And the company, Brian and Sheri realized, didn't have a collective desired outcome.

That changed after David and Donna did a 3VQ workshop with the company's general managers.

THE RESPONSE: 3 VITAL QUESTIONS

Studio Movie Grill began using the 3VQ principles throughout the organization. "The workshop helped us organize collectively," Brian says. "We gained clarity around our desired outcome: to be a well-respected leader in the in-theater dining segment that works seamlessly and collaboratively together." Knowing this, they could identify the things to keep doing and those they needed to change. The 3VQ process helped break these things down into digestible pieces they could take action on.

"The workshop was transformative," Brian says, "not just in the teachings themselves but also in the tools David and Donna left with us." Company leadership began using the 3VQ five-step planning process. And the framework began rippling out to department leaders and their teams. The planning process takes them step-by-step through the 3 Vital Questions, helping them reflect on where their focus is, how they are relating, and what baby steps they're taking

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toward the desired outcome. “Department leaders also use 3VQ for themselves as they interact and collaborate among departments,” Brian says.

Along the way, 3VQ helps Studio Movie Grill assess their current reality and whether they are truly living their purpose. “It almost creates its own immune system,” Brian says. “When people are victims, it sticks out like a sore thumb.”

Transforming drama in the workplace is a constant effort, Brian believes, one that takes deliberate practice to keep the muscles exercised. “We see the 3 Vital Questions as the long game, the infinite game,” he says. “It’s ongoing. We’re constantly evolving.”

■ THE RESULTS: A DRAMATIC TURNOVER DOWNTURN ■

With an understanding that employees leave companies because they’re not growing, Studio Movie Grill made a commitment to enable the level of knowledge and skills that would make their people want to stay. Starting with the hiring process, they identified qualities and built assessments guided by the TED* work. Then they designed a training process that introduces TED* and also the path to development that includes 3VQ. Over time, they identified top performers to put through the Stagen Leadership Academy, which includes both TED* and 3VQ. And they had David and Donna do a workshop for the whole company. People were developing deep knowledge and both job and life skills.

The effect on employee retention was stunning. Over a three-year period, management turnover dropped from 42 to 18 percent, saving more than \$1 million—not counting the intangible gains in productivity and expertise from longer tenure. Percentage-wise, Studio Movie Grill has been running less than half the industry average. Even better news: people who attended the 3VQ and TED* Stagen training made up less than five percent of the turnover. Better still? The company is trending toward 80 percent internal hires.

The 3 Vital Questions have become part of the fabric of learning and development at Studio Movie Grill. They are considered an essential part of the pathway to higher positions, whether in the home office or field operations. They provide a solid foundation for the personal growth of the company’s leaders, which spurs organizational growth. And financial growth follows.

“But it was never for financial gain,” says Brian. “The desired outcome was just to lean in to developing people. The more we invest in people, the less likely they are to leave,” he says. Well proven—in just three years.

Sheri Lawrence added, “TED* and 3VQ are now woven through every team member touch point. Having champions that understand and believe in the change this work creates has allowed us to do that. When your team members know you want to help them improve their lives, not just skills at work, it changes the dynamics and improves culture.”

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CULTURALLY TRANSFORMATIONAL

SINCE INTRODUCING 3 VITAL QUESTIONS, STUDIO MOVIE GRILL HAS REDUCED TURNOVER BY OVER 20% WHILE CREATING ALIGNMENT AND A COMMON LANGUAGE AS AN ORGANIZATION, AND MORE THAN \$1 MILLION SAVINGS ANNUALLY.

—BRIAN HOOD
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