

Driving Change in Corporate Culture: FiredUp

A StrategyBlocks Success Story



FIREDUP
CORPORATION

” *StrategyBlocks has proven an excellent planning system that, when combined with a leadership culture of delegation and empowerment across the organization, proves to be the perfect recipe for strategic success.*”

— Jonathan Bradley Managing Director, FiredUp

The Company

FiredUp is a global corporation that manufactures and distributes domestic heating solutions and fireplaces to the consumer market, as well as electrical products to the international hospitality market. With humble roots, FiredUp was established in 1998 in Huddersfield UK, and today employs nearly 400 people globally.

The company is privately owned, with offices, manufacturing facilities and a warehouse located in the UK, as well as a wholly-owned manufacturing facility located in China.

Snapshot

- £16 million in revenue, with £3 million in exports
- Operates three highly-regarded product brands: Adam, Aurora and Corby of Windsor
- Acquired Corby of Windsor in 2009 and expanded the product portfolio to include a wide range of hospitality products
- Exports to over 50 countries around the world, including Japan, Australia, the United States and across Europe

The Problem

FiredUp's growth over the last 20 years has been steady and successful, however along with its progressive expansion, growing layers of complexity have developed.

With three different brands to manage including Adam, fires and fireplaces sold direct to consumer and retailers; Aurora, high-end luxury fireplaces and heating solutions sold exclusively to full-service retailers; and Corby of Windsor, a worldwide distributor products to the hospitality industry.

Add to that a growing team, globally dispersed, and multiple manufacturing, warehouse and office facilities, and it was clear the company had to enforce a tight rein on its strategic growth and execution.

FiredUp benefitted from a strong, positive corporate culture and a capable leadership team. After significant market research, the company set a vision in 2015 to nearly double its revenue over the next five years, reaching £20 million by 2020. While a clever idea met with enthusiasm, the vision lacked a solid plan of action and saw little impact as it trickled down to various departments.

Jonathan Bradley, managing director at FiredUp, was tasked with creating actionable insights to the 20:20 Vision plan. Taking cues from the famed founder of Entrepreneur's Organization, Verne Harnish, Bradley and his team devised a one-page strategic plan that included the top five objectives necessary to accomplish the vision.

While the strategic plan was initially helpful and offered some direction, it quickly became apparent that it was too simple in its scope. Using the five objectives as a guiding light proved insufficient, as they created too broad a focus and ultimately led to greater confusion than ongoing growth.

Recognizing FiredUp's unique complexities, Bradley and his team moved beyond the one-page strategic plan toward much more detailed - and overly complex - spreadsheets, which broke down 20:20 Vision by its mission, objectives, strategies and sub strategies. Attempting to capture every element required to successfully execute against the corporate vision, however, proved daunting at best.

Bradley knew this solution was no more effective than its predecessor - too simple wasn't the right approach but neither was overly complex.

” *I took to googling 'strategic planning software' on the weekends. I knew there had to be a better way of managing our 20:20 Vision plan, one that could provide ongoing insight for the executive team and a clear pathway for turning our vision into a reality. I was hoping to find ideas of a framework that I could then take to our internal IT department and request they create a customized solution for us.*”

In his search for options on how to effectively manage strategic planning, Bradley came across StrategyBlocks and signed up for a free trial. The solution proved so easy, he immediately abandoned his plan to have it built in-house.

” There is an idea that things should be as simple as possible, but not one bit simpler than that. After the significant effort that had gone into creating a strategic plan that made sense, I intrinsically knew we needed something straightforward and easy, but not so overly simplified it left us with gaping execution holes. StrategyBlocks was the perfect fit and exactly what I wanted but wasn't sure how to create.”

The Solution

StrategyBlocks is an intuitive SaaS solution, designed for strategic planning, management and execution, allowing companies to become more agile across the entire strategic lifecycle. By connecting a company to its ideas, vision and goals, in a highly visual way, StrategyBlocks increases overall business agility while helping organizations maintain tighter control of their strategic initiatives and deliver more successful results.

The solution's proprietary 'Cascading Metric' system simplifies KPI reporting and metrics, removing redundancies and inefficiencies, and giving an organization an unprecedented, 360 degree view into business intelligence and operations.

StrategyBlocks' dynamic approach updates data in real time, ensuring complex executive reports are immediately accessible. The flexible nature of the solution allows clients to customize their dashboards, tailor the platform's functionality and manually input their own metrics, all to fit within each organization's unique requirements.

After a successful trial, FiredUp officially launched StrategyBlocks across the organization, recognizing its potential to connect the company's vision and mission to team members' daily tasks. The company took its complex spreadsheets and moved them over to the StrategyBlocks system, gaining clarity into ownership and direct insight into how the tasks aligned back to the vision.

“For the first time in our company's history we were able to drill down from vision, to strategies to tasks and see who owned them, why they were doing them and the results,” said Bradley. “It changed not just how we work, but it also influenced and changed our culture, which was fantastic. We found our alignment and removed that layer of confusion we had inadvertently created.”



The Results

FiredUp initially rolled out the StrategyBlocks solution to the executive leadership team, who proved highly receptive and engaged in keeping the software up to date and tracking projects. Suddenly every task was well defined, with a clear owner, and product branches were easy to identify.

After the initial excitement of the new system however, interest and engagement started to decline as executives found it difficult to keep the software updated on top of their other tasks. Bradley realized they had created a bit of an exclusive club, with key members on board, but that wasn't good enough to build a successful strategy mindset across the entire organization.

In an effort to determine unequivocally if StrategyBlocks was a benefit to the executive team and the process could develop its own organic momentum, Bradley purposely relaxed his pressure on executives to update and use StrategyBlocks. As new initiatives or product plans failed to be added into the system, Bradley realized he would need additional buy-in across the organization, in addition to the executive team, to derive the greatest value from the StrategyBlocks solution.

“We decided, alongside our use of StrategyBlocks, to implement a system of 1:1 meetings between all managers and their subordinates,” Bradley explained. “This allowed us to drive business down while enabling the staff to own and achieve their own tasks. Not only was this approach highly efficient and effective in achieving our strategic initiatives, it also had the added benefit of enabling employees at every level to have deep insight into the long term goals of the company. It also was the catalyst to building a very trusting, collaborative work environment and a close-knit corporate culture.”

Within six months of implementation of StrategyBlocks, Bradley had achieved company-wide engagement and created a new protocol for task management and strategic execution. In just 18 months time, FiredUp has seen a 10% growth in sales and a 10% growth in its profit line. What's more, the company is well ahead of its targets to reach the 20:20 Vision milestones it set back in 2015.



The Future

FiredUp currently uses StrategyBlocks to deliver on its overall company vision, starting with its 20:20 Vision block and cascading down to the growth strategy to fulfill that vision. From there, members of the executive team create specific goals within their own departments that map back directly to the larger 20:20 Vision goal, while product leaders and account managers within each division drill down on the initiatives and tasks necessary to achieve those goals.

After a year of using StrategyBlocks, FiredUp created a new department by bringing sales and marketing together and hiring a new executive to head up both teams, someone who was new to the industries FiredUp worked in. While this type of change often results in internal struggles, with StrategyBlocks in place the newly formed department quickly came together while the new executive leader came up to speed at an unprecedented rate.

That experience has led FiredUp to be confident in taking on more ambitious change and growth.

FiredUp also plans on using StrategyBlocks to increase its product development rate over time, and would like to incorporate the StrategyBlocks risk features into its overall strategic planning.

”*“We have strong growth and acquisition plans, and the experience of seamlessly merging two departments demonstrated that we have the means to keep any new ventures aligned and organized with our existing infrastructure,” said Bradley. “We are confident that as we grow, StrategyBlocks will help ensure we keep the company focused on our long term strategy and help us quickly integrate any new changes in the most effective way.”*”

— Jonathan Bradley Managing Director, FiredUp

“We currently are managing 1,200 blocks and 60 users on StrategyBlocks, and we anticipate that will only grow over time. It’s exciting for our team as we work closely with StrategyBlocks to create the tailored experience and solution that works best for our organization. The StrategyBlocks team has been instrumental in personalizing its interface to meet the needs of our organization, and that has created an even deeper engagement as our employees and executives see the impact of their feedback in the software they use every day.”



StrategyBlocks

For more information on StrategyBlocks, please visit www.strategyblocks.com or email info@strategyblocks.com. If you would like an online demonstration please click the “Request an online demo” link from the website and we would be delighted to show you how StrategyBlocks can have a positive effect on your business.

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