



MITCHELL PHOENIX

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Interview Clive Mears, Commercial Director Europe - Stanley

Stanley Works <http://www.stanleyworks.com> is a global manufacturer of tools and security solutions. Its business ranges from home improvement tools, industrial tools to electronic and mechanical security systems.

What are your current responsibilities? What geography and functions do you cover?

My official title is Commercial Director Europe, Middle East and Africa. This means that I'm responsible for the sales activity and the people in those geographies. Our business is split into regions with a leader for each region. For example UK and Ireland, France, Spain, Germany and Benelux, Middle East and Africa.

What attracted you into this area?

My background is 25 years with Stanley. I started as a Sales Representative, moved to Sales Manager, on to Sales Director, UK Commercial Manager, European Commercial Manager and so on.

The first time I really dealt with organizational development was during the late '90s. Stanley went through massive organizational change. I was commercial leader for the UK and was looking for help to understand what was happening to us. Massive and radical change brought in by a new CEO in the US. We moved from a divisional hierarchical organization to a consolidated matrix organization. That was the time, '98-99, when we first got involved with Mitchell Phoenix. Ten years on we have people attending Mitchell Phoenix Programmes.

I find myself where I am today because I never gave up. The people who were there needed some leadership rather than my ambition.

How true is that last comment of all of Stanley?

I don't think Stanley is unique in what happened through the 90s. The company faced a lot of challenges that they never really faced before. Everything from the mobile phone to low cost countries became a real force.

Stanley is a 165 year old American corporate. It was a very paternalistic company up until the last CEO, Mr John Trani. People stayed for their whole career. They were very loyal. He changed that culture in just two years. You have to admire how he inflicted it on the organization. A lot of people didn't like it. We are only now starting to see passion coming back into the company.

Who is responsible for organizational development?

Well the true answer is everyone. In fact it is the HR people. We have a strong appraisal process where people are ranked from 'A' to 'C'. HR are the keepers of that process. Does it work? Some people say 'yes', some say 'no'.

We were an old, sleepy company, we rewarded people who didn't perform as much as people who did. It was under siege at the time, there were a lot of people in Stanley who needed leadership and new skills sets.



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If you joined Stanley today, would you make it to Commercial Director?

If you were someone who joined the organization, and worked and succeeded, you would achieve and make it. I don't have a degree, so getting over the first hurdle may be a problem. What is the next step for you?

I love the job I do and consider myself very fortunate, and have no desire for further progression. I get claustrophobic, I need to be on the road, out meeting people and making things happen. I am now 52 and I will retire when I'm 55. This decision is also driven by wanting to spend more time with my wife who has been patiently waiting for too many years.

We have just acquired a large company in France, I would like to play a part in managing that acquisition. I love putting organizations together.

Someone once said, "I'm good at getting people circled around and leading them over the hill together, but I don't always know what happens when we get over the other side." I think there is some truth in that.

How does Stanley develop it's people?

I think Stanley has a keen, desire to have a proper people development process. We are in an evolutionary curve and are somewhat coming up the other side of the curve. Our HR process was a hire-fire process for want of a better description. As we went through that change to a matrix organization, we went through a phase where people were expected to change or ship out. I have been here 25 years, I am the only senior manager in our European Commercial organization that has been here for that length of time.

Change the old for the new, recruit new people from the market. We were overrun by GE people, we seemed to have more people from GE than from Stanley. A considerable number of the senior management was from GE. The HR director globally was an ex-GE guy.

We are now coming up the curve. There is a great desire to build back consistency in people and the organization and that is leading us to a point where real organizational development is really necessary. It will have to be done rather than just talked about.

This is reason we got involved with Mitchell Phoenix in the first place. We were trying to find a way of developing ourselves and find out what was happening and to help us deliver. Consequently we then adopted the Mitchell Phoenix model, which is calm, and sensible.

When you find yourself in the middle of a maelstrom, everyday life becomes tedious, it become something you survive rather enjoy. Organizational development is something you should enjoy. It is giving you confidence in what you can become. At that stage, we were looking for something that gave us a stable, sane approach.

To me the Mitchell Phoenix approach was always about the people and what the people needed.

I think what Mitchell Phoenix did was give us the "yes we are right", we are approaching things in the correct way. At the moment we are in the middle of this storm that is almost unbelievable. The days we took to go to Mitchell Phoenix were calm days, what we saw and did were sensible. It was reassurance that we were right but we also had to live with the reality of where we were. It was reassuring to understand that the behaviours that you need to have are the logical behaviour instead of a crazed shouting processes back at the office. To me the Mitchell Phoenix approach was always

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about the people and what the people needed. And reassurance of that we could get through this thing. It was therapeutic; it helped me understand my own lack of belief in my own abilities and my own insecurities. The things that were happening were things that we didn't understand. I had been propelled to things that I hadn't been prepared for.

I have been to other seminars since with some people who are fairly senior and you get to hear that other people have had similar experiences.

Even as we put this experience behind us, Stanley is still a demanding place.

What is the Stanley organizational development approach?

The UK has gone through an explicit people development process. There is a methodology, and we have used external organizations. We used to have a European development person. That has gone now, however there is still a desire to have a European development process.

In Stanley corporate, there is electronic training that occurs all the time. For example training on anti-trust law, corporate regulations. There is quite a bit that is starting to build. There is now a process that takes the brightest young people in the organization and develops them. We have a fabulous training center in New Britain. The framework is starting to be built to have a strong and proactive process.

As a manager how do you develop people under you?

I would take my leadership team and come together on a quarterly process. Part of that would be the numbers and part would be development for the individuals. There is normally content on product knowledge and there are also individual requirements. I am now about to do my half year appraisals with each of my staff. Every year we also aim to have a major activity for the leadership team in Europe.

Part of the commitment in the UK was that we would never cut the training budget. It was cut in Europe. I don't think we have fully understood European training.

What is unique about European training?

Culturally there are differences, languages are the big challenge. We need to have multi-lingual people. At senior management level you can use English, at the lower levels we need to have people who can speak the languages in each country.

How do you customize the development processes?

It has to take into account the cultural differences, however it can be the same content. People largely fit the stereotype of their country. If you forget that, then you run into trouble and fail to achieve what you are trying to achieve.

The requirement stays the same, the delivery of the thing is different. The Spaniard eats their dinner at 10pm, the German at 6pm. These are simple illustrations but if you have a mixed group of people you have to take that difference into account. People will tolerate and adapt for very short periods, not for much longer.

"You seem to be a bit remote from the leadership development process", how would you react to that observation?

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It's quite hard for me to control organizational development. I have a requirement that I need to have fulfilled. Part of what I try to achieve I do with the individual. This is stuff we do all day and everyday. By review and appraisal etc.

At Stanley we are very very focused on our performance. When the performance is not where it should be, you can get calls at all times of day and night, asking "where's your number?, where's your number?". That short-termism drives all we do. As an organization we are coming up the other side of the curve. The culture was dragged down to this hour by hour process.

A lot of it is driven by quarterly Wall Street requirement. The focus gets dragged away from the rest of the organization. Everything else stops functioning. In the last few weeks of a quarter, our performance has not been where we need to be, we have acquired another company. We have done a bunch of stuff on a daily basis. While battling off some requirement for information on the "has it stopped raining yet" type of question.

It requires leadership to keep people focused on what needs to be the focus.

The people development processes in there can just get lost. Back when I was running the UK business it was absolutely one of the balls we had in the air. Our European and global organization is much more mature that it was 6-7 years ago and so now it is a lower priority. It comes down to the difference between the organization's requirement and the people's requirements in the short term.

Some people get into the don't perform or get out mindset. This is counter-productive for Stanley. Our customers are very stable and our products are complex. We need to have an organization that is also stable and has depth to understand our products.

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What role does leadership development play in this sort of culture?

Our culture is starting to build. What we did in the UK was put our lead team through the process. To say to people, this is the culture we want, this is the expectation of how you will perform as a manager. We have run many lines of management through this programme. People follow the example of their managers so the expected culture starts to flow through the organization.

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As an organization we are coming up the other side of the curve. We want people to understand what we want to be when we reach the top.

If you as an organization are an adolescent, who are the adults?

We benchmarked ourselves with Black and Decker and other similar competitors. Who are the adults? I don't think I can answer your questions. It would be very interesting. What we are is very "GE'esq", our appraisal process GE and so on. GE became our benchmark because that is what most of the people understood. GE is a very successful company. GE trains the chief executives for many companies. They are excellent. GE is not Stanley and we need to grow in our own way.

How would you manage the Stanley acquisition of Facom?



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All the people from Facom I have met have all been very good people. Everyone has been impressive. I would put together a lead team from both Stanley and Facom. I would then take three months to get people engaged in where we are. Make sure you understand who they were, both good and bad. Their market is distinctly different to us. Put a team of people that is very, very balanced. Find out who the key influencers are and take away their fear. There is now fear on both sides, in Europe they are bigger than us. So everyone is asking, both in Stanley and Facom, how does this affect me? If you can take away that you can move forward fairly swiftly.

How has the world changed in the last 25 years?

It's a much more competitive environment. People now approach their careers in a different way. They think of their CVs in a different way. "I have been here for 5 years, time to get variety" so they move on. Great companies are built on great people so organizational development is important, if people don't feel they are being developed they will move on.

Would you employ you?

Stanley is still a place that looks for and appreciates individuals, and much of our recruitment process is now based on aptitude rather than qualifications, **so yes I would!**

In the last 15 years I have had to learn. I have always found the right people in the right places to overcome any shortcomings I may have had. Some people who have aligned themselves with me have done very well. My experience has been that there are people who can see and people who can't see. For those people who can see they will benefit from the opportunity to work closely and benefit from the success.

To do what I do today you should also have one or two languages. I am here because the organization has a need for knowledge and stability and at the end of the day we kept delivering the numbers. My passion for Stanley has also never wavered. Find the level and do more. It's basic stuff. It has always been relatively easier to do better than someone else. You also have to be lucky and you need to work with good people on the way. Today the key to the door is different. It does exclude very good people however you have to get the job to improve in the job. Look at all the major entrepreneurs in the world. They are successful yet few would succeed as a career player in a major corporation. Big organizations need to have people who want to be developed.

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