



Harvard Business School features Sapient as example of excellence in Leadership and Organizational Behavior

“We need to be focused on our clients like no one else. And our desire for their success has to be unparalleled, it has to be.”

Jerry Greenberg
Co-Chairman and Co-CEO
Sapient

Harvard Business School (HBS) professors Joel Podolny and Rakesh Khurana recently chose Sapient to feature in a case study on leadership. Sapient is now one of a select group of companies featured in the school's core curriculum and is taught to all 900 first-year MBA students as part of the Leadership and Organizational Behavior class.

The case study follows the company from its beginnings in 1991 through its record-breaking growth, perseverance through the difficult business climate of 2001 and 2002, and return to profitable growth in the years following. The case study is not about the growth itself, but how the firm's leadership and unwavering attention to its “strategic context” — purpose, vision, goals, core values, and people- and client- value propositions — have enabled Sapient to adapt and thrive in a fast-changing market as they strive to build a great company that has a long-lasting impact on the world.

Founded on a Single Promise

From the start, Sapient's single promise — to deliver the right business results, on-time and on-budget — was very appealing to executives who were extremely frustrated with projects going way over budget and schedule and, even worse, completed without the required business functionality. This is supported in the following excerpt from the case:

Greenberg and Moore did not start a company simply with the purpose of moving with technological trends. From the beginning, they sought to build a long-lasting company that would help clients realize business impact from technology, something other consulting firms had not been able to consistently deliver.¹

Purpose and People

The case study also describes how Sapient's adaptability and success with clients can be traced to the company's strong reliance upon and execution of its strategic context. From the earliest years of the company, Greenberg and Moore devoted tremendous time and energy to ensuring that all of Sapient's people were keenly aware of how their actions connected to this, as the following excerpt states:

Their purpose and core values focused on client's success. Sapient's people understood that the purpose of a project was never to simply ensure that a technological system was put in place; rather the purpose was to meet some business goal, and a client engagement could only be considered successful when the business goal had been met, not when the “switch for the new system had been turned on.”²

Committed to Building a Great Company

To succeed for 14 years in this industry required that Sapient continually adapted to changing client demands and technology trends. Greenberg and Moore believe Sapient has demonstrated that it is possible to deliver a new level of value in this industry, but their ultimate objective is to build a long-lasting, great company that will make an impact on the world.

While the case study serves as a retrospective of the company's journey to date, Moore and Greenberg insist that the Sapient story is far from over. “We're not satisfied with Sapient ... yet,” according to Moore. “We won't be satisfied until we've built something that will stand the test of time, something that has no close second. It would be intolerable to settle for anything less.”

The case is available to the public via the HBS Publishing web site www.hbsp.harvard.edu

For more information on Sapient, visit www.sapient.com



¹ Khurana, Rakesh and Joel Podolny (2004), “Sapient Corporation,” HBS Case 9-405-04519, p.1.

² IBID, p.2.