

- its strategic connection
- stakeholder satisfaction when the result is achieved
- whether the WIG matches the team's passion, talent, and energy
- the availability of time, money, and other resources

#### Cascading Top Priorities to the Frontline

Tanner said once leaders had completed the Aligning Goals process and put the performance measures in place, the natural next step was to begin cascading the WIGs to the rest of the organization.

The first group of frontline employees to experience an Aligning Goals work session was INVESTTools' workshop instructors who teach the one- and two-day investor education courses, as well as the workshop directors who manage and host those workshop events. The objective was to help these key employees—who interface directly with customers—to establish their workgroup goals and gain a clear line of sight as to how these goals tie to the organization's big-picture goals.

As Don Tanner explained, CEO Lee Barba kicked off this Aligning Goals work session with a slide presentation about INVESTTools' WIGs. "Lee discussed the performance measures around the WIGs and really answered why these instructors and directors were going through the training in the first place," Tanner said. "These employees in particular have a significant impact on customer

satisfaction and growing the lifetime value of the customer, which are two of INVESTTools' three WIGs."

#### Meaningful Results and Future Focus

So what's been the immediate impact of the xQ Survey, xQ Leadership Debrief, and Aligning Goals for Results work sessions on INVESTTools? Lee Barba put it this way: "The xQ data and Aligning Goals for Results courses have been the impetus for change at INVESTTools. We've restructured our management team and have communicated the WIGs to all employees through personal meetings involving myself and everyone's direct manager. I have authorized and encouraged each of the senior managers to work with FranklinCovey to develop WIGs for each operating unit that connect with the corporate WIGs and to help fulfill them. In addition, I've encouraged senior management team members to pursue individual training with FranklinCovey to improve management skills in the areas of communication, team building, and time management."

As for the future, INVESTTools plans to continue cascading the Aligning Goals process throughout its various operations teams, including sales, marketing, and finance, so that everyone's in step with where the company is headed. The company also plans to implement FranklinCovey's Focus workshop among all employees, and will administer another xQ

Survey in six months to assess improvements in focus and execution.

According to Barba, the outcomes INVESTTools wanted to realize by engaging FranklinCovey solutions included: 1) having a positive outlook toward change and managing change to create shareholder value, and 2) creating an understanding that 'entrepreneurial' and 'corporate' are not two mutually exclusive words. "We can be entrepreneurial in meeting corporate objectives, yet be corporate in our execution of initiatives to grow the lifetime value for our customers and shareholders," he said.

Barba added: "FranklinCovey fulfilled a critical role in bringing together our diverse cultures following the merger, as well as focusing the management team and Board of Directors on how to get back on a growth fast-track with improved profitability and customer satisfaction."

He concluded, "I am delighted to report that INVESTTools has achieved successive, record-breaking monthly results following our work with FranklinCovey. This work has led to the definition, communication, and implementation of our WIGs accompanied by a disciplined change process, measurable performance benchmarks across all of our operating lines, and a restructuring of our management team to achieve a focus on profitability for our shareholders."



## Improved Results through Disciplined Change



More than 80,000 people around the world have graduated from the company's investor education programs.

#### The Challenge

Since the merger, INVESTTools has witnessed a strategy tug-of-war and resistance to change among some of its leadership. According to CEO Lee Barba, certain executives and Board members favored sticking with the company's traditional business model that focused primarily on workshop training.

However, Barba and other leaders were convinced that such an approach wouldn't sustain the company long-term, particularly as the bull market of the 1990s turned into the bear market of 2001–2003. They advocated reinventing the company by creating a more holistic approach to investor education through a continuum of customer touch points. Rather than offer a one-time, live workshop with no follow-up, leaders envisioned training services and tools that moved customers toward lifelong learning and a seamless customer experience in all interactions with the company. "The environment at INVESTTools was a textbook clash of dynamic

#### Executive Summary

As a result of implementing elements of the FranklinCovey Focus Solution, including the xQ™ Survey and the Aligning Goals for Results work session, the recently merged company INVESTTools is succeeding in: blending business cultures, charting a new corporate strategy, managing change to create shareholder value, and ensuring that the responsibilities of frontline workers are aligned with the company's wildly important goals to achieve strategic objectives.

#### Background

When two companies combine, it's not what merges, but what emerges that matters. Take INVESTTools, Inc. for example. This leading investor education company based primarily in Provo, Utah is the outgrowth of a year-old merger. Like most organizations trying to blend two cultures, INVESTTools has encountered its share of challenges and clashes as it strives to shape a viable vision and long-term strategic direction.

Today, INVESTTools offers a full range of investor education products and services, including instructor-led workshops, DVD and video-based "at-home" study courses, personal training sessions, periodic investor conferences, investment research tools, and investment advisory newsletters.

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## Elements of the Focus Solution

The Focus Solution from FranklinCovey includes: 1) the xQ Survey, 2) the Aligning Goals for Results work session for leaders and managers, 3) the FOCUS: Achieving Your Highest Priorities workshop for all employees, and 4) the FranklinCovey Planning System available in a variety of digital and paper-based formats.

**The xQ Survey**—the spearhead of the Focus Solution—is a Web-based management tool that measures an organization’s Execution Quotient™. The 31 assessment items, including five open-ended questions, reveal gaps in clarity of focus, commitment to priorities, discipline to follow through, and execution within any organization, and how the findings can help organizations link frontline tasks to top priorities.

Specifically concerning clarity of focus for example, the xQ Survey helps answer the following:

- Does everyone know and understand the organization’s most important goals?
- Is everyone committed to achieving them?
- Do all employees know what they need to do to achieve them?
- Do they have the discipline to follow through?

**The Aligning Goals for Results work session** helps leaders and managers identify the highest priorities for their teams based on strategic objectives, and teaches managers how to help teams focus and execute on these tasks day-after-day, week-after-week. The session also teaches managers skills to help ensure their entire team is aligned to the supervisor’s most important work objectives.

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entrepreneurial energy unable to adapt as the company grew beyond management’s ability to specialize and build the necessary enterprise processes and systems that foster customer satisfaction and lifetime customer value,” Barba said. “While some executives were highly innovative, they lacked clarity and organization around what the company’s highest priorities should be. The company had one product and one way of doing things that evolved successfully around the founders in a hierarchical structure. This structure did not promote open communication or internal controls to challenge the efficiency of existing processes, which resulted in ‘all-nighters’, missed deadlines, and penny-wise, pound-foolish infrastructure investments.”

Barba added that the conflict between the entrepreneurial culture and the

sustainable environment of a complex, multi-product public company on top of all of the normal merger issues of integration was inevitable. “Plus,” he said, “we needed to help our employees improve their organizational skills, follow up on tasks and responsibilities more effectively, meet deadlines consistently, and fulfill the company’s potential by working together as a team.”

## The Opportunity

Barba telephoned FranklinCovey and spoke with business-development representative, Aaron Thompson. Barba discussed with Thompson how the entrepreneurial spirit at INVESTTools was a rationale for not being better organized, and asked about FranklinCovey’s approach to working with organizations. Thompson provided an overview of the FranklinCovey Focus Solution, the

elements of which are designed to help organizations succeed by unleashing the power of their workforce to focus and execute on their top organizational priorities.

## The Solutions in Action

Barba’s phone call to FranklinCovey led to more discussions at INVESTTools’ operational headquarters in Provo, and ultimately to a scheduled roll-out of the xQ Survey and the Aligning Goals for Results work session. Approximately 80 percent of all INVESTTools employees completed the xQ Survey online. An xQ Leadership Debrief session followed for 16 members of INVESTTools’ senior leadership team to review data from the xQ Survey. Drawing on data from the xQ Survey Report, leaders created an action plan for raising xQ scores and performance levels.

## A Baseline for Improvement

The overall xQ score measures an organization’s ability to focus and execute on key organizational priorities. A score of 100 indicates that people are fully focused and executing precisely. INVESTTools’ overall score was 53. As to how well the company had clarified its wildly important goals, INVESTTools scored a 43.

“The scores didn’t necessarily surprise us, nevertheless they were humbling,” Barba said. “The overwhelming ‘a-ha’ for us was the fact that we didn’t have a clear corporate direction that everyone on the management team supported and communicated in a consistent manner to all employees. While leaders and employees sensed we didn’t know where we were going, we now had data that confirmed we had a problem.”

As a result of the xQ Debrief, senior leaders committed to having a list of clear organizational goals within 30 days. The team also agreed to “institutionalize accountability” and to put performance-measurement



systems in place. What’s more, they committed to making the goals transparent throughout the organization and creating a clear line of sight from leadership to the frontline so that everyone was on the same page and empowered to accomplish the company’s wildly important goals (WIGs).

During the xQ Debrief, leaders also identified barriers to success, which included no system to move ideas up the ladder, a lack of open communication among senior leaders, and little focus on operational execution. “Until an organization starts executing and meeting commitments and deadlines, nothing really changes,” Barba said. “Everyone on the management team thought they were doing a fantastic job individually, yet the team was failing to meet its objectives on behalf of our customers and shareholders in the areas of customer satisfaction, revenue growth, and profitability.”

## The Next Logical Step—Aligning Goals for Results

Within a few weeks of the xQ Debrief, the same members of the leadership team experienced a full-day Aligning Goals for Results work session facilitated by Don Tanner, FranklinCovey Senior Consultant. With Tanner serving the role as an independent third party, INVESTTools’ management and Board of Directors spent an intensive day working to identify the organization’s WIGs, putting measures around them, translating them into action, and



learning how to engage their own frontline teams in the goal-alignment process.

“Not only was it evident from the xQ Survey that employees didn’t know what our goals were, those of us in the same room for the Aligning Goals session differed on what the goals should be, how they should be implemented, and which members of the team needed to work across functional lines to accomplish the specific tasks,” Barba said.

Using the tools and processes of the Aligning Goals for Results work session, the leaders ultimately landed on the following three WIGs for the organization:

- **Expand Distribution and Product Diversification**
- **Increase Customer Satisfaction**
- **Grow the Lifetime Value of the Customer**

Don Tanner helped leaders take each of these WIGs through the Importance Screen, an Aligning Goals tool that helps clarify each WIG by considering:

- its economic impact to the organization