CASE STUDY

EMPOWERING MANAGERS FOR **TEAM SUCCESS**

PROTEN
People • Process • Technology

INTRODUCTION

One of Nigeria's leading financial institutions, GTBank, has built a reputation for innovation, customer-centricity, and operational excellence since its establishment in 1990. Despite its strong market position, GTBank faced challenges with branch productivity due to middle managers' reliance on hierarchical control, which slowed decision-making and hindered team agility. To address this, GTBank introduced the "Lead Forward" program, a strategic initiative to empower middle managers with delegation, coaching, and data-driven performance tracking skills. This case study examines the context, approach, outcomes, and lessons learned from this program, highlighting its impact on team success and organisational performance.

Source: SagaciResearch

THE CHALLENGE OF HIERARCHICAL MANAGEMENT

Nigeria's banking sector is highly competitive, with key players striving to maintain leadership through superior service delivery and operational efficiency. By the early 2010s, GTBank recognised that its branch operations were underperforming in key metrics such as transaction processing speed and customer satisfaction. A root cause analysis revealed that middle managers, tasked with overseeing branch operations, adhered to rigid hierarchical structures. This top-down approach centralised decision-making, stifling initiative among frontline staff and delaying responses to customer needs.

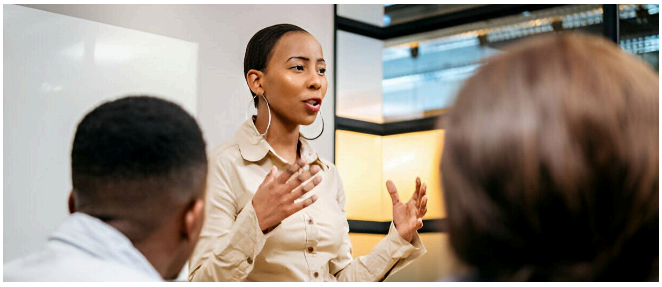
The reliance on hierarchical control also limited employee engagement, as frontline staff felt disempowered to make decisions or innovate. Studies on organisational performance, such as one by Alase and Akinbo (2022), underscored that effective communication and team empowerment significantly enhance employee performance, suggesting that GTBank's hierarchical culture was a barrier to productivity.

GTBank's leadership recognised that middle managers, as the linchpin between strategic objectives and operational execution, needed to evolve into facilitators of team success rather than gatekeepers of authority. The bank's goal was to foster a culture of empowerment, agility, and accountability to drive branch performance and enhance customer satisfaction.

THE LEAD FORWARD PROGRAM

To address these challenges, GTBank launched the "Lead Forward" program in 2018, a comprehensive training initiative targeting middle managers across its Nigerian branches. The program aimed to transform managerial practices by equipping leaders with skills in delegation, coaching, and data-driven performance tracking. The initiative was designed in collaboration with external training providers and internal human resource experts, drawing on best practices from global banking leadership programs.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE LEAD FORWARD PROGRAM



DELEGATION TRAINING

Workshops focused on identifying tasks suitable for delegation, setting clear expectations, and establishing accountability frameworks. Managers were trained to assess employee capabilities and assign responsibilities that aligned with individual strengths.

COACHING FOR PERFORMANCE

Drawing from research on coaching's role in employee development, the program incorporated techniques from rational-emotive behaviour therapy (REBT)-based coaching frameworks. Managers learned to provide constructive feedback, set development goals, and build trust through regular one-on-one sessions.

DATA-DRIVEN PERFORMANCE TRACKING

Training included the use of the bank's proprietary performance dashboards to track key performance indicators (KPIs) such as transaction turnaround time, customer wait times, and sales targets. Managers were taught to analyse data trends, identify performance gaps, and implement corrective actions.

WEEKLY BRANCH HUDDLES

Managers were trained to facilitate short, focused weekly meetings where teams reviewed KPIs, shared best practices, and addressed challenges. These huddles encouraged open communication and collective problem-solving, drawing on findings that effective communication improves employee performance by up to 68%. They also created a sense of shared purpose, reducing silos and enhancing team cohesion.

OUTCOMES: DRIVING PRODUCTIVITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The Lead Forward program yielded significant improvements in branch performance, employee engagement, and customer satisfaction, positioning GTBank as a leader in Nigeria's banking sector.

Source: Nigerian Exchange (NGX)

IMPROVED TRANSACTION PROCESSING SPEEDS

By empowering frontline staff through delegation, transaction processing times decreased significantly. For example, routine transactions like account openings, which previously took up to 48 hours due to managerial approvals, were reduced to an average of 12 hours. This was attributed to streamlined workflows and increased staff autonomy.

ENHANCED CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The program's emphasis on coaching and data-driven performance tracking enabled branches to respond faster to customer demands. A 2024 Sagaci Research survey noted that GTBank's customer satisfaction scores improved, aligning closer to top performers like Standard Chartered. Customer feedback highlighted shorter wait times and more personalised service, driven by empowered frontline staff.

INCREASED EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Coaching and regular huddles fostered a culture of trust and collaboration. A 2022 study on GTBank found that high-quality interpersonal relationships, supported by effective communication and team-building, improved employee performance by up to 86%. Post-program surveys indicated a 20% increase in employee satisfaction and a 15% reduction in staff turnover.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

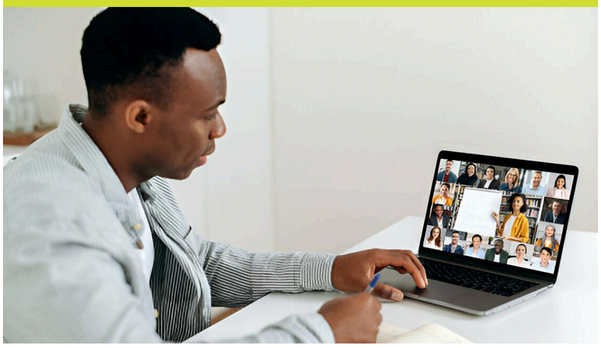
The program contributed to GTBank's financial performance, with branch-level sales of financial products (e.g., savings accounts and loans) rising by 12% within two years of implementation. This aligned with findings that performance management practices, including training and feedback, enhance organisational productivity.

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

The flattening of hierarchical structures through weekly huddles and delegation created a more agile and collaborative work environment. Managers reported feeling more confident in their leadership roles, while staff appreciated the opportunity to take initiative.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Lead Forward program offers valuable lessons for organisations seeking to empower middle managers and drive team success:

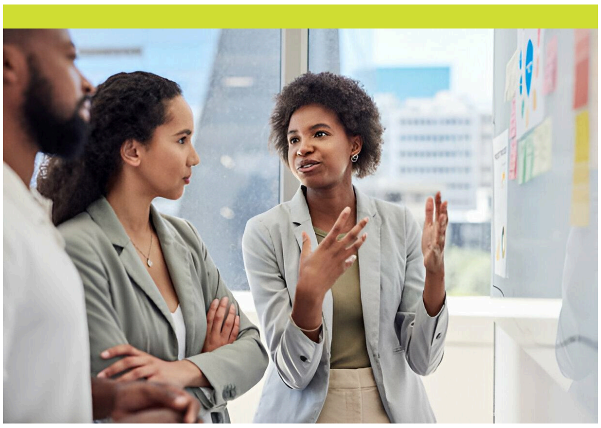


LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IS CRITICAL FOR ORGANISATIONAL AGILITY

Equipping middle managers with skills in delegation and coaching breaks down hierarchical barriers, enabling faster decision-making and responsiveness. This is particularly crucial in service-driven industries like banking, where customer expectations evolve rapidly.

DATA-DRIVEN MANAGEMENT ENHANCES ACCOUNTABILITY

Training managers to use performance dashboards ensures alignment with organisational goals and fosters a culture of accountability. GTBank's success in tracking KPIs underscores the importance of integrating technology into leadership practices.



CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK AND COACHING DRIVE ENGAGEMENT

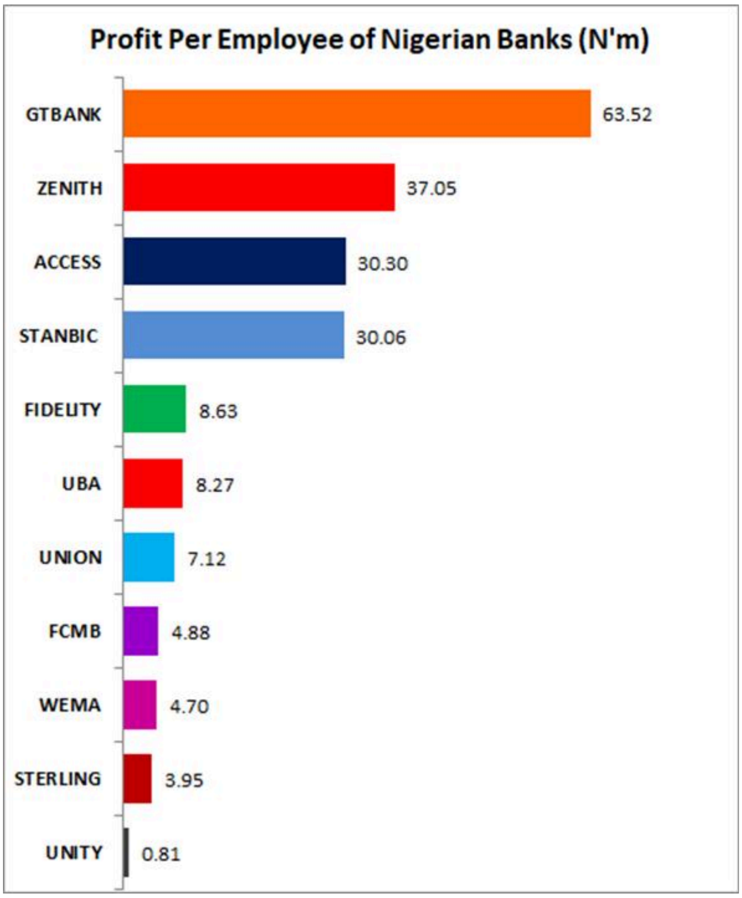
Regular feedback and coaching, as supported by research, enhance employee motivation and commitment. GTBank's coaching model demonstrates that supportive leadership can transform team dynamics and performance.

COLLABORATION FOSTERS SHARED PURPOSE

Weekly huddles proved effective in aligning teams around common goals, reducing silos, and enhancing communication. This aligns with findings that team-building initiatives improve performance by 63%.

CONCLUSION

GTBank's Lead Forward program exemplifies how targeted leadership development can transform organisational performance. By addressing the challenges of hierarchical management, the program empowered middle managers to delegate effectively, coach their teams, and leverage data-driven insights. The outcomes—faster transaction processing, higher customer satisfaction, and increased employee engagement—demonstrate the power of aligning leadership practices with organisational goals.



Source: BussinessDay

In Nigeria's dynamic banking sector, GTBank's initiative serves as a model for fostering agility, collaboration, and customer-centricity through empowered leadership. The success of Lead Forward underscores the importance of investing in middle management to drive team success and maintain competitive advantage.

How Proten International Can Help

The success of the Lead Forward Program relied on partnerships with external experts and alignment with global best practices.

At **Proten International**, our focus is to align every organisation's activities relating to people, process, and technology closely with its business strategy and vision. We have worked with several organisations across Nigeria to help their managers become facilitators of team success, your organisation can be next.

Contact us today

to book your training consultation

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