

Team Turnaround & Culture Change

When Experience Hinders Success

Tagline: *From Compliance to Influence*

BetterGround Advisory | Case Study

AT A GLANCE

A high-visibility team responsible for new store openings transforms its culture, capabilities, and reputation—reducing turnover from 160-200% to sustainable levels, expanding P&L ownership from 1 quarter to 5+, and rebuilding trust across the enterprise.

The Team

One RVP described it bluntly: "They were like drug dealers. They liked having folks addicted to needing them. The problem was when they left, the teams didn't know how to function without them."

The problem was that most of them didn't see it that way.

The team looked impressive on paper. Twelve seasoned veterans, averaging late-50s to early-60s, traveling 38-40 weeks a year to open new stores for a \$3B restaurant and retail company. They owned the company's growth engine—every new store opening, plus serving as the testing ground for new concepts before they rolled enterprise-wide. Two-thirds of the strategy the CEO shared with Wall Street ran through this team.

The Challenge

They had gotten comfortable. Their skills had diminished. They confused compliance for influence—mistaking nods and smiles for actual buy-in. Store managers, district managers, even Regional Vice Presidents would agree to everything in the room, then do whatever they wanted the moment the team left town.

The results showed it. New store turnover ranged from 160% on the low end to over 200% on the high end. The disruption was devastating inexperienced employees training even newer employees, the blind leading the blind. Knowledge walked out the door before it could take root. Food quality suffered. Retail product sat on shelves. Operations churned. Managers worked in the weeds—too overwhelmed to teach, coach, or connect with guests. The best talent transferred out or quit entirely. The hours were long, the stress was high, and the new store concept had become a beast that scared people away.

The pattern was predictable: stores opened with strong sales, bled for months as teams struggled, then took years—sometimes a decade—to rebuild. The enterprise was losing confidence.

The Approach

We had to reboot the entire operation. Not just new processes—new standards, new mindset, new identity.

First, we reestablished trust with stakeholders who had written off the team. That meant acknowledging the reputation problem directly, not defending it. We needed RVPs and district managers to believe this team was capable of something different—and that required showing them, not telling them.

Then we turned inward. The old definition of success was showing up and getting the job done. The new definition was building capability that lasted after we left. Teaching, not doing. Coaching, not directing. Empowering, not creating dependency.

We raised the bar on personal and professional standards for everyone—the core team, the extended team, down to hourly employees in the stores. Excellence wasn't optional.

And we confronted the burnout problem directly. Many team members believed working longer hours was proof of dedication. It wasn't. It was exhaustion masquerading as commitment and destroying their ability to think clearly, make good decisions, and influence others under pressure.

The work was hard and required many difficult conversations. There was some turnover and retirements which proved beneficial in the long run. Not everyone made the journey, and that was the right outcome.

The Results

The transformation showed up first in the numbers that mattered most: **turnover at new stores dropped from 160-200% to sustainable levels.** Knowledge stayed. Quality improved. Managers could finally step back from the weeds and lead.

But the deeper shift was operational confidence. **P&L responsibility expanded from 1 fiscal quarter to 5** because stores were stabilizing faster and district leaders were genuinely happy to have the extra help.

The reputation flipped entirely. RVPs who once avoided the team started requesting help turning around struggling stores. Recruiting transformed from struggling to fill positions to turning qualified candidates away. We rebranded the team, built a new strategic plan, and created something people wanted to be part of.

The confidence we rebuilt across the enterprise made the "Store of the Future" initiative viable. Without this turnaround, that transformation never happens.

The Takeaway: The hardest cultural problems hide in plain sight. Dedication masking as burnout. Experience that's become complacency. Influence that's really dependency. Fixing it requires naming what's broken, raising the bar, and accepting that not everyone will make the journey.

Engagement Overview

Client: Restaurant & Retail (\$3B+, 600+ locations)
Duration: 2+ years
Capabilities: Team Development | Culture Change | Operational Turnaround | Leadership Coaching | Change Management

