

Case Study: Buckman Laboratories

[Background](#) | [Process](#)



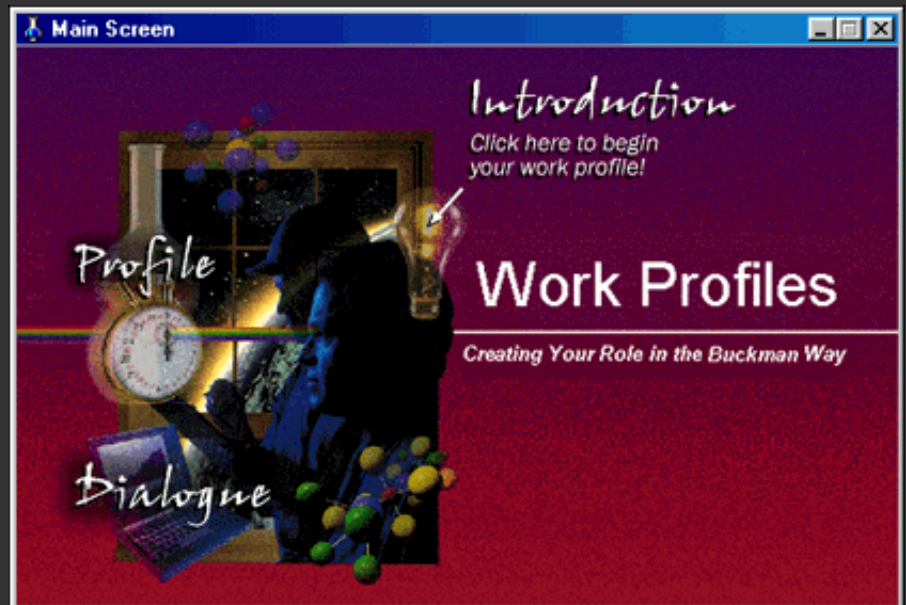
In 1996, significant changes were taking place at Buckman Laboratories International, Inc., a specialty chemicals company based in Memphis, Tennessee. Steve Buckman, CEO of Buckman Labs, met with a group of his top managers to address changing the direction of this global organization. This leadership group envisioned a paradigm shift from a traditional, hierarchical organizational structure to a structure focused on processes and results. The group recognized that for any change initiative to succeed, it was absolutely vital that each Buckman Associate fully understand and appreciate his/her role in the new direction of Buckman. The creation of an individualized Work Profile by each Associate was selected as the first step in this planned paradigm shift.

The Work Profile was seen as a means for Associates to clarify their role in the success of the global Buckman organization by describing the key results of their work, and the essential actions required to produce those results. Steve Buckman acted immediately on the group's decision by announcing two ambitious goals for the organization, world-wide: (1) Each Buckman Associate would create an individualized Work Profile by June 15, 1998, and (2) Each Buckman Associate would receive a formal performance review by November, 1998. Buckman's Human Resources Department was charged with the responsibility for implementing this plan. Initially, Work Profiles were created manually with paper and pen, a time consuming, potential obstacle in the overall plan for a worldwide, cultural transformation within the organization.

Harvesting Process

To overcome this obstacle and streamline the process for creating and deploying Work Profiles, Steve Buckman assembled a collaborative group that included (1) Process/content experts within the Buckman Human Resources Department, and (2) Knowledge Harvesting experts from LearnerFirst, Inc. The goal of this group was to harvest the knowledge required to design and develop software that would provide a means for each Associate's Work Profile to be:

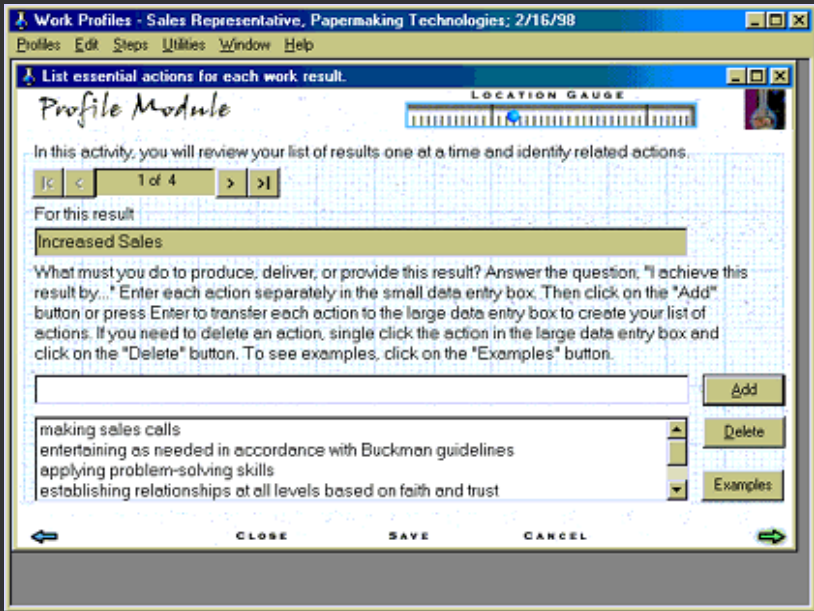
- Self-generated and unique.
- Created with reasonable effort.
- Created in minimal time (average = within 2 hours).
- Easily shared with others.
- Easily transmitted by electronic means to and from all Buckman locations around the world.
- Easily stored.
- Easily updated and changed.
- Linked directly to the performance review process.



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From September through December 1997, Larry Wilson of LearnerFirst conducted knowledge harvesting sessions with Steve Buckman and Buckman’s Human Resources process/content experts (Mark Koskiniemi, John Absalom, and Chip Westbrook). Larry harvested the knowledge of these Buckman human resource experts related to the underlying assumptions, requirements, and component parts of the Work Profiles process, as well as the particular information that would comprise an individual Work Profile. When the information gathered in the harvesting sessions was organized and structured, the underlying assumptions and organizing framework for the Work Profiles process became clear.

Once the methodology was developed, it was submitted to an academic human resources expert, Dr. Jennifer Burnett, for validation of the process and content. After this validation, LearnerFirst designed and developed the Windows’95® software application entitled "Work Profiles." The completed software application and on-line documentation has been translated into many languages, and is now available for Buckman Associates in any country to download from LearnerFirst’s World Wide Web site.



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