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CASE STUDY

TURNING A SHRINKING BRANCH INTO A $130M LEADERSHIP ENGINE

Company: S.I. Systems
Position: Branch Manager, Ottawa
Industry: Staffing and Consulting

PMI PICKS WINNERS: TURNING A SHRINKING BRANCH INTO A $130M LEADERSHIP ENGINE

CHALLENGE

S.I. Systems had a problem child: its Ottawa operation.

Built through multiple acquisitions, then left to drift, revenue was down more than 25% since the deal while the rest of the company grew. There were three clashing cultures, no KRAs, no standards, and no accountability. The market was still recovering from the Nortel/telecom collapse and packed with recruiters fighting over the same people and clients.

They didn’t need a caretaker.

They needed a builder.

The Mandate
We were tasked to reset culture and expectations, rebuild margin and win rates, and turn a shrinking asset into a high-performing P&L.

Most firms would have chased the loudest local “star” — the wild-west branch manager with a big book and bigger bad habits. We deliberately didn’t.

PMI’s Pick
We identified Brian Brady, then a young manager at Manpower/Harrington:
• Leading a team of 10 with 80 consultants billing in a brutal Ottawa market.
• Already thinking in terms of team design, culture, and measurable performance.

Referred by his manager, he went through a rigorous process: candid conversations about the real state of the branch, interviews with top producers and executives, and a clear message that this was a 150% effort environment, not a lifestyle job.

We bet on his culture-building and systems mindset, not just his numbers.

What He Did
• Reset expectations, office hours, and basic discipline.
• Introduced KRAs, removed poor performers, and made performance visible.
• Diversified into public + private sector, formed partner bids for larger projects, moved upstream into higher-value roles, and pushed gross margin on every deal.
• Built a dedicated private-sector group inside Ottawa that became a second engine, balancing cycles and building new expertise.

Leadership Development (The Multiplier Effect)
This wasn’t just about numbers:
• Brian won Forty Under 40 in 2012, signalling city-wide recognition of his impact.
• He led Fight for the Cure in 2011, raising money for cancer and demonstrating the same “all-in” leadership in the community he showed at work.
• He led the National Association of Canadian Consulting Businesses (NACCB) for several years, shaping the broader industry.
• From the Ottawa operation, Brian grew multiple leaders who went on to become Vice Presidents and Managing Directors in Toronto, Vancouver, and Ottawa, exporting talent and know-how to help other areas grow.

The Results
Under Brian's leadership, Ottawa:
• Grew from $18M (declining) to about $130M and growing.
• Increased gross margin from 13% to 20%.
• Boosted RFP win rate from 15% to 65%.

The government/Ottawa engine became the largest segment in the company, contributing roughly 35% of total GM, converting about 50% of GM to EBITDA, greatly increasing enterprise value, and providing a hedge against private-sector swings.

Why It Matters
This is what "PMI picks winners" means in practice:
• We avoided the obvious but risky choices.
• We designed the spec around leadership DNA, not just revenue history.
• We placed a leader who turned a broken asset into a $130M engine.
• And that leader built a bench of future Vice Presidents and Managing Directors who could carry the business forward across the country.

We place leaders who build leaders — and the numbers follow.

CONTACT US

For transformative leadership solutions that align with your strategic goals, reach out to Perry-Martel International at:

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Let us help you find not just any leader, but the right leader.