



**STAPLES**

Enabling a Collaborative Approach to Restructuring within a Large Pan-European Organization



**ORGANIZATION**

Staples Europe



**INDUSTRY**

Retail



**ABOUT**

Staples provides a broad assortment of products, expanded business services, and easy ways to shop in both retail stores and online for individual consumers and mid- to large-sized businesses.

**CHALLENGE**

In 2013, Staples, the multinational retailer of office supplies, initiated a massive restructuring of its European operations. It was possibly the largest transformation in their industry. As a result of the tremendous changes involved, which included large-scale layoffs and significant revisions of roles and responsibilities, Staples Europe's employees faced intense pressure. "The pressures on people and the change that we were going through was enormous," said Gordon Glover, senior vice president in charge of transformation for Staples Europe.

As a result, there was tremendous tension within the company—tension that appeared as "a state of virtual warfare" among functions and locations. Very little business was getting done as a result. Even within his own team, Glover described, he "reverted to my own instincts, was short with my teams, was not really patient with them. The teams got quieter and quieter, and I got less and less feedback."

Recognizing that their carefully conceived transformation plan had no chance of succeeding in such an environment, Staples turned to Arbinger for help.

**"Staples has better results thanks to the new mindset of all the players within the company."**

**ROLAND LASCHET**

Managing Director | Staples Retail Benelux

**SOLUTION**

From June 2013 through January 2015, Arbinger designed and led customized work sessions every three to six months with the senior levels of Staples Europe leadership. Each session was designed for a specific stage of the transformation and to provide the leaders with tools that would allow them to successfully deal with the issues with which they were struggling during that stage. As a result, Staples Europe was able to execute the transformation plan in a far more collaborative and effective manner.

Recounting his own team's experience, Glover said, "I realized one day in a meeting where everything was quiet, when normally the team would be quite vociferous if something was wrong, that I could turn to the tools and concepts we'd learned." He brought up the idea of getting "out of the box," which his team was familiar with through the training. "It was a neutral way of bringing up the issues, of using a mechanism to bring the issues up. After that we were far more collaborative."