

Critical Traction in Culture: A Case Study of *Fountain Tire*



Fountain Tire is a Canadian company and one of North America's top tire dealers, with more than 160 locations. Over the 17 years of Roy Group's partnership with Fountain Tire, working with all corporate staff and store owners, the organization has evolved from \$296 million to over \$700 million in annual revenues. The business model, which involves store managers owning their business 50/50 with Fountain Tire, has clarified and gelled, operations have improved, the corporate leadership team is exceptionally engaged, and the Roy Group tools have been consistently used since 2005. In recent years, Fountain Tire has even seen breakthroughs in chronically underperforming markets, as store managers implement and practice the tools.

Coaching is the intentional positioning of others to perform at incrementally higher standards, to learn more from their experience as it emerges, and to be increasingly engaged in their endeavours. See how a coaching approach to leadership shaped Fountain Tire's performance over time.



Getting onto the Same Page

Fountain Tire is a Canadian company and one of North America's top tire dealers, with more than 160 consumer locations in Central and Western Canada. The company also provides tires and tire-related services to commercial truck fleets and off-road vehicles used in agriculture, oil and gas, mining and construction. When Fountain Tire first engaged Roy Group in 2005, it was with the hope of figuring out a metaphor for its unconventional business model, and uniting the organization's stores and work units across the country with a common language.

Evolving Leadership Within Multiple Cultures

Fountain Tire needed a way to evolve leadership within its unconventional business model, where Corporate and the store owners each own 50%. Simply telling people in the field how to operate doesn't work in a 50-50 structure! Fountain Tire needed to find a way to create a persuasive and collaborative "superculture" while supporting leadership development across its 160 "microcultures" (at the store level).

Part of the work was for us to help Fountain Tire settle on the right metaphor for its business model. As the 50-50 structure is not widely used, the Fountain Tire leadership team was a little perplexed around how to frame the organization's way of operating. Roy Group developed the metaphor of Fountain Tire Corporate as a coach, and the stores as the athletes. As soon as this model was articulated, people had a mental framework on which to hang the tools. Suddenly there was a way for the learning to "stick".

While the Fountain Tire culture was not broken at the time of engaging Roy Group, it was more patronage-based than performance-based. We needed to shift people into greater accountability for the way they show up, give them powerful tools to encourage each individual to aspire toward their best performance, and get them to step into a place of agency for making their teams maximally collaborative.

Partners on the Road Forward

Roy Group began the work by deeply engaging the Fountain Tire team. Using stories to support the unfolding of useful, practical approaches to change, we made it easy for store partners to step into the responsibility that their job entails without overwhelming them with complex tools. Fountain Tire leaders picked up the storytelling approach and used it within their own teams to teach better and reach people more deeply.

We introduced simple models as frameworks for giving meaningful feedback in a nonthreatening manner, and for setting people up to receive feedback as a way of opening doors to greater performance and productivity.

We reminded people of the importance of practice, helping them to understand that they are the work, and that everyday life offers endless opportunities to use and hone the tools.

Driving Improvement

The results have been profound. Over the 17 years of Roy Group's partnership with Fountain Tire, the organization has evolved from \$296 million to over \$700 million in annual revenues. The business model has clarified and gelled, operations have improved, and the tools we teach are still in use more than 17 years on. In recent years, Fountain Tire has even seen breakthroughs in chronically underperforming markets, as store managers implement and practice the tools.

Globally, the organization has shifted to leading with mutual respect, and approaches complex operational and cultural issues with curiosity and a willingness to learn. Stores perform better because managers and owners can use our simple tools to keep their teams connected, heard and feeling empowered.

The Roy Group tools gave teams across Fountain Tire a shared language, while our learning experiences gave them common memories and experiences that bond even geographically distant managers as friends to this day. Fountain Tire leaders have even adapted a key Roy Group concept into a unique problem-solving tool that helps them see the way forward in complex projects.

Adopting a coaching approach to improving performance has shaped a learning mindset at Fountain Tire: people are more inwardly reflective and continually ask how they can become a better version of themselves. Conversations have become more honest; people take and receive feedback without judgment; leading happens in a non-directive way rather than from a place of knowing all the answers. Our future-focused and feedback models are embedded in Fountain Tire's performance-management systems as well as in its sales calls with customers, and form the basis for a loop of continuous improvement throughout the organization.