

"blue shirts": greeting and making eye contact with women shoppers, asking her about her favorite movies, demonstrating those movies on systems. But simply identifying helpful new behaviors would be insufficient. Gilbert felt that for Best Buy to take full advantage of this under served market, the company would have to place more women employees on the store floors and more women in executive positions.

Blue shirts had typically been recruited from the electronics departments of rival chains such as Wal-Mart and Target. Now, Gilbert began looking at a broader spectrum of retail outlets including Victoria's Secret (women's lingerie) and Origins (make-up). "We're working with the Girl Scouts, with private female colleges, and others to recruit amazing women so we can delight our women customers," said Gilbert. The goal was for 50 percent of Best Buy's workforce to be women, with a disproportionate number working in the home theater departments.

Gilbert's 50 percent goal applied to more than just the Blue Shirts. Aiming to change the role of women in the entire organization, she focused on the management and executive level as well. She created and led "WoLF" packs, for Women's Leadership Forum. Women from all levels of the organization came together to share ideas and generate innovations designed to expand the customer base. The WoLF packs also made it easier for Best Buy to recruit and retain women employees. When Gilbert left Best Buy in 2009 to promote WoLF pacts in other organizations (through a private consulting firm, WOLF Means Business), Best Buy had grown its women's influenced purchases by 30 percent.

## PEOPLE ALIGNMENT AND CHANGE

Best Buy had identified a new product marketing strategy:

- New products—increasing emphasis on high-end home entertainment systems rather than components.
- New market—increasing emphasis on women shoppers.

Julie Gilbert's initial insight was that Best Buy would need to change the behaviors of its Blue Shirt employees. Greetings, eye contact, and demonstrating systems for women would all be required behaviors.

Identifying new behaviors required of a strategic renewal is one thing; developing those behaviors among current employees is another. Best Buy was fully staffed with employees, overwhelmingly male, recruited and trained to implement the company's past strategy: selling components to tech-savvy male customers. And they had been remarkably successful. But the new strategy required change, and Gilbert knew there was no "before" and "after" switch. She looked to make sweeping changes in the firm's human resource practices.

**People alignment** involves assuring that the skills and behaviors of employees within the organization will enable the effective implementation of the organization's strategy. Effective change requires alignment between employees—the selection, training, evaluation, promotion, even removal of employees—and the shifting strategic goals of the organization.

In seeking people alignment, leaders can select a "make" or "buy" approach. *Make* implies developing the needed new set of competencies and

### Building a Vocabulary of Change

*People alignment* organizational efforts taken to match the skills and behaviors of employees within the organization with the business' strategy.