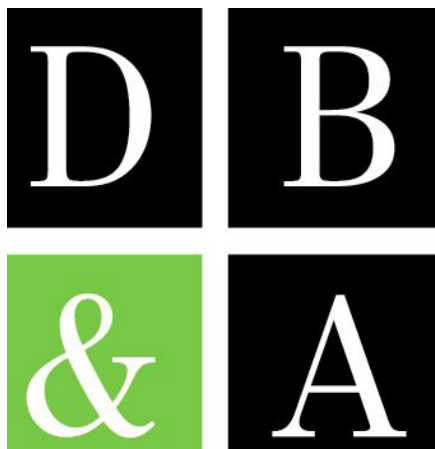
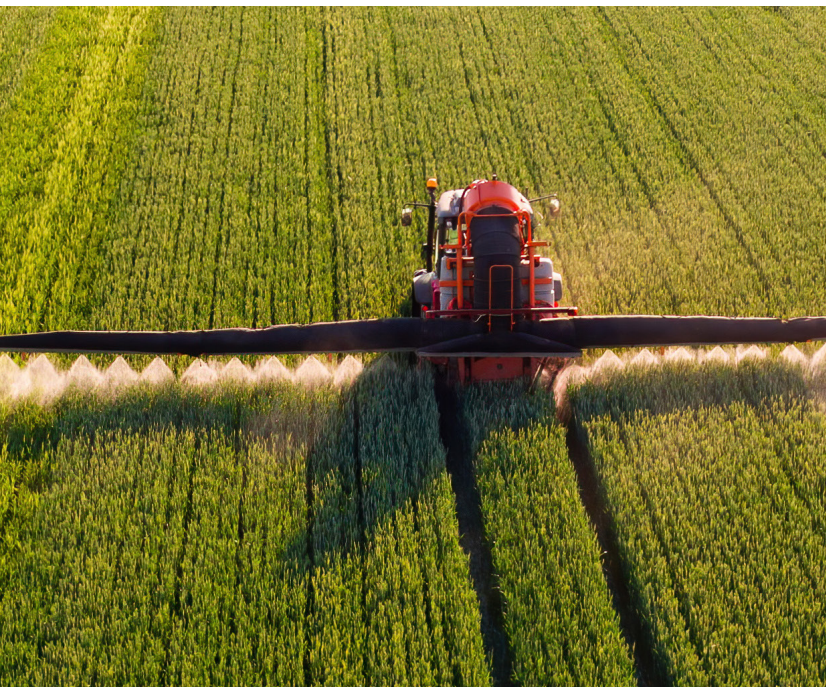




Agribusiness Transforms Culture to Exceed Fiscal Goals Through Leadership Transformation

Some companies build their success on a single innovation. Others transform entire industries. The client in this case study has done both, changing American food forever.

In the late 1940s, this company pioneered the first commercially viable frozen french fry, and later became the exclusive supplier to McDonald's restaurants. What started as a potato farming operation grew into a vertically integrated agricultural powerhouse spanning ranching, food processing, and mining. When wartime shortages made it difficult to buy fertilizer, the company built its own manufacturing



plant and produced what it needed — a pattern of self-sufficiency that would define its operations for decades to come.

By 2024, this global agribusiness network operated sophisticated facilities across North America, including a major phosphate fertilizer complex in Wyoming. The facility produces phosphate fertilizers, phosphoric acid, and ammonia, operating 24/7 with integrated, energy-efficient systems that generate electricity from sulfur combustion. As a provider of key crop nutrients to growers across the continent and beyond, this operation plays a critical role in supporting sustainable agriculture, and in maintaining the company's legacy of feeding the world from farm to table.

Yet even companies built on innovation can become constrained by their own success. The fertilizer facility faced an unusual challenge: an EPA production cap that limited how much fertilizer the plant could manufacture. This wasn't merely a regulatory hurdle — it was a ceiling on growth, profit potential, and the plant's ability to

serve its customers. While the technical expertise existed to produce more, the regulatory framework hadn't caught up to the plant's capabilities.

Through strategic collaboration and process documentation, the plant successfully worked through the regulatory process to increase the EPA cap, unlocking greater production capacity. But capacity alone doesn't guarantee results. The real challenge lay in whether the organization could actually achieve the higher production levels now within reach.

The DB&A Difference

Analysis Financial Proposal

➤ Proposed Project Cost: \$3,061,260

Actual Financial Results

➤ Annualized Savings Rate: \$18,000,000

➤ ROI: 6:1

Project Results

➤ Granulation: 115.3% of goal

➤ Phosphoric Acid: 106.7% of goal

➤ SPA: 103.1% of goal

➤ Ammonia: 102.3% of goal

➤ Sulfuric Acid: 101.3% of goal

Success would require more than new equipment or revised procedures. It demanded a fundamental shift in how leaders led and how teams collaborated. The facility's decision-making often resided with a small group of individuals, reinforcing departmental silos and limiting collaboration across teams. Among them was a veteran employee whose deep knowledge of plant operations had become invaluable — even indispensable. This person understood the facility's quirks, workarounds, and unwritten rules better than anyone.

But knowledge hoarded is knowledge limited. The question became: How could this expertise be transformed from a single point of dependency into a shared resource that elevated the entire organization? And more broadly, how could a culture built on the informal influence of a few key insiders evolve into a system where leadership was distributed, structured, and sustainable?

The existing structure left many employees disengaged and slowed the flow of information between operations, maintenance, and support functions. Problem-solving was frequently reactive instead of strategic, and opportunities to innovate or prevent issues were missed. The lack of shared accountability made it difficult to align around company-wide goals, hampering momentum and long-term performance.

Recognizing that lasting operational excellence depends on engaged, capable leaders at every level, the company sought DB&A's expertise. Leadership identified a need for more than technical training. They wanted to cultivate consistent, behavior-based leadership practices that would foster ownership, proactive communication, and cross-functional alignment.

The engagement was designed not just to increase production within the newly expanded EPA limits, but to fundamentally transform how the facility operated, moving from people-dependent to process-driven, from reactive to proactive, from siloed to collaborative. And critically, it would work to help key individuals, like the veteran employee, understand their value not just as repositories of knowledge, but as leaders who could share, teach, and empower others to achieve bigger goals through different approaches.

By focusing on how leaders interact, set expectations, and hold teams accountable, DB&A's approach promised to create the cultural shift required for sustainable improvement. The engagement would build leadership confidence, strengthen collaboration, and establish clear systems that empower all employees to contribute to continuous improvement to ensure that when opportunity knocked through an increased production cap, the organization would be ready to answer.



Analysis

Over a two-week on-site assessment, DB&A partnered with company leaders and front-line teams to examine how daily management practices, planning routines, and cultural norms influenced output and reliability. The review revealed that while the Rock Springs facility has a strong foundation of technical expertise and team loyalty, the people in leadership were largely reactive. Supervisors often spent their days troubleshooting or completing paperwork rather than proactively managing people and processes. As a result, opportunities for training, strategic problem-solving, and continuous improvement were frequently missed.

One central theme emerged: front-line leaders were not fully equipped or empowered to manage their areas effectively. Leadership interactions lacked the consistency and depth needed to build accountability and accelerate employee development. Training plans were not always followed through, scheduled work was sometimes unprepared for downstream crews, and performance expectations at the individual level were unclear. This created a cycle of delayed response and under-utilized labor hours.

DB&A's analysis also found that the tools and data needed to drive productivity were limited. Without robust, real-time metrics, many leaders defaulted to informal communication and reactive decision-making. Planning and scheduling weaknesses, such as incomplete work orders and uneven resource loading, led to periodic stoppages between operations and maintenance. A detailed use-of-time study confirmed that employees across operations and maintenance faced more downtime than anticipated, underscoring the need for

better coordination and structured planning.

These findings point to three key objectives for the engagement:

► **Increase Output Through Equipment Reliability**

Strengthen operator–maintenance collaboration and follow a clear maintenance priority—from preventive and predictable tasks to planned work orders—so that reactive maintenance becomes the exception, not the norm.

► **Evolve the “Inner Circle” Dynamic**

Preserve the team’s high trust and collective spirit while introducing a formal structure, steady communication cadence, and proactive use of critical metrics. This ensures that goals are met through systematic leadership rather than informal influence.

► **Transform the Culture for Sustainable Performance**

Shift from people-dependent to process-driven operations, moving management from reactionary to structured and collaborative. Build layered ownership from department to supervisor to employee, and celebrate behaviors that reinforce long-term improvement.

By blending leadership development with data-driven management practices, these objectives create a roadmap to reduce downtime, elevate equipment reliability, and foster a culture of proactive, accountable performance for the manufacturer.

Implementation Actions

DB&A rolled up their sleeves and got to work creating change from the inside out, focusing on people and behaviors rather than top-down directives. Early in the project, the team identified the organization’s “inner circles” and partnered with them as catalysts for cultural transformation. By empowering these key leaders to model and reinforce new habits, DB&A helped dismantle entrenched silos and build a culture of shared ownership and proactive collaboration.

To fit the organizations unique operating environment, the consulting approach emphasized people development over prescriptive solutions. Consultants worked side-by-side with leaders to help them recognize behavioral gaps, design targeted strategies, and follow through with consistent feedback. This tailored method encouraged leaders to observe, reflect, and guide their teams toward sustainable behavior change, rather than relying solely on reactive, task-based management.

Several key milestones marked the progression of the project:

- **Daily AM meetings** – Regular morning meetings were launched to align priorities and improve cross-functional communication. Initially facilitated by senior leaders, who were bypassing their managers and going directly to operators to make process decisions these meetings are now fully led by area managers, demonstrating ownership and long-term sustainability



- **Collaboration walks** – Plant-wide walks brought operations and maintenance leaders together on the floor, strengthening communication and ensuring that job preparation and resource needs were addressed in real time.
- **Behavioral lens for growth** – Leadership development shifted from merely completing tasks to intentionally recognizing, reinforcing, and rewarding behaviors that drive performance and accountability.

Throughout the engagement, DB&A maintained close collaboration with the leadership team. By coaching key influencers to embody and promote the desired cultural norms, the project created a ripple effect of positive change — breaking down silos, encouraging cross-team problem solving, and embedding a mindset of collective responsibility.

While no significant unanticipated challenges emerged, DB&A remained flexible and responsive, adapting coaching and meeting structures as the client's ownership and confidence increased. The result was an implementation that not only addressed immediate operational issues but also equipped the facility with a self-sustaining framework for continuous improvement.

Project Results

The engagement produced measurable, record-setting gains across all production units at the Rock Springs facility. By the end of the fiscal year August 2025, every major unit exceeded its production target, demonstrating stronger operational discipline, better planning, and cross-functional alignment.

- **Production Performance Highlights**
- Granulation: 115.3% of goal
- Phosphoric Acid: 106.7% of goal
- SPA: 103.1% of goal
- Ammonia: 102.3% of goal
- Sulfuric Acid: 101.3% of goal

Notably, Phosphoric Acid, Granulation, and Ammonia each set all-time plant production records, underscoring the success of the leadership and process changes introduced during the project.

Beyond the numbers, the cultural and operational impact was equally significant. As recurring area-manager

meetings became routine and fully owned by department leaders, silos were dismantled and collaboration flourished. Leaders began to share ownership of agendas, proactively solve cross-department challenges, and build a climate of mutual accountability. Field-level initiatives like collaboration walks deepened trust between operations and maintenance teams, while the focus on identifying behavioral root causes, rather than simply completing tasks, helped prevent issues before they emerged.

This integrated transformation not only increased throughput and efficiency but also elevated morale and strengthened leadership alignment. Employees reported a greater sense of inclusion and empowerment as communication improved and expectations became clearer. Strategic alignment and proactive leadership are now defining elements of the plant's culture.

What made this engagement especially rewarding was its depth of behavioral change. Instead of relying primarily on new systems or tools, DB&A centered the project on coaching influential leaders to become internal change agents. By modeling and reinforcing desired behaviors, these leaders drove sustainable change from within, creating momentum that continues to build.

Key lessons from the project affirm that lasting cultural change requires a shift in mindset as much as in process. By working with the plant's natural influencers and coaching them to lead by example, DB&A demonstrated how cultural transformation can ripple outward to affect every aspect of operations.

Impressed with these results, this client has expressed interest in expanding the partnership into its retail sector, with leadership development as the next opportunity for collaboration.

Since 1987 DB&A has provided cross-industry management consulting delivering 15-20% in operational and financial improvements to our clients with a financial guarantee. We deliver customized solutions that maximize existing resources to increase efficiency, capacity, and productivity. Our approach is to work with all levels of management to transform management culture in order to drive accountability where it matters most: the front-lines. For more information visit www.dbaresults.com or email contact@dbaresults.com