



**Industry**

Food and Drug Retailer

**Client Profile**

Safeway, Inc. (NYSE: SWY) is a Fortune 100 company and one of North America’s largest food and drug retailers. The company operates over 1,700 stores in the U.S. and Canada and had sales of \$40.2 billion in 2007. In support of its stores, Safeway has an extensive network of distribution, manufacturing and food processing facilities. Safeway’s IT department supports the business objectives of increasing sales, reducing costs and creating greater efficiencies that ultimately improve the overall customer experience. The IT department works with various business units to develop and implement technology solutions to meet business goals. The department delivers solutions covering all aspects of Safeway’s business, including marketing and merchandising, retail, supply chain, eCom-merce, business intelligence and administration.

**Technical Skills Assessment**

*“By ensuring we put the right people in the right positions, we were able to increase productivity, and over the last few years, decrease attrition rates. Taos helped us acquire a much-needed efficiency in employee development. They once again delivered on what they said they would do and, as always, went the extra mile to make it happen.”*

– Michael Wolfson, Group Vice President of Information Technology, Safeway, Inc.

**Success Highlights**

1. Increased productivity over 10% annually by aligning employees’ skill sets to the appropriate positions.
2. Decreased attrition over 10% annually by providing appropriate training and increasing IT staff satisfaction.
3. Completed extensive, objective, one-on-one interviews with 130 employees within 30 departments.
4. Integrated findings into newly purchased HR employee self-evaluation and professional development application.

**Taos Service Areas Deployed**

Project Delivery

- Assessment

**Situation**

As Micheal Wolfson stepped into his new role as Safeway’s Group Vice President of IT, he knew that one of his main workforce challenges was to ensure that each member of his team was in the appropriate position, engaged in the right project, and up to speed on technology. He had engaged with Taos and their Skills Assessment program while with his former employer and immediately recognized the benefit the program could bring to Safeway, especially since its IT group operates on a multi-site and multi-national basis. He needed to quickly understand his new team’s skill sets and knowledge gaps, as they were beginning to employ more complex systems and needed to plan for wise investments in the required training for the new systems.

### **Solutions**

One of Taos' internal successes that has also benefitted its client base is the development of a technical interview process administered to all of its consultants. After years of honing this objective-centric, matrix-driven process, as well as modifying it annually due to the changing state of technology, Taos is able to utilize it to consistently supply its clients with the exact required skill set for the task at hand. Taos allows its clients to benefit from the technical interviews' objective and in-depth results within their own organizations via Taos' Skills Assessment offering.

At Safeway, Taos first had to obtain Human Resource's support of the Skills Assessment program. They assisted the HR team to clearly understand the process — what was being assessed, what the results would look like, and how those results could be tied into a new, online employee evaluation system. One of Taos' commitments to Safeway's HR department was that the assessment would be completely objective. They explained that the objectivity would be accomplished through a proven interview process in which questions are strictly technical in nature and would thus help determine an employee's particular skill set and identify strengths and areas for improvement. Taos conducted extensive, 1-2 hour interviews with individual contributors within the IT department's engineering and support teams. They coupled the gathered information with completed management questionnaires and employee self-evaluation forms, allowing for a clear and objective understanding of specific teams' functions, skill level benchmarking, and identification of where skill sets should be.

### **Results**

Taos presented its findings in a written report tailored for each individual and each group, then rolled the results up to provide a more holistic company perspective. The report included a detailed, objective analysis of what was and what was not working within the organization. Recommendations were made for learning plans, and specific tools were suggested to get team members to the appropriate level. Many employees were re-aligned based on the gap analysis. Safeway also developed programs to begin the process of closing knowledge gaps. And, when developing the programs with this invaluable intelligence Taos delivered, Safeway was able to appropriately invest in training based on what the business needed versus what a manager may have believed to be required.

Safeway achieved an incalculable degree of success in terms of the amount of time and money saved by raising employee satisfaction. With increased employee satisfaction, attrition decreased 10% on an annual basis. And, with a reorganization based on objective analysis versus assumptions, productivity has increased over 10% on an annual basis.

### **About TAOS**

Taos is a professional IT consulting services company. With more than 5,000 successful engagements at more than 1,000 clients, we have the experience and the technical expertise to help you achieve and sustain operational excellence. Our success is built upon the breadth and depth of our technical expertise, flexibility and objectivity – we are hardware and software vendor independent.