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## Valassis: Nurturing a Team-oriented Environment

Valassis strives to be more than just a place where associates come to work each day; associates is the term used to refer to employees. The word, “associate,” is collaborative in nature and speaks to the strong team environment the company nurtures.

One of Valassis’ key mission strategies is to enrich and evolve its culture. The company values its associates and works to provide a rewarding environment through open communication, trust, recognition, work/life balance, diversity, camaraderie, and corporate citizenship. It is difficult to capture the company’s culture with words – it must be experienced in order to be fully understood. Collaboration among employees is key at Valassis, and this became even more evident during its acquisition of the nation’s leading direct mail marketer in March 2007. Now, with seven thousand associates worldwide, the company is embarking on its next chapter, making changes yet remaining committed to its best practices.

### Background

Valassis, although not a household name, has probably affected every home in Michigan. If you have ever wondered who is behind those savings coupons you receive in your weekend newspaper, here is your answer. Livonia, Michigan-based Valassis pioneered the newspaper coupon booklet.

Valassis has been in the promotions and marketing services industry for thirty-seven years. Today, Valassis is a widely-recognized global leader in marketing services and a public company whose stock (VCI) is traded on the New York Stock Exchange. The company offers a plethora of media products and services, including newspaper-delivered promotions; shared mail; direct mail; in-store marketing; direct-to-door advertising and sampling; Internet marketing; loyalty marketing software; coupon and promotion clearing; promotion planning; and analytic services.<sup>1</sup>

The company employs approximately seven thousand associates in twenty-nine states and nine countries. Valassis companies include ADVO (the ADVO name retired in 2008), Valassis Canada, Promotion Watch, Valassis Relationship Marketing Systems, and NCH Marketing Services.

Valassis CEO Alan Schultz put strategies in place to keep the business competitive in an increasingly globalized and competitive marketplace. In order to stay on top despite declining newspaper circulation, Valassis completed numerous mergers and acquisitions and grew organically, allowing it to enter the global marketplace and expand its customer base and product portfolio. In most cases, organizations that undergo

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*Research Associate Grace Augustine developed this mini-case under the supervision of Professor Lynn P. Wooten of the Michigan Ross School of Business Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship. ©2009 The William Davidson Institute*