



PURPOSE, VALUES, AND VOICES: STANDING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT A CULTURE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE

ClarkDietrich, the largest manufacturer of cold-formed steel framing in North America, decided to invest in the development of their managers and supervisors as part of their commitment to “Do the Right Thing – Do Things Right.” They found an experienced, proven partner in the American Management Association (AMA).

Investing in managers reverberates throughout an organization: Research reveals that more than 70% of team performance issues are related to the performance of managers and supervisors, and that inefficient management leads to lost productivity of \$1 trillion annually in the United States.

“Good management boils down to trust,” says Todd Barnett, recently retired Vice President of Human Resources. “Especially when there is a lot of change going on.”

“Communication has to happen at every level so everyone’s on the same page,” adds Jennifer Smith, Vice President of Human Resources. “It helps with team building, engaging and motivating employees, and retention. We’ve also definitely put a focus towards succession planning in the last few years in terms of developing our people.”

The Project: A New Way to Build High Performance

ClarkDietrich began working with a pilot group of managers to provide feedback and coaching over time to replace the annual performance review.

“Trying to sum up a year’s worth of performance on a formal written document does not really feel like building a bridge with team members,” says Smith. “It caused a lot of stress for both the manager and the employee.” According to a [Wakefield Research](#) study, 94% of employees prefer getting feedback and coaching in real-time, on the job, and not in performance reviews, which they feel are outdated. “Based on feedback from staff,” says Smith, “we decided, let’s do more frequent, less formal communication to really build those relationships.”

“We wanted to enable our managers and supervisors to have flexibility in communication styles,” agrees Mary Lehr, Director of Human Resources. “Training gets everyone on the same page on what a manager does, the role of HR, and how to handle difficult issues.”

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— President and CEO, Jim Collins

ClarkDietrich and AMA Case Study



Solution

To help employees transition from a formal performance management process to a more engaging coaching model, ClarkDietrich partnered with AMA. AMA worked with ClarkDietrich's HR team through each step to develop a fully customized, instructor-led program which was delivered over two days on-site at their West Chester Township, Ohio, headquarters for approximately 100 managers and supervisors. The sessions were provided for groups of 25 participants per session to ensure plenty of time for activities and discussions. Each group contained a mix of managers and leaders — from the manufacturing floor to shift leaders to leaders in engineering — which provided a great opportunity for cross-functional networking and collaborative learning.

With AMA's support, ClarkDietrich's team was able to accomplish a number of the identified development goals:

- Promote self-awareness of the leaders' preferred communication styles and how they affect those around them
- Help managers adapt to the communication styles of their direct reports and colleagues to build better relationships
- Improve their ability to communicate direction, plans, goals, and objectives
- Practice their listening skills to uncover underlying issues and better manage conflict
- Establish trust
- Refine their communication skills to engage and empower their direct reports

ClarkDietrich's internal use of a Styles Assessment Tool was also reinforced within this training program. AMA's facilitator was able to build on what ClarkDietrich had begun to gather internally to further maximize ways to use this important knowledge.

Driving Lasting Engagement and Retention

ClarkDietrich has seen a notable improvement in engagement and positive behavioral changes.

"The best indication that we've truly engaged our employees is our retention rate," says Smith. "We've had a lot of organizational change this last year and we've had a lot of positions open up. There were many internal candidates vying for those positions. Turnover is low. Employees want to stay, they want to grow with ClarkDietrich. We're really proud of our retention efforts, and this program was a fundamental part of building those relationships."

"We expect a lot from our vendors and partnerships," says Smith. "The fact that AMA was willing to work with us, and work with us so well, customizing a program for our employees, won us over. The content was backed up by research, the facilitator brought in real-world experience, and the delivery was amazing."

Because the 2019 training was so successful, ClarkDietrich has extended the program and has scheduled an additional 100 managers for development.

"I think training and development for our leaders only makes us stronger as a company," says President and CEO Jim Collins. "The more knowledge our leaders have, the more confident, empowered, and prepared they will be for the future. Over the last several years, we have made strides to build our bench, and the leadership training delivered by AMA was a great way to do this."

