

## Putting People Back in Best Practice



Having worked in many different industries over the past 20 years, I can tell you a few things that my former employers all had in common. One similarity was that they all sought out best practices but often overlooked the human resources that made these best practices work. In many cases, I watched these companies look to their competitors, suppliers, distributors and consultants for that elusive silver bullet process. They would find something intriguing and then try to emulate it themselves.

Unfortunately, this was somebody else's best practice. It wasn't always destined to be theirs.

I witnessed one former employer pay top dollar to poach a VP from a very successful competitor. Their hope was that he would bring with him their competitor's magic wand. There was a problem with this strategy. The functional processes and tactical best practices of his former company weren't what made the company excel. It was the people – the culture.

I was fortunate to develop a great relationship with the new VP. Because of this, I had the opportunity to find out what really made his former employer so successful. The VP's previous employer required that Leadership involve frontline workers in the assessment and improvement of the company's processes. The frontline team members helped gather data, led sub-teams, and were required to report back. Not only did they report back to the process improvement teams, but they also reported their findings to their colleagues on the front line. The entire organization was involved, engaged, and played a vital role in the company's success.

This is the positive effect of a culture of inclusion. Engaged employees at all levels of the organization stepping up and taking the lead; thereby, pushing leadership

down into the organization. This was a huge plus for both the employees and the organization's leaders alike. For the frontline employees, they were given the opportunity to take the lead and grow. Leadership benefitted through their ability to delegate many of the responsibilities to frontline workers that are generally reserved for Supervisors and Managers within other organizations. This opportunity to delegate also allowed company leaders to assess employees for future leadership positions.

It was a win-win for everyone involved. Leadership was happy, employees were happy, and the work subsequently always got done. Probably the most important factor in the company's success was that voluntary turnover on the frontlines was next to zero. This was undoubtedly related to the culture of inclusion the company worked so hard to build. The employees stayed and succeeded because they were involved, engaged, and had the complete support of the organization's leaders.

How does this resonate with where you and your team are today? Are your employees empowered? Are they engaged? Are you pushing leadership down in the organization without still trying to retain control over everything? By providing your employees with autonomy and leadership opportunities, you are offering them the chance to take ownership of their own work and careers. This is a vital necessity for Covenant to continue to grow our culture and retain our high performers.

What will you do today to move leadership down into the organization?

-Scot