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Building a Legacy of Leadership

Find out how Carhartt established a standard language of leadership at all levels of the organization

A Success Story featuring: **carhartt** 

Expanding from two sewing machines with five associates to global operations with 4,700 associates worldwide, Carhartt continues to outwork them all.” The iconic brand has been growing since 1889, carrying on the legacy of founder Hamilton Carhartt. Although the company is famous for its high-quality garments, their continued success goes far beyond workwear.

As a 129-year-old company, Carhartt has truly stood the test of time. They’ve adapted as the world transformed through the era of steam and steel to today’s advancing technology. Leadership that was focused on their associates’ success steered Carhartt through cultural and organizational change, all while maintaining a family-oriented and pro-team culture.

A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

With a new president and new talent entering the organization in 2013, Carhartt began to experience a cultural shift. They realized that although the business was thriving, they lacked the alignment at the leadership level that would keep the company moving forward and uphold the Carhartt legacy.

As the organization grew, there was a push to cultivate a legacy of effective leadership to shape the future of the company. Carhartt partnered with an independent consulting firm for leadership coaching, pre-hire assessments, and other culture transformation projects for leaders within the company. To get their leaders on the same page, Carhartt expanded one-on-one coaching to emphasize leadership. After exploring several leadership models, Carhartt implemented *Everything DiSC Work of Leaders*® into the organization.

The consulting firm was also an Everything DiSC® Authorized Partner and exclusive provider of this powerful workplace solution. The consulting firm worked with Carhartt to create a custom leadership development program rooted in the *Work of Leaders*. This solution focuses on improving leadership skills by providing leaders with the framework of creating a Vision, building Alignment, and championing Execution to effectively lead a group toward desired outcomes. Based on a four-year development effort with the help of 300 subject matter experts from more than 150 organizations, the *Work of Leaders* program offers a strong foundation of leadership best practices for leaders of any level.

THE LANGUAGE OF LEADERSHIP

Carhartt’s leadership program became one of the company’s largest investments in employee development. With expertise from the consulting firm, Carhartt developed a robust, cohort-based program that directly connected the model of Vision, Alignment, and Execution to strategic initiatives and real-work projects, making it easy for participants to actively apply their knowledge in real time.

Carhartt started the program with a pilot group of participants. After seeing the impact it had on the pilot group’s communication and effectiveness, the



From Left to Right:
Esperanza Juarez, Liz Nagrant, Brendan Lokes, Emily Irrer

senior leadership team became early advocates of the *Work of Leaders* and decided to expand it on global scale. The program transformed the perspective of leadership at all levels. “This isn’t a straight line.... It’s more of a circle process, said Nick Foote, Senior Manager of Learning. You may get to Alignment and go back to Vision. You may get to Execution and have to go to Alignment three or four times before you are done. That’s where, at times, it’s exciting and frustrating, because people never looked at the process other than in a straight line.”

The practical application and ongoing implementation efforts of Carhartt’s talent management team and the consulting firm contributed to the vast adoption of the program. In between each learning module, senior leaders held roundtable discussions with each cohort to put the concepts into context, asking: “Are we really doing this? How should we be doing it? How can we get better?”

“What happens outside the training is just as important as what happens within,” said Chuck Jozwiak, Director of Talent Management. The time in between each module was critical to the learning process. Leaders put what they learned into practice and discovered areas where they needed to adjust and clarify their understanding of the *Work of Leaders*.

Skeptics soon turned into *Work of Leaders* ambassadors without even realizing it. The common language became a seamless part of their daily interactions. Leaders began to adjust their behaviors to match the task at hand, such as exchanging perspectives when building alignment was necessary. “When someone uses the language unprovoked, it just gets stronger. Our next step is how we continue to foster it,” said Foote.

“The content speaks for itself. I attended the class as someone who grumbled about three days without my phone and laptop. Instead, I left with lasting friendships. We all became vulnerable, and in turn, better as a result,” said William Hardy, Senior Vice President of Supply Chain.

GROWING BEYOND CLASSROOM TRAINING

Everything DiSC® has become the standard learning tool throughout the organization. Every new hire that enters Carhartt is introduced to DiSC® so they can develop the language as they grow within the company. “We are better at analyzing talent and giving people the chance to learn and grow internally,” said Foote.

“Carhartt customers work like they mean it. Carhartt associates engage like we mean it”

— Chuck Jozwiak

Work of Leaders has been ingrained throughout the organization and is even mirrored in the company’s leadership competency model, core values, and performance reviews. This intense focus on leadership has enabled Carhartt to promote talent from within the organization and set up their future leaders for success.

“The program helps emerging leaders understand their strengths and opportunities early in their career. They begin to see the differences in personality styles as well as increase self-awareness, gaining insights needed to lead larger groups effectively. Vision, Alignment, and Execution are the output but the people interaction is the input that is so valuable,” said Paul Hundhammer, Senior Vice President of Sales.

As this journey continues, a unique side effect of the Work of Leaders program has emerged. Associates establish connections, allies, and internal resources across departments long after their initial Work of Leaders training. The leadership team continues to see unique problem-solving abilities develop on a global scale. Leaders at all levels—from plant managers, supply chain leaders, merchandising directors, to corporate executives—have embraced the program. Supervisors have requested training and are eager to take advantage of the opportunity to improve in their leadership skills.

Carhartt also uses the model to drive the strategic planning process and aid in the prioritization of resources leading to stronger execution of critical work. Work of Leaders has helped deepen Associate Engagement, one of Carhartt’s strategic initiatives. Carhartt leaders use the model to bring this initiative to life—to get associates aligned, motivated, and committed to the company’s goals, values, and shared success.

“Carhartt customers work like they mean it. Carhartt associates engage like we mean it,” said Jozwiak. “We’re not done. We started with a concept, language, model, book, and it has become so much more and continues to grow.”

