



## Business Impact

87% of participants feel their leadership has been **positively influenced** by this course

99% would **recommend** this course to colleagues

# CASE STUDY

## Building Frontline Team Leaders at a Large Defense Contracting Company

### Situation

Organizational change is never easy, and keeping your employees focused on customer performance throughout the change process is a great challenge. When our client separated from its former parent company in 2013, it was clear that exploring different ways to support employees during the transition to a new organizational structure was critical.

- Create an environment that **inspires collaboration** and working as one team to create and **deliver innovative solutions** for customers.

### The Challenge

When a company changes its fundamental organizational structure, quite a bit changes for its employees. In the case of this large defense contracting company, the separation resulted in two public companies with the idea that each company would hone its focus on certain business segments and remove conflicts of interest to increase each company's market access. The split resulted in a shift of organizational structure to a matrix organization, representing a significant internal change.

During the move to a matrix organization, it was necessary to take a hard look at the development of this organization's frontline leaders and adjust their new roles and responsibilities which required collaboration and integration across the enterprise. Critical to leadership development was the ability to strengthen influencing skills, including gaining commitment, approval, and support for leaders across their different reporting lines.

As the organization evolved, the attention moved beyond maintaining core leadership skills and shifted to creating an environment that inspired collaboration and teamwork to create and deliver innovative solutions for customers.

## GP Strategies Solution

To support skill development during this time of change, a leadership development program was designed in 2014 in partnership with GP Strategies®. The goals of the program were to improve frWontline leader skills and build behaviors to effectively lead, engage, develop, and retain employees. A critical focus of the program was to help individuals understand how best to lead in a matrix organization.

Specific objectives of the program included:

- Building leadership bench strength by increasing the competency and number of employees ready to fill vacant leadership positions.
- Enabling career growth and development, which is key to improving talent retention and engagement.
- Reinforcing important business principles and values across the enterprise.
- Improving customer satisfaction and excellent contract performance.
- Strengthening the culture of high performance rooted in ethical behavior and team success.

The first component of the program was an online assessment that included both self-assessment data and feedback from five direct reports who rated the leader on 48 different behaviors. Feedback and self-assessment data were compiled into an individual report and included in the curriculum. The format consisted of:

- **Kickoff:** A 1-hour virtual session intended to set expectations and ready participants for their leadership experience.
- **Pre-work and assessments:** Included a self-assessment, as well as evaluations from feedback providers, that was self-paced and could be completed in 1 hour.
- **Instructor-led, classroom training:** Lasted 1.5 days and included the following topics:

- **Foundations of Leadership.** This section helps participants understand what drives employees and how to move business objectives forward. This core module set the stage for the program by teaching the fundamentals of engagement and ensuring that leaders understood their ability to affect the contributions and satisfaction of the people on their teams. GP Strategies' research on the needs of technical people and the challenges leading them, established credibility and provided a common language for the rest of the program. Building trust, listening actively, and asking strategic questions were the skills that were taught and then practiced and applied in subsequent modules. The communication strategy helped leaders plan for and conduct conversations with the members of their teams. These skills, strategies, and tools were reinforced through real-world scenarios brought through in subsequent modules.
- **Setting Goals.** Leaders can increase their contributions to the organization by setting and supporting goals with their teams. Participants learned how goal setting is tied to engagement, discussed different types of goals, and then focused on how to make goals as effective as possible by working with the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reasonable, Time-Bound) framework, applying the strategy to a goal-setting conversation and then completing a real-world skill practice.
- **Giving Feedback.** This section taught how to leverage high performance and correct performance issues with clear, meaningful feedback. In this module, participants examined the power of feedback, exploring different types of feedback, and then learning best practices to consider when providing feedback. Leaders spent time learning about how to best deliver difficult feedback and then planned for and practiced a performance strategy conversation that they needed to have with one of their team members.
- **Influencing Others.** Leaders can create buy-in and advance ideas by building strong relationships and influencing strategically. Participants defined what influencing means and discussed the different situations where they need to influence others on the job. After learning more about the characteristics that make an effective influencer, participants learned specific influencing skills and how to communicate benefits. Leaders applied what they learned by participating in a game-based lesson to "pitch" to others in the room.

## Business Impact

Measurable benefits have been evident in the results gathered from post-program surveys. Of all participants:

- **87%** feel their leadership has been positively influenced by this course.
- **89%** are successfully applying the skills they have learned to their jobs.
- **90%** found each course module relevant to their current role.
- **99%** would recommend this course to colleagues.

Beyond the survey metrics, comments from participants indicate that the program has had a meaningful impact:

- "Workshop was very well organized. The pre-work proved to be very helpful to me. Getting the feedback from my direct reports was helpful."
- "Excellent class that is needed across the company to all levels of leadership. Too many times, we promote someone to a leadership position but fail to give them the proper tools to do the job effectively. This class should be mandatory for anyone in a leadership role."
- "One of the more useful and relevant seminars I have attended. I learned so many great skills and gained a lot of awareness in my current leadership style, [including] things I need to adjust and improve upon."
- "One great thing about this class is that it forces leaders to step back from being busy with their usual duties to evaluate the problems of their organizations, [keeping] 'best leadership practices' in mind."
- "Well worth my time - fantastic instructor whose experience and enthusiasm absolutely made the class for me and 20 others. Sure wish it was available to more of my coworkers."
- "Exercises were spot on; the group took them seriously so it was really worth my time."

- • • For more information about equipping YOUR LEADERS with the tools they need visit [www.gpstrategies.com](http://www.gpstrategies.com).

## About GP Strategies

GP Strategies is a leading workforce transformation partner—one of the few truly dedicated global providers in the marketplace providing custom solutions. We believe our transformation focus, when paired with deep listening, a customer-centric approach, and innovative expertise, enables our clients to routinely achieve superior business and operational results from our evidence-driven and technology agnostic recommendations.

Whether your business success requires a change in employee performance and mindsets, learning technologies, or critical processes, GP Strategies is the transformation partner you can trust.

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