

FOCUS ON

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A New Culture: Graniterock's Employee Engagement Success

Graniterock, a 650-employee construction materials supplier and heavy civil engineering contractor based in the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas of California, is a venerable, family-owned company founded in 1900. Graniterock has grown and changed over the years, but the most significant changes occurred when Bruce Woolpert, grandson of company founder, A. R. Wilson, took the helm after a stint in management at Hewlett Packard. Bruce was determined to implement a new culture of rigorous metrics and employee engagement – no easy task for a company that was nearly 90 years old – and make “quality by design” the new byline.

Woolpert's new management approach was built on core values that constituted nine corporate objectives (safety, customer satisfaction and service, financial performance and growth, people, product quality assurance, community contribution and responsibility, efficiency, management, and profit) and baseline goals for each of these objectives. “Every division, branch, and department develops measurable goals each year unique to their business, and each team member has an active part in meeting these goals,” says Barbara Kimball, Staffing Manager.

People are a primary focus at Graniterock and team members stay engaged through job ownership and extensive training and development opportunities. Through the Individual Professional Development Program (IPDP), employees can plan for and meet career and personal training goals through classes taught in-house and outside the company. Each year, Graniterock spends up to \$2000 per employee on training (not including safety training). “Team members value the IPDP program and the growth opportunities training provides,” says Kimball. “They also enjoy having the freedom to make improvements to their job as they see fit.”

By developing measurable goals around common corporate objectives, team members from all areas of the company work cooperatively towards the overall growth of the company, fostering teamwork and a better understanding of the business. “Bruce personally reviews all Baseline Goal reports each year,” Kimball explains. “He asks questions, makes suggestions for improvement and ‘scores’ each division, branch, and department in Baseline Goal achievement. This information is

helpful in determining what to focus on in the coming year; in HR we find it helpful to have historical data in one binder each year for easy reference.”

The culture shift did not happen overnight, but it has had a clear impact on business performance, Kimball says. The company grew exponentially throughout the 1990's and, as a result, has solidified an excellent reputation in the industry and among customers and won a spot on Fortune magazine's 100 Best Places to Work for in America. “The things that distinguish us from other companies – our great products, people, and customer service – have improved tremendously due to the changes made to our culture,” she adds.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Although it is ideal to establish employee engagement practices from the beginning, it is also possible to put these practices into place at older, established firms to create an infusion of energy and growth.

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