

Speaker 0 00:00:05 Welcome to the Clear Impact Podcast brought to you by PGTI University. Thanks for joining us today. My name is Sherri Connor, and I am your host.

Speaker 1 00:00:19 You know, I think every business gets challenged or the culture gets challenged for all different reasons. It's not losing sight of what your vision and your values are that keeps you. It's like, it's your compass. It's what keeps you on track. Even when times get rough.

One thing that cannot be overlooked in running a successful business is company culture. Remembering the company's core values, how employees treat one another, and keeping excellence at the forefront are some of the compass points of culture. Today we hear from Debbie LaPinska, Chief Human Resource Officer, and Rachel Evans, VP of HR for the Southeast Business Unit of PGT Innovations. We hope this conversation encourages our customers to spend some time evaluating their own company culture.

Good afternoon. We are here on the Clear Impact Podcast and we are in the series, Running a Successful Business, and I'm so excited that we are here today with Debbie LaPinska and Rachel Evans.

Speaker 1 00:01:15 Welcome. Thank you. I'm so excited to have Rachel back and Debbie, this is your first time in our studio. So I want to start with you with your introduction. So tell us a little bit about your role here and just a little bit about what you do. Hello, so I am the Chief Human Resource Officer for PGT Innovations and basically what that means is I'm responsible for everything that relates to our people across the enterprise.

And that's seven brands?

Seven brands, I think we're close to 4,000 team members across the enterprise as of right now.

Wow. And how long have you been with the company?

I'll be celebrating my 30th anniversary next month.

Wow. So they survive the first 10 or 11 years without you?

Um, yeah, just fine.

Oh, that's wonderful. Well, I'm glad that you could take some time today to join us and Rachel, for those that may have missed the earlier episode, tell us a little bit about you.

Speaker 1 00:02:07 Sure. My name is Rachel Evans and I'm the Vice President of Human Resources. I primarily support the Southeast Business Unit and anything else Debbie asks me to do.

Wonderful. Debbie, you and I actually talked through some of the key things that would be helpful topics around this series. And I think this is a really critical piece for any successful business and that is culture. And so today's topic is creating a healthy company culture. And so what is culture like? There's a lot of different ways to define that. So I would love to hear from the two experts in our enterprise, what that is.

I am really excited to actually talk about this topic because it's something that I think a lot of companies underestimate the importance in making sure that everybody understands how we affect the culture of an organization. It's really your attributes, beliefs, and I say your values, but, um, it's your behaviors.

Speaker 1 00:03:03 And so it does tie in with your value system a little bit. And I know those just seem like, you know, words, but a lot of what it is, is what you demonstrate every day and, and how you make decisions, how you conduct yourself, how you interact with people and really staying true to what's really important to you, but then also to the organization and making sure that we're all aligned in those beliefs.

That's an excellent overview. I want to kind of get into like the nitty gritty of that. And again, we're speaking to our dealer audience. And so how is what we have learned in these spaces helpful to them.

So I think if you go back in PGT history, the things that are valuable to our dealers and what they tell us all the time is being honest and upfront, but living up to your commitments.

Speaker 1 00:03:52 So if you make a promise follow through with it, and if you can't, you know, be truthful and honest being transparent. And I think that's what PGT has always strived to deliver to our customers and also to our employees, our team members. And so I think for me, at least for my experience in the 30 years that I've been here, it is never losing sight of what we've committed to do and doing it is fairly and as effectively as we possibly can and just being transparent.

What I would say, to add onto that is, you know, what makes PGT kind of special, as we kind of really get into some of the detail here is, you know, when you think about culture and you think about all the different cultures that come from different countries into where we're based out of, which is Florida, you know, we've got people from Haiti, we've got people from Asia, we've got people from the United States, we've got people from Russia, you name it.

Speaker 1 00:04:49 And so when you think about how do you get all of those people from all those different cultures to rally around who we are as an organization, it's really about being very specific on what drives our business. And it's all about, you know, serving, leading and thriving and that's our company values.

Yeah, that's PGT Innovations company values, just to take it, you know, maybe in a little bit deeper from PGT's core, original values, it was really about integrity. And, you know, we would list out customers, our families, you know, family, meaning our team members as well as their families community. So it's really about relationship and how we engage and interact with all these different audiences and people. And then the quality of the work, the quality of the service, everything that we do and making sure that we're doing it the best of our ability and that's really what PGT's reputation has been built on and what we're known for in the community as being that company that cares and wants to do the right thing for people, whether building safe products, to serving our community, to taking care and providing our team members with the best benefits and solutions that we can provide an offer.

Speaker 1 00:06:03 So every decision we make always goes up against what's most important. And so you factor in all of those values and that's what drives our decisions and our solutions.

I love that. I love that the customer isn't last on the list, that they're actually right up there. And it's a tough balance too, because you're also serving stakeholders, you know, you're serving the employees, you're serving the customers and then the homeowner. So there's a lot of different audiences to keep happy, but I think it reflects in the quality of the products and just the feeling and sense of pride that we have.

We are a family culture. And so, and you can tell by a lot of the things that we do and that we offer. So, you know, one of the first things when we're interviewing someone, you know, they're, what are your benefits, but what about development?

Speaker 1 00:06:48 And are you committed to that? And, you know, those are the things that we really rally behind, you know, making sure that we're taking care of the employees and their wellbeing, and what's important to them as well and taking care of their family. I know that, you know, our senior leadership team is really dedicated to making sure that, you know, no matter what it is, we try and find a way to do the right thing. And I think that's the phrase that really kind of sold me on joining the PGT family. And that is, what's the right thing to do. How do we make the right decision? And I think with leadership, you know, your culture can really come out through those leaders that are really selling, you know, who we are and driving that all the way through the organization. And we have this program that we started two years ago now as called CORE.

Speaker 1 00:07:31 And it's, we call it Creating Open Relationships Every day. And so it really starts with how we communicate. How are you communicating when you're communicating, you're setting expectations, making it very clear, you know, what's expected. And then you move to holding accountable, but you can't hold someone accountable, if you haven't communicated the expectations. It's like, I didn't know I was responsible for that. So we have to make sure that you start with communication, always that's the foundation. And then when you're moving to the hold accountable, you're being fair, right? Making sure that you're consistent in your approach and then showing appreciation for job well done, going above and beyond, demonstrating pride in the organization that you work for. And a lot of times we spend more time at work than we do at home. And so making sure that we take pride in our house, we talk a lot about our PGT house, you know, with our leadership and, you know, we take care of our house and then, you know, we move into celebrating those wins and successes.

Speaker 1 00:08:22 And we do all those things right, then we get employees that are loyal to the organization and they're engaged and feel a part of it. And they feel included, bringing their ideas to the table. And then affiliated, being affiliated is like being married, right? You don't want a divorce, you don't leave the company. You stay, you're affiliated you buy into exactly what we're doing because it's a belief system.

It shows, I mean, I feel it, I'm sure others do as well. Obviously there's people with tenure even longer than yours, Debbie, which is amazing to be able to say, I've worked in the same place for 30 years, for 35 years. And that doesn't happen by accident. So when we, these things, right, we have a loyal workforce, we have engaged employees and that is good for everyone because if you don't care about what you're doing, that's going to reflect as well.

Speaker 1 00:09:03 The fact that we care about people comes through in our interactions with them.

So how can a culture be changed? How can it be improved? Like what if there's just kind of a, maybe a negative morale going on? Things are hard, like, even right now, there's all kinds of supply chain issues. You can't find enough labor. It's a challenging time for everyone, but how can a dealer really be intentional about maybe shifting the culture or uplifting the morale when it's not so good?

It goes back to your behaviors and the way you communicate. So, you know, and, and just talking about PGT, this has been a challenging year for the PGT legacy brand, specifically in Venice. And it goes back to, we set a very high expectation for ourselves. Our customers became very in tune with that expectation and that consistency of performance. And then we weren't delivering on that.

Speaker 1 00:09:58 So, you know, the change in environment and all the things that happened, you don't want to blame everything on COVID, but just everything that kind of hit all at once, really. And it had an impact on our ability to actually behave and, and demonstrate that core of being, you know, someone that you can count on. And it's been really hard. But what I think we stayed true to is that we have to be transparent. We have to be honest about the challenges that we have going on. We have to communicate honestly about those challenges and work really hard as a team to stay focused and true to the mission of being able to deliver on those expectations. And so, you know, I think every business gets challenged or the culture gets challenged for all different reasons. It's not losing sight of what your vision and your values are that keeps you, it's like, it's your compass.

Speaker 1 00:10:49 It's what keeps you on track. Even when times get rough and you just don't want to lose sight of that. And so it's really in leadership, you have to continue to help your team get through those hard times and keeping them focused, keeping them positive, keeping, you know, your own self motivated and uplifted so that you can keep the team uplifted. Because certainly if we're down feeling kind of beat up, then everybody else kind of falls into that same trap. So it's really being very mindful of that.

So have it, you know, sticky notes everywhere, and that reminds you of what your core values are and, you know, extra quiet time in the morning to get your center and just to be positive. And then, you know, let it come because then you can better handle it, when you're prepared for it.

Speaker 0 00:11:27 Be sure to tune in for upcoming episodes to help you understand the fenestration industry, what you need to know when buying windows and doors and other related topics, you can find out more about us at pgtiuniversity.com. You can also find us on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Speaker 1 00:11:47 Well, and leaning on each other too. I think it's just like a family, right? When you're going through a crisis, you lean on each other for strength and for direction. And, and that's what we do pretty much on a regular basis is really help each other out.

How would you add to that Rachel?

One of the things I was thinking as Debbie was talking is, that it's easy to lead when times are going well, but it really challenges, you know, the whole workforce when things are tough. And, you know, you're trying to navigate your way through, you know, rough waters. It does take nurturing every single day, not losing sight of who we are as an organization. And what's important to us and serving our customers and our employees and, you know, just staying on track with that. It takes focus every day.

And I love the part about just the communication and the setting up the expectations and, you know, just doing your best.

Speaker 1 00:12:36 So one other question, actually, I have two more questions. How does culture impact the bottom line?

A lot of what we just discussed? So if you, as, Rachel said, if you don't set the proper expectations and you don't have mechanisms in place to hold yourself and hold the team accountable, you won't deliver on your commitments. And if we don't deliver on our commitments, obviously we're not delivering to our customers. It could impact sales. If we're not, um, holding our teams accountable, we may not be efficient. So all the metrics that we have in place are really to help us monitor where we're not meeting expectations or holding ourselves accountable. And that does have an impact on the bottom line because everything's built around the process and the systems that we have in place to deliver on those key financial metrics. And so you can pretty much tell when you see the trend going in the wrong direction, at least if it helps you recalibrate and get things back on track.

Speaker 1 00:13:37 And culture is not something that you can actually, you can't really measure it, but you can feel it. And so the impact may not be immediate, right? It might be a few months down the line, but you still want to stay on top of it, right?

Right. And you have to be careful because, you know, we create a culture and environment for people to try new things, get creative find solutions. And so one solution that may have been implemented may not have been effective. It's, you know, not beating that person up because it wasn't effective. It's saying, okay, kind of do a plan-do-review. What did we do? Why didn't it work? What are we going to do differently and help them get back on track. But if you don't do those things quickly, then you could certainly have a negative impact on the bottom line.

Right. So just pay attention.

Speaker 1 00:14:18 Yeah. And you know, if you think about it, you can measure culture in a couple different ways. Although the feel is, is probably the most beneficial, but through engagement surveys, you know, how engaged are your employees? Are they, you know, satisfied with the work that they're doing and, and the guidance that they're given. You can also measure it, maybe through your retention metrics. You know, if you have high turnover, you can probably guess that people aren't happy working in the environment, or maybe they're not getting what they need in some way, shape or form. And you know, when you think about the bottom line, turnover is expensive. It takes a lot of time and energy and focus to interview and, you know, advertise and schedule. It's a whole calendar play. And it takes a lot of time. And I think the national average is somewhere around \$3,000 to turn someone over. So when you think about every person that leaves your organization, there goes, approximately \$3,000 and it varies from business to business on what you would consider it to be in that figure, but it's a lot of money. And that definitely impacts the bottom line.

Speaker 1 00:15:10 For sure. One more question. One of the things that I love about this podcast is that we're able to leverage a lot of our internal knowledge and wisdom. And so a lot of this is around advice. So what is a solid piece of advice around company culture that you could share, whether it's a book or a quote or somebody that you lean on and look to because we all need inspiration sources. You know, we might be that leader, that source for someone else. What would each of you have to share around that?

I don't actually have a book. I guess I would probably just quote experience from being a part of PGT and how we could share that with our customers, our dealers here, especially now, um, we are in probably one of the tightest labor markets that I think we've ever been in, in quite some time.

Speaker 1 00:15:57 So the more you can demonstrate what makes you different than other companies that you're out there competing with. And a lot of that has to do with your culture. What type of environment are you bringing people in? How do you find that out? Well, you talk to your team members, you talk to the people that work for you and you ask them, why do you stay? What is it about to say that you can create that brand and that messaging to go out to the marketplace and really talk about who you are, because people are, are looking to work for companies that really care and have something meaningful. I mean, you have to pay competitive wages, you have to provide the benefits, but most people want to work for a company that cares and appreciates the work that you do every day. My advice to our dealers, what is your "why"? What is it about your company that makes you different? And make sure you celebrate that with the existing team, but then broadcast that out to the community when you're out looking for new people.

Speaker 1 00:16:49 That's great. Rachel?

Last year, Debbie and I went to this seminar with our HRIS system, Ultimate Software and Ultimate Software and Kronos kind of merged together to form this Ulti Kronos Group. And so there's a CEO of UKG his name is Aron Ain. And they had recommended in the seminar, you know, to read his book and it's called Work Inspired. And it's about creating intentional culture where people actually like coming to work and it's all through leadership. And so, you know, I went out to, you know, where you get all your books from right, Amazon. Right. And I actually listened to this book and I that's the best way, you know, if you're on the road or you're driving, just listen to this book. But it was a really well done book to talk about culture in, in what really drives it, how to change your leadership style and approach to really get employees engaged.

Speaker 1 00:17:38 And one of the quotes, I wrote it down here, it says here, "Many executives talk about how their people are their greatest asset. Challenge leaders to walk the talk and put people first, whether they oversee a team of five or an organization of 500,000. When they do, employees won't be the only ones who thank them, customers and shareholders will too." So that was one of my favorite takeaways from the book. It's definitely well worth it. If you haven't listened to it or read it, it's a short read and it's got lots of valuable information.

That's wonderful. I love that we can provide those kinds of resources because I've never heard of that person or that software.

And I had neither.

That's a great thing. And I'll put a link in our media posts when we air this, but any last closing thoughts or words?

Don't ever underestimate the importance of knowing your culture and especially as you're out acquiring companies, knowing the culture that you're acquiring, because culture is a very big part of every business. And I don't think a lot of times, leaders or people think about the importance of culture and there is culture in every business there's culture in every home. It's just the way we operate, because it goes back to your beliefs, your behaviors, and all those things exist every day in a business.

Awesome. Well, ladies, I so appreciate your time today. Thank you for joining me. Thank you. Thanks for having us. Yeah, this is awesome. We'll talk again soon. All right. Take care. Bye. Take care.

Speaker 0 00:18:59 PGTI University is the customer education team for an entire family of brands. We began with the original, Eze-Breeze Porch Enclosure line, then became PGT, America's leading brand of impact resistant windows and doors. We then added CGI, CGIC, WinDoor, Western Windows, New South Windows, and Eco Windows and Doors. We create products built to withstand major storms, keeping people safe, secure, and prepared. Our exceptional brands give you the protection you need without compromising design or functionality. PGTI University is here to educate you, our listener, so that you can be a more informed consumer of window and door products.