

Future Leaders Program: Environments at Work Lays the Groundwork for the Future of the Company

[Environments at Work](#) (EAW) provides organizations with guidance in designing and creating new interior and exterior office spaces. From managing expectations of general contractors, subcontractors and architects, to managing and implementing the technology requirements, outfitting an office space can be an incredibly complex process. EAW takes the pressure off their clients by managing each part of the new office space creation process while ensuring the end result reflects the clients' workplace culture.

The need for a company like EAW has increased significantly over the past few years and, as a result, EAW has grown quickly. But CEO Ken Patrick had more on his mind than managing rapid growth and meeting performance expectations; he realized that within the next 10 years, the entire senior leadership team would be replaced. What would become of EAW?

The Challenge

In 2018, Patrick realized the timeframe for his retirement didn't seem as far away as it once did. He began gathering information from industry leaders and peers to learn what they were doing to prepare their organizations for their own retirement. What he realized is that even though succession planning was a frequent topic in conversation, it remained a distant business strategy with little action.

"We're not getting any younger, and if we want the company to continue to succeed, we need to train our people to do the job and to do it well," said Patrick. "This transition is even more important when a company relies on customer relationships; we need to transition those

relationships to our employees, our future leaders, so they can keep doing the job that needs to get done. We can't do that if we're not willing to let those future leaders have a chance to step up and learn the ins and outs of how the business works."

In an effort to create a leadership succession plan, EAW's leadership team began including younger employees in strategy sessions to start to expose them to the inner workings of the business. The first strategy session, however, was eye opening: the senior leadership team did all the talking while the younger participants sat silently. After some reflection, they realized the younger employees were not invested in the

decisions of the organization because they never felt part of the decision-making process. For that reason, many did not feel empowered to speak up.

The leadership team met to rethink the approach to succession

planning and looked for guidance to help teach the high-performing employees how to think and act like coaches while in management roles, a strategy that helps create more engaged, loyal and happier employees overall. Basically, they were looking for someone to help train the next generation of leaders.

The Solution

EAW's leadership team found the solution they were looking for with The Forte Factor's Leadership Succession Program.

The Leadership Succession Program is a 6-month program that guides participants in gaining greater self-awareness to use and manage their leadership abilities. Participants also learn how to activate performance in others



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Ken Patrick, CEO, EAW

and to understand and participate in all of the areas of the business, gaining practice for when their time for a leadership role arrives. The program introduces a variety of tools, skills and applications that gradually builds each participant's effectiveness, while accommodating their already busy workdays.

"This is a time investment. You can't just flip a switch and expect to see the next generation of leaders ready to take charge," said Patrick. "But when you allow them the time and space to grow, the results are amazing."

The Forte Factor team worked closely with the EAW leadership team to ensure the program delivered not only a leadership succession plan, but also included information that aligned directly to their day-to-day activities so they could understand the impact of a manager-coach in their world, not just a theoretical approach.

"Jay was fantastic adjusting the content to align to our language," said Patrick. "It ensured that as our future leaders went through this program, we were all using the same language, both industry-specific and as manager-coaches."

The Results

The Future Leaders program, as the Leadership Succession Program became known at EAW, was so successful, the leadership team decided to run it again. A second group of future leaders graduated from the program at the end of 2020, and there are plans in place to expand the program to offer not only a first-year program, but to also continue coaching guidance and education to support the future leadership team over multiple years to ensure continued leadership education in a world that constantly changes.

"Every Future Leaders graduate has shown up in a way that honestly surprised me," said Patrick. "They know who they are. They're more comfortable with who they are. They know their strengths, they know what they need to work on, and they're open about those areas they need to work on. They are more willing to speak up with senior leadership and the management team when they see an issue or have an idea. They just show up in an entirely new way. I have every confidence that they are going to show up as leaders everywhere in their lives, regardless of what title they may hold."