



BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE CASE STUDY:



COMPANY BACKGROUND

Cascade AutoCenter in Wenatchee, Washington, has been serving the needs of area car and truck buyers since 1932. Steve and Jane Baldock bought Cascade from its founder in 1980. Under their leadership, the company has grown from being an exclusive local Chevrolet dealer to becoming the largest auto dealership in North Central Washington -- an authorized dealer not only for Chevrolet, but also for Subaru, Mazda, Jeep, Cadillac and Oldsmobile.

CHALLENGE

New brands and strong sales brought steady growth to Cascade, but it brought challenges, too. Cascade's parts and service departments serviced different auto brands from separate facilities -- under the management of one person. The inefficient system helped create an atmosphere of distrust and frustration among employees of the departments, and poor communication between top management, department management and employees made things worse. Changing personnel and structure would help, but Steve Baldock and Berit Vandebrake -- Cascade's General Manager, saw it would take more for everyone in the organization to share and commit to a common vision of excellence. *For Cascade AutoCenter, Blueprint was the answer.*

SOLUTION

After initiating changes to Cascade's management structure, new Service Manager Dave Manke and new Parts Manager Matt Hutyer joined Berit in establishing a Blueprint chapter in January, 2003. At Retreat 1, Dave, Matt and Berit were trained as Headwaters Leaders. They returned to work and began learning from their fellow Cascade employees what their vision of excellence was and how it could be achieved -- not through top-down management, but by inside-out "brainstreaming," idea-sharing and personal investment in reaching the company's goals.

A survey of employees of the newly-created Parts and Service Departments revealed they wanted a clear and compelling vision statement. A "vision team" of 7 core employees of the two departments met weekly over 4 months. With experienced guidance from Blueprint's Certified Upstream Guides, the vision team moved from airing grievances (a symptom of feeling powerless) to identifying things they could *control* -- like attitude and workplace ethics -- and thus *improve* (empowerment).

The Blueprint Tool software and their Headwaters Leaders helped the vision team define the four components of the vision: *central purpose, core values, vision and descriptive future*. With these components in place, the team created a vision statement that clearly communicated the shared vision of the two departments.

RESULTS

Blueprint for Excellence provided the path for Cascade AutoCenter employees to move from frustration to self-motivation, from dysfunction to continuous self-improvement. *Steve and Berit saw:*

- Core employees become company leaders.
- The development of a shared, attainable vision.
- Employees take ownership of their decisions and attitudes, and realize the power they have to shape the success of Cascade AutoCenter.
- Continuous, repeated efforts to improve teamwork and communication.

WHAT'S NEXT: ACHIEVING THE VISION

Developing and introducing the vision statement into the daily lives of Cascade's Parts and Service employees is only the beginning. Now the Blueprint Tool, Upstream Guides and the employees themselves will implement process improvements to advance them toward their vision. Cascade's employees are ready for the challenge. Parts Manager Matt Hutyer says: "It's given us a new pride in our people. We know when they are needed they will step up and do the job. We are very proud of them". And now, adds Service Manager Dave Manke, "they know why and how much they are needed."