



Daktronics Displays Exemplary Customer Service through Precision Leadership[®]

By Gail Snyder

Have you ever been to a sports arena, relied on the electronic traffic messages on the expressway, read a digital billboard, or become mesmerized by an LED video wall? If so (and unless you live on Mars), you have probably experienced a Daktronics product. Daktronics, Inc. began its journey of creating “digital display solutions” in 1968 and today is one of the world’s leading providers of LED message displays, video displays, scoreboards, sound displays and numerous related products. Daktronics, based in Brookings,

“Every day, our spirit is reflected in the products we build and in the way we interact with our customers.”

– Daktronics, Inc.



South Dakota, states on its Web site: “We believe that technological innovation isn’t just judged by the electronic signs we build today, but by what we’ll build tomorrow.”

That drive toward innovation also applies to the way Daktronics works with its employees and customers. Even with many ongoing efforts in place to continually improve all aspects of running a business, several years ago Daktronics contacted Aubrey Daniels International (ADI) to help energize Daktronics’ *Performance Development Cycle*. This process includes defining roles and responsibilities for employees called *performance dimensions*—closely related to results, that each employee should strive to meet. All of this was well and good, but management sensed an element was missing in their improvement efforts. ADI helped them discover the missing element—behavior.

Jessica Kippes, Leader Development Coach, explained how the company’s relationship with ADI began. “Human Resources invited ADI in for training to understand how we could use their methods within the

organization. When we completed the training, we invited a few key leaders from multiple areas for training. We’ve found that in those areas where the leaders, department managers, or unit managers show interest and apply these methods, it really does make a difference.”

One of the company’s departments that has applied behavioral methods to make a difference is the Global Services Division. After reading *The Effortless Experience*, a book about gaining customer loyalty, for example, managers in that division very much liked some of the book’s ideas on creating an *effortless experience* for customers, but how did they go about doing it? “The *what* was, “we want an effortless experience for our customers,” but we didn’t know *how*. The *how* was leveraging [ADI’s] Precision Leadership® and Coaching for Rapid Change® to get us there,” explained Sarah Rose, VP of Global Services.

Precision Leadership® uses specific behavioral methods to discover, describe, and reinforce desired work behaviors and Coaching for Rapid Change® applies feedback structures such as touchpoint sessions and debrief meetings to support Precision Leadership®. “If we go back in time before we had Precision Leadership and Rapid Change, I think we were unclear about the roles and expectations of our employees,” said Rose. “Then we started describing dimensions for our employees within roles and asking, ‘What behaviors would they demonstrate in order to achieve this dimension of performance?’”

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Rose’s department applied the MORS® requirements to target behaviors that are measurable, observable, and reliable. “MORS® re-

ally helped us be more deliberate in how we described the behaviors that we were hoping to achieve,” she said.

POSITIVE LANGUAGE

One success among many has been utilizing behavioral principles to implement and reinforce the concept of positive language. Using even subtle changes in language during verbal interactions not only improves customer experience but also reciprocally improves that of the employees. For example,

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rather than tell a customer that a part is not available, tell the customer when that part will be available. But how can these changes become learned and habitual? As managers and supervisors meet and discuss such conversations with employees

and ask them about their dialogue with customers (touchpoint sessions), the employees soon learn that the changes they make result in a self-reinforcing workday.

“We ask, ‘How did that make your work easier?’ and ‘How did the customer respond?’ People are saying, ‘It’s so much easier working with customers. We’re not having as many difficult phone calls as we had in the past.’ Why do you think that is? Because they are using positive language, and that builds positive reinforcement into their work. You can definitely say that has helped us improve our customer effort score,” said Rose. Holding regular debriefing meetings between managers and supervisors, at which times they share best practices and the behaviors they are shaping, also furthers engagement and teamwork.

This is but one example, according to Rose, of using Precision Leadership® to heighten performance. “We’ve applied it to

everything in customer service from taking customer calls, to coordinating activities, to providing technical support calls and field service calls,” she said.

LEARNING THE ROPES

Both Rose and Kippes note that incorporating Precision Leadership® into everyday business takes dedication. Rose states that after training, many managers enthusiastically began an attempt at shaping behaviors . . . but too many behaviors. Trying to shape a large number of behaviors and doing touchpoints on the same with large groups of employees just was not sustainable. “So, using behavioral roadmapping and the PIC/NIC Analysis® process, we prioritized the performance dimensions that we wanted to focus on first, and determined the behaviors that would lead to attaining those for each team. We went through the PICs and NICs early on to understand how to get positive, immediate, and certain consequences to shape those behaviors and bring in those PICs that are naturally reinforcing,” Rose said. Importantly, Rose stresses transparency; let the employees



know what you are doing, why, and how.

Rose thinks people should know that in initially implementing Precision Leadership, hits and misses are probable because knowing how to pinpoint behaviors, shape them, reinforce them, conduct touchpoint sessions, and deliver consistent coaching and debriefings takes planning and practice. “It’s something that you really need to have a deep understanding of, but if you do that and you put in the time, it’s very, very valuable,” Rose said.

PULLING TOGETHER

Kippes points out that walking the talk is the only way for the technology of Preci-

sion Leadership® to influence a culture in a positive way. “If you’re looking at your own behaviors—what you are reinforcing, and not reinforcing—you can shape behavior just through how you interact with people,” she said. “It starts with you.”

Rose comments that it all comes down to this: “We want customers for life. We want to be the industry leaders in customer satisfaction. As a company we want our employees to have long-term mutual prosperity, and to leverage our Performance Development Cycle. We want the effortless experience for our customers. And how do we get that? Precision Leadership®.”

[About the Author]

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Gail Snyder is a staff writer for Aubrey Daniels International. For the past 27 years, she has worked with clients to share their stories of the impact the science of behavior has had on their people and their business. In addition, Gail was the editor of Performance Management Magazine from 1987 to 2004.

[About ADI]

Regardless of your industry or expertise, one thing remains constant; people power your business. Since 1978 Aubrey Daniels International (ADI) has been dedicated to accelerating the business and safety performance of companies worldwide by using positive, practical approaches grounded in the science of behavior and engineered to ensure long-term sustainability. ADI provides clients with the tools and methodologies to help move people toward positive, results-driven accomplishments. Our clients accelerate strategy execution while fostering employee engagement and positive accountability at all levels of their organization.

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