

Case Study

How an Engaging Culture Positions Alta Resources for Going Beyond Boundaries | 2021 Engage!

Situation

Alta Resources helps organizations worldwide create incredible customer experiences that build their brand and grow their business. Because Alta focuses on the big picture — how consumers behave across every phase of the business cycle — it drives profits for its clients and delivers seamless, unforgettable brand moments.

Alta's leadership recognizes that the key to satisfied, loyal customers is engaged, cared-for employees — from the front line to the C-suite. To this end, Alta strives to maintain an engaging work culture that develops each individual and celebrates what employees do best. As part of this effort, Alta facilitated a leader development program that focuses on building relationships that drive positive results. Over time, Alta infused the program with Gallup's concepts of engagement, defined by the Q¹²® elements, as a foundation for their leader development efforts and to complement their growth goals. Gallup's emphasis on building thriving human relationships with employees and clients aligns perfectly with Alta's guiding principles. Determined to provide optimal care for employees and improve outcomes, Alta leveraged Gallup's guidance in developing a culture of engagement.

Approach

Alta is committed to engagement for the long term. With this in mind, leaders recognized the need to build a firm foundation for engagement growth. In 2017, Alta and Gallup began by establishing baseline employee engagement data using the Gallup Q¹². The Q¹² measures the 12 foundational elements of employee engagement that predict high team performance, making it the only metric that captures the fundamental psychological requirements for unleashing human potential. The Q¹² also gave Alta's managers a framework for facilitating ongoing coaching conversations with employees — conversations that motivate teams and make engagement integral to daily work culture.

After obtaining an initial "snapshot" of engagement levels, Gallup and Alta worked with managers to help them learn about the Q¹² and their role in setting engagement goals with their teams. This initial emphasis on manager education and development proved instrumental — in large part because managers account for 70% of the variance in team engagement. After the first survey administration, 100% of Alta's managers harnessed the Q¹² data to complete action plans with their teams. In the four years since launching the Q¹² process, Alta leaders and their teams have created and completed more than 900 action

plans. Because of leaders' emphasis on associate and team development, Alta's managers executed their team action planning process after the subsequent Q¹² administration in half the time it typically takes.

During the tumult of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alta and Gallup launched the "Gallup Restart," which involved a companywide commitment to three Q¹² engagement elements: Q07 — At work, my opinions seem to count; Q08 — The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important; and Q09 — My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work. Alta's leaders set the tone for the Gallup Restart in their words, actions and strategic decisions. They consistently reignited their dedication to meeting employees' needs by creating more than 300 action plans with suggested goals regarding the three Gallup Restart elements.

To further support an engaging work culture, Alta leveraged Gallup's Q¹² to launch a comprehensive coaching program, CARE, based on the 12 engagement elements that equip managers to coach individuals and teams. CARE centers on four targets — Communication, Assessment, Resolution and Execution — and connects directly to Alta's core values about customer care. CARE is designed to promote leadership accountability: For example, managers and leaders are held accountable for participating in coaching experiences and conversations with their direct reports. Furthermore, CARE provides tools and materials to help managers build meaningful, deep relationships and share engagement success strategies. Through CARE and in alignment with Gallup's foundational engagement concepts of meeting basic needs and focusing on the individual, managers are encouraged to listen, affirm and ask questions. This approach to coaching helps managers focus on development and illustrate that they value employees' opinions, needs and goals. As a result, those sites where the CARE coaching system was implemented saw significant double-digit improvement in Q¹² elements Q03, Q04, Q05 and Q06 (i.e., "focus on the individual"), with some scores increasing as much as 80 points over the prior year's survey results.

To instill employee engagement throughout the entire employee life cycle, Alta emphasized leaders' dedication to the Q¹² elements by focusing on the themes of personal (i.e., leader) engagement commitment, deliberate and frequent recognition, and validating employee input (i.e., opinions matter), whether it be via Microsoft Teams meetings or individual coaching.

Outcome

Alta leaders' unwavering dedication to engagement has fostered resilience during uncertain times. By focusing on ongoing relationship development and coaching conversations during difficult circumstances, Alta cultivated a highly resilient culture that is energized to spearhead 2021 goals — so much so that its engagement ratio has doubled over the previous year, into a category of "Demonstrated Engagement Excellence." Despite a year of hardship, this ratio of highly engaged to actively disengaged employees improved from 5:1 to 10:1, along with a 17-point change in engagement mean. At all levels of the company, Alta employees perceive that engagement is real in their work culture — that their managers and leaders authentically care. Moreover, employees are active participants who own their role in sustaining an engaging culture.

Though 2020 presented incredible challenges, Alta also experienced business growth, including improved revenue and financial outcomes (exceeding initial projections), a 20% reduction in turnover, and increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. Because Alta's leaders prioritized a culture of engagement, they empowered their people to deliver exceptional customer service throughout the year. For example, Alta jumped into action to provide the necessary materials and equipment for virtual work — and through ongoing coaching conversations, managers listened to employees' needs and demonstrated that they cared. Alta's ability to respond to the changing environment helped improve client relationships and drive results like never before.

As Alta leaders look to the future, they are confident their culture of engagement has positioned them to provide clients with unparalleled service. Alta's work culture is more mission-driven than ever — and its drive to maximize client relationships has never been more promising.