Evolve – Transforming Managers to Leaders – Submission Summary

The Evolve leadership development program at Purolator has built connections, common purpose, skills, expectations and commitment among all levels of management and kick-started culture change around several key organizational goals in a short period of time.

Purolator is experiencing unprecedented change to meet the expectations of a rapidly evolving marketplace. At a company-wide level, the following key organizational goals have been identified:

- Foster a more engaged workforce
- Improve efficiency through more effective systems thinking, networking and cross-team collaboration
- Embed a culture of workplace safety, continuous improvement and waste reduction
- Implement effective change management practices
- Build a workplace that supports diversity and inclusion

Purolator’s Evolve program was designed with these broad objectives in mind and has exceeded our expectations in this regard. Anecdotal and empirical evidence shows the program has been a key lever in starting a management movement that is raising employee commitment levels and efficiency across the organization. The target audience for the program is comprised of managers, with this cadre of approximately 400 people having a direct impact on 85% of the workforce, therefore, playing a key role in achieving the identified organizational goals.

The program was designed and developed by Flint Learning Solutions working in close collaboration with the Learning and Development team at Purolator. An extensive learning needs analysis was conducted by visiting operational sites and corporate headquarters, and interviewing upwards of 50 managers, executives and subject matter experts from all levels and functions of the organization.

The resulting program design called for a comprehensive solution incorporating e-learning and 10 days of in-class learning experiences, incorporating a wide mix of methods to engage and motivate participants. The program structure was cohort based and divided into three sequential phases with significant breaks between each phase to allow for workplace transfer activities to be completed. In addition, we supported learners with a robust electronic sustainment system that included mobile access to all course content and pushed out micro learning scenarios post-program to foster recall and prompt workplace application of skills learned. To connect managers of the participants to this initiative, we developed a two-day Evolve program overview session to enable them to support workplace skills transfer and provide appropriate learner motivation and accountability.

We chose a delivery location close to our Headquarters Office, and ensured that each cohort was made up of operational managers from across the company (Canada and the U.S.) and all
corporate functional areas in order to foster cross-functional understanding and networking. The proximity to our Headquarters office also facilitates the regular involvement of senior executives in the program, providing significant interest and motivation to participants.

The program was launched in January 2018; since then, 200 managers have completed the full program, and upwards of 80 participant managers have attended the two-day overview session. Delivery of the program is a collaborative effort with Purolator and Flint Learning Solutions co-facilitating significant portions of the program, which helps to provide a good combination of internal corporate knowledge and reality checking coupled with deep course content credibility and external viewpoints to broaden perspectives. Facilitation is also provided by several members of the executive team, internal subject matter experts and an external experiential learning provider, which adds energy, motivation and content credibility to many of the key topic areas.

Learner reaction feedback data shows participants felt the program was highly relevant to their roles and they had very strong intentions to apply their learning in the workplace. The learner summary impact reports prepared by each graduating participant confirm that this is in fact happening.

This conclusion is further supported by a sample survey completed by the managers of returning participants, which shows they are observing graduates of the Evolve program applying the expected core management skills on a sustained basis. The top results from this survey show that a high percentage of participants are consistently demonstrating the following behaviours and actions in the workplace:

- Making effective and ethical decisions (96% of participants)
- Actively and consistently building trust and relationships (91%)
- Fostering a safety culture (89%)
- Supporting a diverse workforce (85%)

These all directly contribute to increased employee engagement, which was the predominant learning outcome desired of the program.

The program has been successful, largely because the design and delivery team clearly focused on:

- The priority goals and skill needs of the organization and program participants
- The entire learning chain (aligning individual capability building, to workplace transfer, to desired organizational outcomes)
- Learner engagement, motivation, transfer support and accountability
- Manager engagement to support and monitor key expected learning outcomes after participants return to the workplace (managers of participants are provided a two-day overview training session of the full Evolve program)
- The buy-in and direct ongoing involvement of senior management in facilitating the program
- Engagement of internal subject matter experts to ensure realistic organizational scenarios and to facilitate key portions of the program to add content credibility and organizational reality checking
- Identification of high-priority, relevant and practical course content, models, methods and tools
- The use of an electronic sustainment system providing mobile access to course content and tools, and interrupting the forgetting curve by pushing out micro learning scenarios on a regular basis
- Providing a comprehensive, well-structured, well-planned and highly engaging interactive, sequentially phased learning experience.

The expected impact on organizational goals is beginning to appear in several related business metrics that we have been tracking. Managers who have completed the program show a 15% decrease in employee grievances and an 11% increase in NPS (Net Promoter Score), reflecting a happier employee and customer, attributable to a more engaged workforce.

Total workplace injury rates are also 2% lower for teams of managers that completed the program, showing a tangible transfer of health and safety learning — a key organizational objective covered in the program. Lean project savings generated by program participants also contributed to $29 million in operational waste reduction, which can be partially attributable to the Evolve program as well as other more focused organizational projects underway to address this organizational goal.

Plans to expand the impact of the program are to train all remaining current managers in the organization and then expand the potential audience to aspiring managers. We intend to leverage this investment to foster even more networking within the management cadre once a critical mass has been reached, and we are incorporating some of the program’s content, transfer support and accountability practices into other priority learning programs in the organization. We also plan to continue adjusting the program content on an ongoing basis as priorities shift to ensure its ongoing relevance — one of the key reasons we chose to brand the program “Evolve.”

In summary, we believe that Purolator’s Evolve Leadership Development Program is an exceptional learning initiative given its holistic design, well-structured delivery, and strong support for and commitment to workplace performance outcomes. The positive impact it is having on individual program participants and on aligning and energizing our management cadre towards achieving our key organizational goals has exceeded our expectations and therefore we believe it is a strong candidate for this important award.