

Client Spotlight

WD-40 Company

Background

If you telephone WD-40 Company on any given day, a friendly recording, guaranteed to put a smile on your face, greets you with enthusiasm. You haven't bought the product yet or spoken to a single person, but by simply calling you have already had a magnificent experience. This is just one of the ways the "new" WD-40 has captured magnificence and successfully integrated fun into its culture.

For 43 years WD-40 sold only one product. Today, it is a global consumer products company that sells a number of brands—which WD-40 calls their "fortresses" that stand the test of time, must be protected, nurtured, and grown—that deliver above expected performance at extremely good value in more than 160 countries worldwide. Two years ago WD-40 set a lofty four-year goal to double its revenues from \$150 million to \$300 million. It is well on its way. However, aggressive growth often requires the need for a culture change. President and chief executive officer Garry O. Ridge knew that to achieve this goal WD-40's people needed to have a work environment that promotes what he calls "free mental attitude"—turning issues into learning opportunities. He knew that The Ken Blanchard Companies could help make this change possible.

In his personal quest for growth, Ridge had researched various executive programs that would teach him new skills and reconfirm what he thought he already knew. He came across the University of San Diego's new master's program in executive leadership, which is cosponsored by the University and The Ken Blanchard Companies.

The Blanchard MSEL program met Ridge's requirements, which made his decision easy. Ridge learned about The Ken Blanchard Companies' Situational Leadership® II Model (SLII®) and he knew he had found the solution to his culture change worries. Through the process, Ridge gained exposure to the power of SLII® and it also led him to the creation of a new business model for WD-40.

The two-year program is offered to emerging and established leaders and combines the core elements of an MBA course with a unique mix of leadership courses. It develops interpersonal skills and offers personalized feedback, integrates real life experiences into course work, and includes a cohort-learning environment. Typical candidates for the MSEL program have five years of professional experience or more and are in leadership positions. Most candidates want to learn skills to boost their careers and create dynamic relationships with their work.

CHALLENGE: How to meet aggressive growth goals, change the corporate culture, and maintain magnificence.

SOLUTION: Situational Leadership® II was rolled out to top-level leaders, which was seen by WD-40's CEO as adding value to the company's learning objectives.

RESULTS: With 54% increase in sales and 47% increase in earnings the first six months, SLII® helped increase employee commitment, and provided a framework to strengthen leadership bench strength. SLII® is now a way of life at WD-40.

“Leadership is all about serving people in a way that gives them what they need to be effective.

SLII® provides a frame of reference for both the teammate and coach so that each knows the role of the other. At WD-40 Company, we benefit daily by having a large group of people who have been through SLII® training, and further by having five people trained in the MSEL program at USD. As a result, we “speak” the same leadership language and have a shared understanding of ways to work together. SLII® and MSEL have had a profound impact on our organization.”

—Mike Irwin, Sr. Vice President / CFO, WD-40 Company, and University of San Diego MSEL Class of 2002

“One of the biggest challenges any organization faces is good communication. The genius of the MSEL program is that it focuses not only on what leaders say, but also on how leaders communicate. When a group of leaders are all speaking the same language the communication becomes easier, more effective, and more efficient. We are fortunate to have a CEO who embraces both SLII® and MSEL. Having similar training experiences allows us to keep each other honest. We can call each other when it becomes apparent that one of us is not ‘walking the talk.’ Most importantly, by going through the MSEL program and by using the SLII® Model, it forces us to look at the impact our actions have on others. When we pay attention, we greatly improve our effectiveness as a leader— in our organization, our personal lives, and our community.”

—Steve Schwab, Vice President, Sales, WD-40 Company, and University of San Diego MSEL Class of 2002

When asked what advice he has for others who are seeking to grow and expand by facing new challenges, Ridge responds, “Leadership is what it is all about. Without people being motivated and committed to magnificence, you will have an average company. Leadership is about creating the environment that motivates people to reveal their magnificence every day. Situational Leadership® II and the MSEL program provide potential leaders with the framework to become practicing leaders.”

With Garry Ridge’s Leadership Cycle and the Situational Leadership® II Model in place, WD-40 has created a culture in which people continuously discover and utilize their magnificence and will continue to drive the success of the organization.

Additional information on the Master of Science in Executive Leadership program is available on the University of San Diego Web site www.business.sandiego.edu/



THE Ken Blanchard
COMPANIES

San Diego 760 489-5005 • 800 728-6000
London +44 (0) 20 8540 5404
Toronto 905 568-2678 • 800 665-5023
www.kenblanchard.com