

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

How They Can Help Your Business



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Heidi Ellsworth:

Hello and welcome to another RoofersCoffeeShop Lunch and Learn. My name is Heidi Ellsworth. And we're here today to talk about how you can interact at a higher level with your field crews.

So before we get started, I just want to remind everybody to download their discussion sheet. So along with this Lunch and Learn, you have a PDF discussion sheet, download it, take notes as you go so that you can have a great conversation on how you can implement this into your business afterwards.

So today talking about strategic partnerships, how they can help your business. And we have three learning objectives. First, establish what your field crew needs for success. Second, find solutions for their pain. And third, challenges to launching those solutions. Great learning objectives. This is going to be an amazing discussion.

Brittany Randall:

So I'm Brittany Randall. I've been with WTI for almost six years. I started off as a regional administrator, and now between Adam and I we have a team of 20 administrators and dispatchers.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Excellent.

Brittany Randall:

And Adam?

Adam Cook:

Hi, Adam Cook. I've been with WTI for, this will be my 20th year. And that is exactly how long I've been in the roofing industry. So I've learned everything through this company. But I started off as a regional field tech and I've kind of just worked my way through the company learning all aspects of it. And I'm now listed as a field support manager.

Heidi Ellsworth:

How do you establish your field crews pain points? What's kind of your process on how you kind of figure out what's going on and what they need help with?

Brittany Randall:

So usually we get a lot of feedback. And when we hear the same problem over and over and again, that's how we know that it's really painful for everybody.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Adam, you had experience with this because you were in the field for a number of years and now are helping folks. So Adam, going back to you, what are some of the top pain points that you are hearing today from your team in the field?

Adam Cook:

A lot of it comes around communication. There's so many different points of information. We have to get to them between where they're working, what they're working on, the scope of what they're working. And we're getting that information from many different places. We're getting emails, we get texts, we

get phone calls. So one of our big objectives was find a single point for communication that could kind of solve all those problems.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Excellent. And what are you hearing, Brittany?

Brittany Randall:

So a lot of what I'm hearing is some of the give backs that we've put out there for the technicians they don't work as we intend them to. So we think we're putting out this awesome program that they're going to love and take part in, and then it's actually more challenging than it's worth to them. So we have also taken a lot of that feedback to make our programs better.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Oh, I love that. And do you see, when you talk about communication or maybe programs that really aren't helping as much, how is that limiting production?

Brittany Randall:

It kind of limits morale. When things are more challenging, it just doesn't make them want to get up and come to work every day. So that's been a huge obstacle to overcome.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Adam, what are you kind of seeing on production and productivity overall?

Adam Cook:

Yeah, she hit it right on the head. It's really they're fighting with the technology before they even start their workday. And that's the point where we're trying to ease that pain and just kind of make it an easier transition from getting started to work to finishing your day.

Heidi Ellsworth:

So really when you're talking about communication, so much of that goes around technology.

Adam Cook:

That's right. It's a big push towards getting rid of the paperwork, getting rid of all the phone calls and having technology be kind of the leader. So everything they do from their time entries, their work day they did, the photographs of the work, their customer interactions, pretty much everything's going to go through some form of app nowadays. That's what we're trying to get to them.

Heidi Ellsworth:

To get to that. And everybody has a phone on them.

Adam Cook:

That's correct.

Heidi Ellsworth:

And so it's a little bit easier possibly in the future to improve those communications.

Adam Cook:

It is. It was a little rough at first because there's two different types of phones. You have Androids and iPhones, and we chose to supply all of our employees with iPhones. And so it's working now, but it was a little bit of a struggle. But we've kind of gotten to where we feel a little more comfortable.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Now, you two spend a lot of time out in the field talking to people. How have you really come to understand the field experience? I know, Adam, that you were out in the field. But Brittany, what's been your journey on really understanding the needs?

Brittany Randall:

They will tell you, especially when you're in one-on-one conversations. When you get to be in front of them and have those one-on-one conversations, they're so impactful. When you're on a call or you're in a group, they might not share their concerns. So just being there saying, "Hey, how can I assist you? What are you struggling with?" You have to ask the questions in order to really understand, and it really does make a huge difference.

Heidi Ellsworth:

It's kind of breaking down that wall between the office and the field. Right?

Brittany Randall:

They need to know that we're there to support them. And that's kind of how we start when we go into these groups. We say you can talk to us about anything and we will try to solve it.

Heidi Ellsworth:

How do you source what you need for that field support? So once you realize the solution, or the problem and you're looking for a solution, how do you go about that? Adam, you're nodding. Let's start with you.

Adam Cook:

Well, we were discussing this earlier. It's really, we start from the ground floor, internet searches, look to see what other people are using. It's that simple. And then you start working from that point, you start looking at the reviews, looking at their backstories, how long have they been in business, how many different companies, size of companies they're using, and then you just start putting demo requests in. It's a long process.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah.

Adam Cook:

The current implementation we're doing now, I think we did probably a year worth of demos from multiple companies before we found a solution. So you just start at the ground level, research them. There's a lot of information on the internet on every company out there.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Did you reach out to other companies? And Brittany, as you were vetting them, did you reach out to other companies for referrals and how it worked for them?

Brittany Randall:

So we've reached out to so many companies and asked do you enjoy your partnership? Are they responsive? Are they reactive? So we do. We try to go through every channel that we can to make sure that our solution's going to really stick.

Heidi Ellsworth:

So as you're kind of looking at these solutions for, let's say for the communications, when you decided to go all iPhones, how do you work with the vendor to make sure that they are going to empower your employees? Because sometimes it all sounds great during the sales process, but then when it actually happens the customer service is not there. How do you make sure that they're going to be as good with your employees as they are with you?

Adam Cook:

Well, we just make sure we have a clear objective. And we kind of lay it all out on the table for them saying this is what we're looking for, this is the solution we need, and we need it to work this way. That's how we put the demos out there. And then we have them work towards answering our solution. So we give them our problem and then they try to bend and shape and make it kind of fix our issue.

Brittany Randall:

Also, it's really important to know when their solution no longer works for you and to move on. And that's something that Adam and I are currently learning because you want to keep making it work and you want to keep making your partnership work, but you have to really know when it's time to walk away.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Figured out the pain, vetted it, you've gone out, you found a solution that you think is going to work. Now you need to launch it, and so that's the third learning objective for today is challenges to launch. So how do you even start approaching launching a new solution into the field?

Brittany Randall:

We take it in phases or in levels. Adam and I have an amazing team, and we kind of break it down and we usually start with a small group, see if it works, see if they like it, and then kind of figure out the pain points of that and then make it better before we deploy the rest of the solution.

Heidi Ellsworth:

And talk about that feedback, that getting their feedback and kind of understanding their experience before you move on to the next one. Adam.

Adam Cook:

They're the ones that are going to use it day to day and they're going to go through the process. So they'll tell us what they like, what they don't like. And if it's something we can go back to the system and say, "Hey, can we swap this around?" or "Can we turn this off and turn this on?" Then we'll work with the company and we'll make it happen for the next group.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Adoption is, has to be the hardest part because I don't care who you are, I don't care if you work in the office or in the field or on the roof, wherever, new things, learning new technologies is always hard. How do you deal with that adoption and really helping employees understand that this is necessary for them to adopt and to make the change?

Brittany Randall:

Sometimes it's just a real hard conversation, that change is hard for everybody and this is what we need to do to keep our business moving forward. But usually when they see that we've worked really hard to put out a solution that meets all their needs and answers all their questions, usually they do kind of come around.

Adam Cook:

Yeah. And I think one of the other issues or parts is that first step, training them very well so they feel comfortable with the solution from the start. If they're not trained very well, then they're going to have an issue and then that first issue's going to have them, "Well, I don't like it anymore. I want to go back to the old system." So I think a good first step is a really good training center.

Brittany Randall:

You can't rush the training. Everybody needs to feel really successful in order for it to be well received.

Heidi Ellsworth:

When I think about the process that you've laid out, first of all, asking them what is limiting your productivity, and what is a pain for you out in the field, has it gotten easier as you've launched new initiatives where you've built the trust?

Brittany Randall:

The level of trust, we've built a good level of trust with them so they know that we are trying to help them. Even if they don't see maybe the benefits right off the bat, they do trust us. And that's really important. And that also means us going out into the field asking those questions. That's where that comes in. We go, we meet with them, we talk with them, and then we hear them. And we go back and take that back to our team and say, "What can we do for them?"

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Adam, you were kind of nodding too on just that whole circle. I mean, having experienced it, starting out your career working in the field, how do you see building that trust? What works the best?

Adam Cook:

Well, as you mentioned earlier, there was a wall between us and the offices, and I remember that clearly when I was in the field. And now we have a special support team that's kind of the bridge between the field and the office. So anything, any kind of answer they need, we have a team that's there. So that's I think been really big because they have someone they can go to directly that they know is going to have an answer or be able to get an answer to whatever issue they have.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Right. I have seen those walls break down too since when I first started my career. It's like we're starting to understand the bigger picture of the full team in everyday work.

So you've spent all this time, you've found the pain, you found a solution, you put it in the field, you found some adoption, but it's not working. And talk about that because, I mean, that's a bummer to let go after all that time. And then how do you reboot, and how do you go to that next step? Maybe Brittany start with you.

Brittany Randall:

So that's really hard to say you kind of failed. But the goal is to give them a solution that benefits them. And once you get past that this isn't working, now you know what's broken and you can go forward and ask better questions when you're in your vetting process. It takes a lot of time and sometimes it seems, I don't want to say hopeless, but sometimes it seems hard, something that should be so simple or so easy you can't find your solution. But if you keep trying, you'll find a company that wants to support you in the way that you want to be supported.

Heidi Ellsworth:

I know what I've seen a lot in the past too is you kind of need to get some of the team who become early adopters. And so when you have early adopters who have adopted it and who maybe are helping to lead others but then you realize the solution's not right, what does that do for morale? What does that do for those folks out there?

Adam Cook:

It's tough because there's always a group that are going to, I don't want to say want it to fail, but they love the solution you have already, but we know it's not working. So they want to stick with that. So they're going to pick at it. They're going to find ways to make it break down. And then when it does, it's kind of...

Brittany Randall:

To what Adam's saying, you also have the team that's always your cheerleader though. And so they're always helping you push forward. And just by getting some of those people involved in the field, you can kind of overcome those challenges when you're putting out a new solution.

Heidi Ellsworth:

With people who maybe are not so excited about it.

Brittany Randall:

Yes, exactly.

Adam Cook:

Right.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah.

Adam Cook:

Yeah, it's kind of the give-and-take relationship I guess you could say.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And on the other side of it too, the right vendor. I mean, once you find that right vendor who really is great working with all of your employees, who's delivering and doing things, that can be for a long time, I mean it can really become a whole part of the culture. Have you seen that with some of your vendors who just knocked it out of the ballpark?

Brittany Randall:

Absolutely. There are so many vendors that want to go above and beyond for you. And then you find other ways to utilize them, and that even makes your partnership stronger.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Now, what are you finding with some of the partners that, I mean I know that they're solving a solution. Well, and let's talk about a pretty well-known campaign that you have out there, and that is boots for your employees. And it's been on the RoofersCoffeeShop. And it's just a great thing that WTI does for everyone out in the field. Talk about that a little bit. You had a boot program and it was good, but it wasn't everything. And then you were able to find this new one. Maybe Brittany talk a little bit as an example of finding that right vendor.

Brittany Randall:

So our previous solution was only online and it was a really struggle to use your mobile device, which everyone had. So we needed to find a solution that allowed us to shop in store or online, however the technicians were comfortable, however the field was comfortable, and that was huge. And with almost 800 technicians in the field, we needed a large vendor that could support 800 technicians shopping in the store if that's how they chose. So that was our very first question, can you support us any way we need to be supported?

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And I mean, that's a personal thing too. The boots, your footwear, your boots is very personal to everybody. So Adam, what have you seen with that campaign and really what the employees are looking for?

Adam Cook:

This is a good example of how we communicate with the field and listened. They gave us all their issues with the current solution. And we couldn't find it. Couldn't get it fixed with the current solution, so we found a new one. And I think we pretty much answered all their questions. I think they couldn't be much more happier.

Boots, when you're roofing, a boot's, it's everybody has their particular set, you wear them forever. I mean, boots they're just so personal. So if you have a small selection or not the right selection, we're offering these guys, I would say a free product of \$200, but of something that they don't want. Now I feel like we have a solution to here, get what you want and then you can try it on. They'll come to you in certain situations. We can have them come to you and they'll bring selections where you can try them on there and then purchase them right then.

Heidi Ellsworth:

That's cool.

Adam Cook:

So I think it's going to be a good partnership.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And they're offering additional perks too for all the employees.

Brittany Randall:

They are. So you get an extra percentage off of your purchases that aren't necessarily work related, and they're also offering to come to big job sites and provide lunch or some giveaways. And we love that because we want to support our field and we want them to know that they're really important to us. And that's how we do it.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. That is very cool. So okay, with these programs and with this program that you're doing, what have you seen in terms of productivity and just overall culture and morale that has come from this program?

Brittany Randall:

Talking about a solution that they didn't like and saying, "Hey, we heard you and we're going to do better for you," that changes the culture almost immediately because they came to us with a problem and we're offering them solutions. They came to us with a small problem, and we went out and found a vendor that actually answered so many more problems that we didn't even know we had until we started kind of digging and answering the right questions.

For example, our old supplier could only provide a handful of women's boots. And now we have so many women in the field and it's great to be able to give them good solutions as well. With our new vendor, we're able to give them much more options than we ever were before. So just hearing them helps change their morale and their culture.

Heidi Ellsworth:

And the culture, continuing it up. And I think it would be remiss if we didn't mention how important it is for retention and also for recruitment because now they know that they're getting solutions, they're getting what they need to be successful in their job.

Brittany Randall:

Absolutely. We outfit them with the best PPE all the way down to their boots because they're steel toe or composite toe and we want them to feel successful and look good too.

Heidi Ellsworth:

And be safe.

Brittany Randall:

And be safe.

Heidi Ellsworth:

When you are really talking about this whole process, and let's talk not just about that one initiative, but about you two and about this whole initiative that you have with listening, finding the pain, finding solutions, and then helping to make the adoption, what do you see overall with all of these programs and this initiative of really listening to the field and delivering solutions? What is some of the feedback you're hearing on that?

Adam Cook:

Just making their life easier. Everything we do in our roles is to try to make the guys that are out there, the guys and the ladies out there, just make their life as easy as they can. Because if it's easy, they're going to want to work, they're going to want to work hard, and they're going to do a good job of what they do. So everything we've done is just to make it easier for them.

Brittany Randall:

When we first started going out to the field, we would say, "We're a resource for you, use us, utilize us, call us." And our phones rang off the hook and it was a lot. Now, we've been in the field, we go out in front of them often, and so those have slowed down too. And so that also helps improve our relationship because now we can manage the solutions a little bit better, but also we've solved a lot of the problems that they had.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And that's the bottom line right there. Solving problems in order to make everything work better. Well, thank you both of you. This has just been... What a great initiative. It just shows what a great company culture WTI has and how much you care. You're inspirational. Thank you so much.

Adam Cook:

Thank you.

Brittany Randall:

Thank you so much for having us, Heidi.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Thank you. And so please everybody on your discussion sheet, I hope you've been taking notes for these three learning objectives of how to establish your field crew needs for success, two, finding the solutions for those pain, and finally, the challenges to launching it and keeping it going.

So thank you so much everybody. I hope you enjoyed this as much as I did. Great initiative that I hope you can implement in your company because it can only make things better. Have a wonderful day, and thank you so much for being on this month's RoofersCoffeeShop Lunch and Learn.