

ATDSFL Champions of Learning Best Practices Submission Form

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Q1 Organization (as printed on certificate):

TBC Corporation Learning and Development

Q2 Project/Initiative Title:

Advanced Leadership Program (ALP)

Q3 Name of Person Submitting:

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Q7 Write a brief summary of your project/initiative. Please limit your response to between 150 and 200 words.

Advanced Leadership Program (ALP) is a one-year educational program for high potential retail store managers. The program has two parallel paths, which deliver education and development opportunities tailored to prepare select Associates for future opportunities in management and leadership capacity positions at TBC. In addition, the program is targeted to provide participant experiences that can be immediately applied on the job to further bolster store managers' capabilities while preparing for future roles.

The program includes four 5-day sessions held over a calendar year at corporate headquarters. ALP covers a variety of topics to build skill set leadership, organizational agility, employee relations, and performance management. The program culminates in a project presentation to the Executive team. The projects are assigned to work teams in the program, focusing on solutions to business challenges within retail operations.

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Q8 What was the business/organizational need that led to this initiative? Please limit your response to between 150 and 200 words.

The retail organization experienced high turnover and low performance in store manager positions. Internal promotions from store manager to district manager lacked a strong success rate and external hires did not fare much better despite the competitive landscape. We recognized our opportunity and determined we needed to modify our practices to form a solution that focused on accomplishing the following:

- Improve overall store manager performance
- Create internal career development opportunities
- Improve retention and drive down the cost of turnover
- Build a talent pool for future leadership positions

To address the above, we designed the Advanced Leadership Program, created and facilitated internally, in its entirety. This one-of-a-kind program identifies our high potential store manager population and prepares them for advancement in the company. It was equally important to engage our managers in a process that showed a viable path to success in their careers and assist in transition. If designed and executed properly, one solution could lead to multiple bottom line improvements.

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Q9 What actions did you take that led to the success of this initiative? Please limit your response to between 400 and 500 words.

We identified a talent gap in our store manager population that is the feeder to our District Manager positions. We were experiencing difficult transitions into the organization from external hires and recognized a lack of overall preparedness of internal Associates assuming the higher level role. This realization was the product of conducting a GAP analysis, using surveys, turnover/retention studies, interviews, employee relations issues and overall operational results, which helped to drive the program deliverables. The aforementioned need, coupled with the intention of building a talent pool further substantiated the business case for the ALP program.

While we had training programs available on topics such as operations, coaching, and business acumen, each was a stand-alone program and inconsistent in delivery, application, content and ultimately, effectiveness.

In an effort to build a sustainable and pragmatic program, we partnered with some of our top performers in the role and retail business leaders to best understand the key characteristics, knowledge, skills, and abilities of successful incumbents in the role. Through collaboration, we created a brand standard program that is not only foundational in nature, but provides a global view of this key contributor role within the organization and leadership team. We further supported the program by committing to promote only ALP graduates into District Manager positions.

Before a manager enters the program, there is a dedicated conversation with the potential participant about their career path which includes a program overview. They must meet pre-determined performance metrics, have a desire to become a district manager, commit to attending the yearlong program, have the ability to travel to Corporate Headquarters, and have demonstrated they have developed an effective team at the local level.

ALP was founded on real-life scenarios that business leaders in retail encounter daily. Participants were encouraged to bring real challenges and obstacles they face to their sessions. They discuss solutions and interact with support teams and corporate leaders to enable navigation in the organization.

At the onset of the program, the participants complete a self-assessment inventory where results are used for self-development as well as to bring awareness of communication and leadership styles.

Additionally, the top level leadership in our Retail organization fully endorsed and embraced the program and take an active role in both the selection process and the ongoing sessions through the year. Participants are exposed to subject matter business experts to assist in their project development.

Implementing each of the above components and involving the right team to lead and champion the program has led to great success when participants are promoted. Said differently, being ready and positioned for that "next" position at TBC Corporation.

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Q10 What outcomes resulted from your initiative and how did you measure them? Please limit your response to between 250 and 300 words.

First and foremost we measured the internal promotion rate into District Manager roles. Once promoted, we then continue to monitor their performance in the role. Forty percent of participants have been promoted into higher-level roles. Since the inception of the program, all open District Manager positions have been filled by ALP graduates. More recently, we identify additional positions for promotions in our Fleet and Learning & Development departments as ALP has proved to be cross functional.

Turnover among the ALP members is extremely low; less than 10%, comparatively, 21% of those have not participated. At this time, 56 Store Managers graduated from the ALP program over the 3 years, with 30 additional graduates in 2019. Of the 56 that have graduated, 20 have been promoted to next level positions within the organization (35.7%).

Several ALP Projects have been adopted by Retail operations that have streamlined processes, improved the onboarding process and our career path program. Sales have increased and customer service has been positively impacted.

The above items have been recognized as contributing factors to the overall success of the retail organization. Improved knowledge, skill, retention, and engagement in the manager and district manager ranks has also strongly impacted the bottom-line results.

Additionally, this program has an enormous positive impact on our participants and their organizations. For our formal presentation, we will include success stories that are dramatic and truly moving. We will include the stories of several of the participants about how their careers and personal lives have been absolutely uplifted. These are stories of individuals of top potential who were enabled to realize goals and dreams they did not think possible. Depending on the format of our presentation, we are able to bring some of these folks to tell first-hand what their experiences were.

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Q11 What information would be vital for other organizations to know if they wanted to replicate your initiative? Please limit your response to between 250 and 300 words.

“Training” has traditionally been a standard answer to address organizational challenges and lack of achieving objectives. While it may be true in some cases, it is critical to understand what we are trying to fix via learning and development. In our case, this was the cornerstone to the ALP program. Once we aligned on the objective, the program intent became that much clearer as well as easier to design and implement.

By partnering with Key stakeholders, subject matter experts, and those who demonstrated the level of success we were aiming for, we were able to emulate the expectations of successful Managers and those who are poised to take on the next level of leadership for the organization.

We cannot emphasize enough the power of adoption from the top down. We created a buzz and atmosphere around the program so that folks were vying to be selected.

From a program management standpoint, there are certain items that will prove to facilitate program success. The ingredients to the secret sauce are ...

- Find your program champions and involve them in designing and promoting program
- Always make decisions that support the intent of the program
- Create a program image so it is alluring to others
- Define your budget and ensure it is realistic to provide the agreed upon solution
- Commit the necessary time and effort
- Design curriculum that embraces different perspectives: Leading self, others and the business
- Celebrate “wins” that can be attributed to the program; market the success
- Create a legacy for the program

Lastly, do not underestimate the impact the program has on the personal growth experience the participants gain. We tend to speak of business metrics to gauge success, and while this holds true, there is an intangible success that is immeasurable. The human interaction and relationships developed during the ALP programs have been long standing and unbreakable. Those connections have been nurtured by leaders in the organization and the participants themselves. This speaks to the level of engagement and associate satisfaction among program graduates. A sense of pride exudes from the group as they are delivering their executive presentation and remains for years to come; they are truly a shining example of employee engagement!
