

# CASE STUDY: LIEBHERR

CRESTCOM®



For more than 65 years, Liebherr has been an independent, family-owned company that is committed to forming close long-term relationships with customers and colleagues, which has led to Liebherr becoming one of the largest manufacturers of construction machinery in the world. In 1949, Hans Liebherr was managing his parents' building firm when he recognized the need for tools and machinery to aid in the reconstruction of Germany after World War II. He worked with design engineers and tradespeople to develop the first mobile, easy-to-assemble tower crane which provided the foundation for Liebherr Group to become the global leader it is today. A company firmly grounded in craftsmanship and ingenuity, Liebherr is now one of the largest manufacturers of construction machinery as well as a renowned supplier of technically innovative user-centered products and services in numerous other fields – from aerospace systems to domestic appliances to first-class hotels.

Liebherr's expansion to North America followed a similar pattern to its success in Europe and throughout the world. It began in 1970 with the construction of two manufacturing facilities and their North American headquarters in Newport News, Virginia. Today, they are growing their brand presence in the United States by transitioning into a company with a simpler structure and broader reach to deliver an exceptional and consistent

experience. They now operate 5 U.S. companies in 13 locations with more than 1,088 employees. This growth contributed to the formation of Liebherr USA, Co., an organization created in 2016 to streamline service for customers and business partners which set the stage for rapid expansion and growth, and all the management challenges that come with it.

How does Liebherr continue to work systematically to keep one step ahead through continuous innovation while maintaining the consistency and trustworthiness their customers have come to expect? Ryan Wood, Human Resources Manager at Liebherr USA, Co. explains, "When I look at the strategic initiative we have as a whole, not just in one division, you can see that within Liebherr, that the employees are the key factor to success." Vicki Wishon, HR & Training Manager at Liebherr USA, Co., believes that leadership development is an investment in the company's current and future leaders. "If you're committed to leadership development, as Liebherr is, developing current leaders, future leaders, improvement of communication, building relationships, all of those are going to make a stronger employee – which will generally make a stronger supervisor, and those strengths lead through that person's life. Whether it's communication with their subordinates, their peers, their customers, or with their family."

Ryan and Vicki agree that if an organization believes their employees are key to their success, it must have an actual development process for those employees. Ryan asks, "How can you identify the future leaders, without having this type of training? To bring out that skill set in those individuals, and properly prepare them for such roles. And in doing this, not overlook the leaders that you have at higher levels such as executives or senior managers, and giving them that refresher training, that updated training, based on the trends and the things going on in business. To me it goes back to the strategic initiative of Liebherr firm as a whole, that it's the employees are key to our success and employees have to have true leaders to move this organization forward." As HR professionals, Ryan and Vicki know that the investment Liebherr makes in leadership development is unique and that many organizations don't invest the time or money in developing their employees. They are both proud to be part of a brand that takes leadership development seriously.

## **WHEN VICKI LEARNED ABOUT THE CRESTCOM LEADER PROGRAM, SHE THOUGHT:**

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**"The 12- month format was a good fit for us. It breaks the learning into bite-size pieces and allows a supervisor or manager to learn new concepts, have 30 days to put it to work, and then have a follow-up. The subject matter changes over time and benefits people in that group or people with aspirations to be, and even experienced managers and leaders find good takeaways from the program."**

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Ryan explained that part of his job is doing due diligence in regards to what other vendors are available for training programs, "and some of the reasons we continue with Crestcom LEADER is the platform, the diversity, the presentation, the subject matter, the willingness to update the information and understand the trends of what's going on in Leadership." Ryan agrees and says that their facilitators, Mark and Patti Hawkins, have been great, "we know this is your business and puts food on your table, but that's not how it comes across. It comes across as a true passion, to train, and to teach, and work with us in developing our current leaders and our leaders of tomorrow."

Most importantly the training has shown real results for Ryan and Vicki's team members. Ryan shared that one participant often brings back information and exercises to their department meetings and they all benefit and learn to work better as a team. He has seen his managers implement what they've learned. Ryan shared another example of a manager that is very serious and business-driven, learn to be more personable and relate to his staff more in order to improve communication and morale. Seeing the managers that participate in Crestcom LEADER make real-world changes and improvements in the workplace has proven to Ryan and Vicki that investing in leadership development yields excellent results.

Liebherr is the winner of the 2019 Crestcom Global Leadership Growth Award. This award is given to just one company or organization each year that demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to talent and leadership development. Liebherr's culture of independence, trustworthiness, innovation, quality, responsibility and most importantly the belief that their employees are a key factor in their success as a company and they should be developed at every level has set them apart from the competition and has made them the clear winner for this year's award.