

Case Study

GUY Engineering

Location: Tulsa, Oklahoma

2015 Revenues: \$4.7 million

Employees: 36

Industry: Engineering Services

Highlights



Challenge

When the company sold 49% of the business to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) in 2013, they saw the need to educate the new owners how to run their business.



Solution

Open the books and teach everyone inside the business what it means to think and act like an owner.



Results

Since GUY implemented the Great Game of Business, results are up across the board, including near record sales and profit figures, reduced debt, and a 30% increase in the firm's stock price since 2014.

“We are one team, and we can go to each other for help. There is a lot more camaraderie now.”



GUY Engineering is a consulting firm with extensive experience in civil engineering and land surveying. Since 1987, GUY has been providing quality design work on hundreds of projects ranging from roadway and bridge designs to water distribution and sanitary sewer improvements throughout the state of Oklahoma.

Company Background

GUY Engineering was founded in 1987 by Julie Guy. But the company entered a new phase when, as a way to help Guy retire, it implemented a Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). “That gave us tax advantages and was also a way to give back to the employees,” says John Blickensderfer, the company’s CEO. But the new ownership structure also meant that the company would lose its status as a woman-owned business, which meant it would lose out on certain contracts. The company had also never shared company-wide financial figures with employees before. The Great Game of Business became a way to open the books and teach financial literacy throughout the company as well as to get everyone working toward shared company goals.

“Knowledge is power and by sharing knowledge with our employees we empower them to reach whatever goal they want to reach.”

Playing the Game Together

Implementing GGOB was not without its challenges. Not only did the employee owners need to believe that the Great Game of Business wasn't another flavor-of-the-month program, they needed to get used to the transparency around the numbers in the business that were now being shared with them.

Dottie Hagan, an accountant who has been at GUY for 18 years, says her first reaction was: "I'm supposed to share all that?"

As way to share those figures and help everyone understand what they mean, GUY began a weekly huddle to update its scoreboards. Every line item is "owned" by a different employee, who is responsible for learning about and tracking that line item for six months. "Forecasting has had the biggest impact on everyone's attitude," says Pete Ellis, an engineer. "People are more willing to work extra hours and be more efficient when they know where we are in a certain month and if we need to stretch to meet a goal. Everyone takes more ownership of what they are doing and is willing to help us reach our shared goals."

The company has also rallied to the idea of playing a series of MiniGames, including one called, "Get Smart About Cash." The main objective of the game was to encourage quicker invoicing, thereby generating cash more quickly. The game included lunchtime classes to teach employees how cash is generated, how to read profit and loss statements, and how projects are set up.

"People can see longer-term now," says Blickensderfer. "They have an awareness of the bigger picture."

"I like to know the 'why' behind the 'what' and figuring out how I can help."

Rapid Financial Results; Lasting Cultural Change

Thanks to improved communication and forecasting, GUY can point to several specific and measurable wins they have enjoyed since implementing the Great Game of Business, including:

- Highest net revenue year in company history (revenue increase of 8% over 2014)
- Second highest profit year (PBT; their critical number) increased 38% over 2014).
- Stock price increase (value increased 30% over 2014).
- Added growth (increased number of employees by 6% over 2014).
- Reduced long term debt (reduced debt by 26%).
- Employee retention (average employee has 5.3 years of service with 17% of employees having more than 10 years of service).

Working toward shared goals has had a positive impact on GUY's culture. While it always had a family-feel to it, the Great Game of Business has helped "strengthen" it, says Ellis. "Before, I'd show up, work on my stuff, and leave," he says. "Now, everyone is involved, even people who were reluctant at first. We know how we affect PBT - our critical number."

"The Great Game of Business is helping us inspire loyalty and provide a place where people want to stay."
