

Elevating Team Performance

at  Whirlpool
CORPORATION

During a time of extraordinary transition, Whirlpool's North American leadership team used [Vantage's High Performance Team Solution](#) to increase effectiveness in order to drive critical improvements in business performance. The organization has since embedded our Model into their training and team development across the enterprise.

BACKGROUND ON WHIRLPOOL

Whirlpool Corporation is a multinational home appliance manufacturer that began operating in 1911 with the creation of the first electric motor washing machine. Whirlpool Corporation has been named one of Forbes Reputation Institute's "Most Reputable U.S. Companies" and one of Fortune Magazine's "World's Most Admired Companies". As of 2017, the organization employed 92,000 employees across 70 manufacturing and technology research centers.

The executive team with whom Vantage worked, the North American Region Staff (NAR Staff), is responsible for the revenue growth of the \$10 billion Whirlpool home appliance business that spans the U.S., Canada and Mexico. They are collectively accountable for an organization of approximately 30,000 employees who work in a wide range of business functions, from consumer insights to product development, sales and marketing to integrated supply chain and customer service.

“ At Whirlpool, teams are central to everything we do, and teamwork is one of our core values. In today's challenging global economy, we need leaders to create high performance environments in which our teams can create innovative products and services. We use Vantage's High Performance Team solutions to help us develop the high performing environments we need to maintain competitive advantage. ”

David Binkley, Global Head of HR at Whirlpool

THE CHALLENGE

In early 2011, the housing market was still rocking from the recession, and international appliance manufacturers were squeezing profit margins. Whirlpool's stock price was down.

With a significant restructure as its only solution, Whirlpool needed the NAR staff to switch gears and navigate its recovery. The team needed to strengthen how it collectively led in order to best execute a major change to the business. They knew the next year would require well-informed, timely decision-making and efficient, effective, cross-functional collaboration if the business was to move forward.

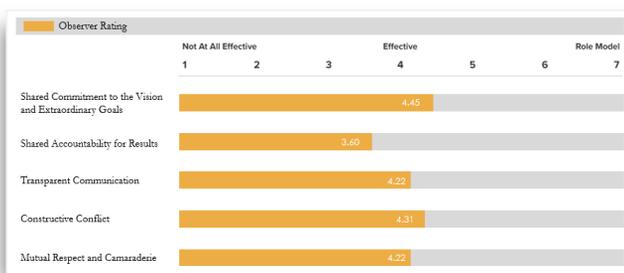
Whirlpool contracted Vantage to deliver its High Performance Team Solution (HPT) to provide team development in support of the restructure.

THE SOLUTION

The HPT helps measure a team like the NAR Staff along five core dimensions critical for exceptional team performance:

- Shared Commitment to the Vision and Extraordinary Goals
- Shared Accountability for Results
- Transparent Communication
- Constructive Conflict
- Mutual Respect and Camaraderie

HPT's purpose is to help team members identify collective strengths and gaps, and then engage the team in a productive dialogue about improving business performance. Once changes are made based on the dialogue, the tool can be used to stay on course.



Initial Team Assessment Report

The NAR staff's HPT included three components: data collection through interviews and the HPT surveys that measured the team at the level of Team, Team Member, and Team Leader; a consultant-facilitated team development session, customized based on the survey results; and a six-month follow-up survey to evaluate progress of the NAR Staff against key business targets.

The first HPT surveys served as a platform for discussion and a baseline by providing a direct, rather than inferred, measure of team functioning without being impacted by how each team member or the team leader may be performing. The ability to compare and contrast 360 data from the three surveys allowed the team and their leader to gain a deep understanding into their effectiveness in light of the 5 dimensions in the model. It brought about several “aha” moments for the NAR Staff. They learned their productivity was hampered by:

- Less-than-effective weekly staff meetings
- Fire-fighting and end-of-quarter urgencies
- Revisiting and overturning decisions already made
- Siloed operating style that required too much from the team leader

In the course of a half-day, facilitated team development session, the NAR Staff identified and agreed to implement changes to strengthen team functioning. They formalized these commitments to change by creating a team compact that each team member carried with them in their wallets.

In addition to these team-level changes, the NAR Staff made individual commitments to align their personal behavior with the newly developed expectations of the team.

A second administration of the HPT occurred six months later to determine how the team changed. In just a half-year period, and during a critical time in Whirlpool's business, the HPT effectiveness process helped to improve NAR Staff performance, strongly enhancing the team's ability to deliver exceptional results.

OUTCOME

The NAR team showed measurable improvement in all five of the HPT dimensions, although *Shared Commitment to the Vision and Extraordinary Goals* and *Shared Accountability for Results* were the areas most strongly affected.

Individual commitments to breaking down silos, challenging one another, and seeking input and perspectives from peers created an environment of accountability and teamwork. The team was more prepared to ensure their individual actions supported overall team success and made decisions that aligned with the team's vision and goals.

The HPT process provided the NAR Staff with a process to create practical, actionable steps to improve team performance and help meet multiple restructuring objectives. But the need to take teams from good to great was not limited to the top of the organization. To make the HPT process more widely available within Whirlpool, we partnered with HR to certify and train their HRBPs to use the process internally and the HPT model and its associated methodology has been woven into the training and team development programs across the enterprise.

“ As a result of the HPT process, the NAR staff shifted from a disjointed group of functional leaders to a high performance team, collectively focused on a common set of business and organization objectives. Through a challenging time period, NAR business performance managed to go from inconsistent to consistently delivering record results ”

Vice President Human Resources,
Whirlpool North America