



DAVID HUTCHINS



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FOSTERING A UNIFIED VISION TO SUCCESS

Leading diverse teams to exemplary performance at culture champion CDW.

By
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For David Hutchins, vice president of strategic programs at Vernon Hills, Illinois-based CDW, nurturing sales organizations to perform at their top game is a skillset harnessed over close to three decades working in the public sector. “What I love about supporting all the different markets in public sector, is they go through more challenging times with limited resources than other sectors,” he shares. “And it is really easy to fall in love with helping people who are serving our community solve problems and accomplish missions in tough situations.”

No doubt then that Hutchins was tasked with pulling together the strategic programs team at the award-winning multi-brand technology solutions provider to expand reach to more customers in a more meaningful way. “We realized there is so much interdependency and opportunity to optimize our customer and partner experience as well as our sales organization and other constituents within our company if these teams are working together with a single vision,” he says of the strategic programs team, which was formed just over a year and a half ago, and combines everything from supplier and business diversity team and functions to contract capture organizations across public sector to contract management and business development.

Hutchins believes inspiring a collective vision with the team and defining what success is at the start establishes a strong foundation. “When you think of performance, you often get caught up in the ‘what’. But there is so much more to it and that’s where the magic happens,” he says. “For me, it’s so much more about the ‘how’, the ‘why’ and the ‘who’—enabling, coaching and inspiring people around that vision and making sure they are always improving, challenging themselves and validating what they are bringing to the table in terms of value and impact for customers and the organization.”

Those challenges and learning lessons in Hutchins’ own leadership journey have been plenty, considering the 27 years of experience he has steering sales teams to success. “During those times, it’s all the more important to stick to the vision...If you are keeping the team focused and being successful in your function, you are going to come out ahead.” When the pandemic hit full force early 2020, his teams at CDW quickly mobilized, understanding what customers were experiencing as they faced the challenges of work from home and stress around their business.

One of those areas was schools and students, but with the CDW education team working closely with the education markets for many years, they were well prepared to help schools deal with a hybrid learning environment. The exposure of and urgency toward digital equity and the divide that exists was integral in getting technology into the hands of students. “The result of that is moving much faster toward solving some of those challenges and improving the situation from our education team which works so closely with our partners, both manufacturing and our diverse partners and service partners, to help the education space,” he shares. “Going forward, my charter is to continue to challenge us to think about how we can get closer to our customers and that means thinking about different roles and services and other ways we can work with our partners to have the impact that we feel we can have to help accomplish what they want to in their businesses.”

A cheerleader of the fantastic corporate culture at CDW, Hutchins highlights two guiding principles he values. One is the circle of service, where everything revolves around the customer and over time, the customer experience, he adds. The other is the CDW way, a core set of values or code of conduct guiding employee behavior at all times. “D&I is absolutely in our company’s culture. There is an intentional effort and programs to continue to improve, be inclusive, and address the issues where we see we need to,” he says. “It’s an expectation of all leadership and absolutely pervasive through our organization.”

In fact, CDW was named a Culture Champion in October 2020, a recognition from the MIT Sloan Management Review and Glassdoor Culture 500, in what was perhaps the largest systematic study of corporate cultures among large, American employers. A member of the esteemed Billion Dollar Roundtable—the Fortune 500 company boasts annual net sales at over \$18 billion—CDW ranks among 29 major corporations, including global tech industry leaders, as one of the country’s top supporters of diverse suppliers.

“I have responsibilities for our contracts and proposal teams and more and more—and this is a wonderful thing—companies and organizations are requiring diverse participation in the supply chain,” Hutchins shares, about CDW’s diverse supplier community. “I am absolutely thrilled about what our organization has built to not just support these companies that are asking for participation but to really drive meaningful contribution and impact in the communities where our partners sit.”

Internally, he points to the strong CDW Business Resource Group (BRG) community—BRGs play an important role in promoting an inclusive culture by providing professional development, informal mentoring and networking opportunities at CDW. Hutchins himself is an executive sponsor for one of the BRGs, a disability group called Alliance for Business Leading Equality (ABLE) which aims to create a workplace that respects and honors individuals’ capabilities, including the unique qualities of differently-abled co-workers.

Hutchins is proud of the performance and success of people he has worked with across the organization, seeing diamonds in the rough being nurtured into great leaders themselves. He admits great satisfaction spearheading his team of over 200 co-workers, in seeing them grow and be successful, loving what they do and truly understanding the value and impact that they have. He adds, “I care an enormous amount whether my team goes home at night proud of what they have done. When you address all of those things, the performance is more of a natural and expected result, more so than the initiative.”

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