



The Secret to Creating Extreme Ownership

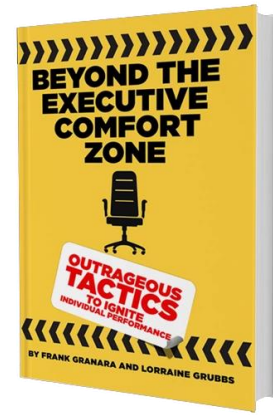
We have worked with General Insulation (GIC) as consultants for the past 10 years. Our role with this 500 employee, \$250+ million company has ranged from business coaches and leadership developers to HR advisors. Most recently, we had the opportunity to spend time visiting and talking to individuals in several of GIC's 50 branches across North America. We are working on a project to develop front line training. What we found as we traversed the country and the time spent with several branches validated what we already knew. The success of this company lies in something every company needs - extreme *ownership*. Each branch is proud to be part of General Insulation and is committed to ensuring they represent the GIC brand in the best light possible.

To get employees to “own” your business is one of the most rare and valuable competitive advantages an organization can attain. With *ownership* you will enjoy better productivity, customer service, accountability and an overall better bottom line. The path to creating an ownership mindset is not easy, and it must start from the top. Here are the six secrets to how General Insulation accomplished this.



1) It Starts at the Top. The CEO, Frank Granara, makes it his business to know what's going on, but doesn't micromanage. His door is always open and those who take the time to seek his opinion are rewarded with good advice. He leaves much of the day-to-day running of the operation to the General Managers and those they report to. The VPs and General Managers are empowered to make decisions and encouraged to take risks, a philosophy that has served them well.

2) Teach Your Leaders. General Insulation is a learning organization. They have a yearly managers' meeting where managers get together to learn from industry and leadership experts. Additionally, they read various leadership and best-selling business books to keep them abreast of what's going on in the business world. We created a program for their senior leaders that took them on a 2-year journey to develop teamwork, strategic thinking and various competencies necessary at the senior executive ranks. The program was so successful it became a book, "*Beyond the Executive Comfort Zone- Outrageous Tactics to Ignite Individual Performance*". The next phase was an 18 month long journey for a group of High Potential managers. Now, as the company is poised to aggressively grow, we are developing a Leadership Academy designed to address the learning at all levels.



3) Communication. In addition to the usual regional meetings and phone calls, each manager submits a weekly 5-15 report. The 5-15 was an idea derived from Paul Hawken who designed it to be written in 15 minutes and read in 5. Additionally, as part of the current leadership development program, both groups that underwent the leadership training are paired up as "Knowledge Partners" and get together once a month to mentor one another and encourage cross-functional and territorial conversation.



4) Hire Entrepreneurial Spirits and Let Them Lead. Entrepreneurs are competitive. They like knowing it is "their" branch and they can make most decisions independently. They don't like to be micromanaged. They love to be empowered. They infuse a "can do" attitude among their team. As a result, the customer service at General Insulation is excellent. While each branch competes against one another, they don't forget they all work for the same company and don't hesitate to help a branch in need. If one branch needs a product that another has for example, with a quick phone call the material is dispatched to the branch in need.

5) Know Your Mission and Corporate Values Intelligence, Integrity, Intensity, Commitment to Safety and Accuracy, Becoming the Distributor of Choice... these values and mission statements are understood, taken to heart and lived in every branch from Boston to Los Angeles, from South Texas to Halifax. Whether new or seasoned, employees understand and live up to the mission. Even when we visited a branch, before we could tour the warehouse, we had to wear safety gear.





6) Having Fun on the Job

Each branch has its own personality and, while they take their business seriously, they don't necessarily take themselves seriously. They like to have fun. Recently one manager read "The Energy Bus" and instilled the concept of staying positive into her branch by painting the bus on the wall and having customers comment.

Another manager surprised his team by taking them on a kayaking trip for a fun teambuilding Friday afternoon event. The employees loved the experience and he vows to do something once a quarter to get his team out of the warehouse and doing something fun together.



GIC is family. As any family knows, they stand united ready to defend any challenges that come their way. And, while healthy inner competition is always welcomed, they will have each other's back when necessary. Not only do the employees react this way, this spirit flows to the individual family unit – moms, dads and kids. Everyone is included at GIC as they build the next generation of leaders.

Ask yourself if this spirit of *Extreme Ownership* is alive and well within your organization. The six secrets outlined above can help instill that sense of ownership giving you a tremendous competitive advantage. Ask GIC...they know.

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