Case Study:
U.S. Cellular

DeGarmo's Culture Fit Assessment is Key to Valued Outcome

Headquarters: Chicago, Illinois

Industry: Telecommunications

U.S. Cellular is the fifth-largest full-service wireless carrier in the United States, providing national network coverage and industry-leading innovations designed to elevate the customer experience. The Chicago-based carrier has a strong line-up of cutting-edge devices that are all backed by a high-quality network in big and small cities and rural communities. Currently, 94 percent of customers have access to 4G LTE speeds. U.S. Cellular was named a J.D. Power and Associates Customer Champion in 2014 for the third time in four years. Founded in 1983, U.S. Cellular employs more than 6,600 associates who work together to serve more than 4.8 million customers.

The Challenge

U.S. Cellular was interested in establishing an objective way to identify best-in-class talent that strongly aligned with its culture. According to Russ Nykaza, Vice President of Human Resources, "When we first engaged DeGarmo, we knew it would be a major change initiative."

Their business model, the Dynamic Organization, starts with leadership excellence which creates passionate associates, who in turn deliver the world's best customer service, leading to customer advocacy that produces superior business results. Leaders ensure that associates have the best training and knowledge so they can act freely to make informed decisions on behalf of our customers. U.S. Cellular is guided by its core values of customer focus, respect for associates, ethics, pride, empowerment, diversity and winning.

The goal for DeGarmo was to leverage assessment technology to enhance the talent profiling process in an efficient and effective manner.

Assessment Strategy

"What was important to us was that we had a strategic partner that we could work with and align our strategies with." said Nykaza. Based on the project specifications, DeGarmo suggested the customization of a culture fit assessment to more objectively measure person-organization compatibility. DeGarmo's culture fit assessment works by comparing U.S. Cellular's importance ratings core "culture elements" to those of internal or external job applicants.

As part of the culture fit assessment, participants complete a 10-minute web-based assessment in which they rated the importance of culture statements. The goal of the research study was to see how those ratings related to outcomes such as organization commitment, turnover likelihood, and job satisfaction. Candidates complete a work tolerance assessment as well as simulations designed to measure essential work skills.

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Profile Build

As part of the profile build, U.S. Cellular collected survey data from the organization's leadership. Additionally, DeGarmo worked with representatives from U.S. Cellular to create a custom culture profile which best represented the framework of the Dynamic Organization model. Therefore, rather than DeGarmo's standard culture elements, U.S. Cellular's model was best represented by 4 "major" factors.

In creating a benchmark against which to measure job candidates, it's critical they strongly agree with each other regarding the relative importance of culture elements, which was achieved by U.S. Cellular.

> ***"DeGarmo has truly helped our ability to retain the brightest and best in the workforce."***

Assessment Administration & Outcomes

Participants completed the culture fit assessment in addition to a short survey containing items relating to valued outcomes (commitment, retention, etc.). The results were significant and clearly demonstrated the benefit of better culture fit. Participants who fit better with U.S. Cellular's culture reported higher levels of organizational commitment, lower turnover likelihood, and higher levels of job satisfaction. "DeGarmo has helped us put the right people behind the phones that our customers call into on a daily basis" said Nykaza.

Implementing a new talent assessment process in a large organization can be challenging—especially one with such a strong culture and history of making hiring decisions more subjectively. However, according to Nykaza, "DeGarmo has been great. They've been stellar in their efforts to ensure we train our organization and they are there to answer questions."

It is important to note that while DeGarmo's culture fit assessment was used by U.S. Cellular primarily for hiring, it also has applications for organization development.

What is DeGarmo?

DeGarmo is a recruitment, assessment and consulting organization that has provided services globally for more than 20 years. DeGarmo helps organizations identify the best talent in less time through recruitment optimization, superior assessments, and predictive analytics. Our solutions provide the talent intelligence you need to make better selection decisions, support effective coaching, and drive the development of your people.

With talent insights from DeGarmo, you can more effectively build talent pipelines and support the long-term growth of your business.