



MORRISON HERSHFIELD

## 2020 Vision

### BUSINESS ISSUE

#### *Making 70-year-old business more agile*

Morrison Hershfield (MH) is an established multi-disciplinary engineering company. The 70-year-old, employee-owned firm has built a reputation for quality, being easy to work with, and having a great culture. That reputation has supported MH's growth and was behind its strategy to expand across a number of Canadian and U.S. markets.

However, there were challenges the company needed to address to meet its' plan.

Specifically:

- **Consolidation** among larger competitors
- **Pricing pressure** due to consolidation in the industry
- **Larger and more complex projects**, with corresponding growth expectations across multiple stakeholders

These dynamics and others created increased pressure on MH's profitability. The firm recognized that in order to establish market leadership, it had to better leverage and build its capable team of technical professionals into a leading company working for the long term in selected markets.

“**Companies generally hire for skill but they fire due to behaviour.** With benchmark data and context on key behavioral traits from **SuccessFinder**, we've resolved the challenge of unwanted behavioral surprises. We identify hire, promote, and develop based on both skill and behavior. This has **transformed our business results.** Behavior is the secret ingredient that can get at the latent potential of 'fit' to help leverage company capability and drive performance.

– Pelly Shafto, VP HR

### Morrison Hershfield Case Study



### SOLUTION

MH's business transformation process began with a focus on its people – the professionals who drive the company's results. Additionally, the company's executive and HR leaders recognized that while technical skill, knowledge and experience are important – it is often the overlooked behavioral dimension that drives performance.

With that context in mind, the HR team **evaluated more than 40 tools** designed to help with organizational and performance change. SuccessFinder was selected because it provided a **unique scientific framework** that defined individual performance improvement and how each team member's performance could be aligned with the company's strategy. SuccessFinder defined a robust behavioral profile of the MH staff and statistically compared this with **500 benchmark profiles of high performers.**

Interestingly, when the behavioral data for all managers was combined and graphed it showed a remarkable consistency overall and matched the technical profile of consulting engineers. This indicated very specifically the gaps (low scores) in behavior that could be addressed to drive the organizational, process and business improvement required to advance the MH business strategy.

Training and development was then tailored to focus on the traits key to the business.

The validity of the SuccessFinder benchmark data for high performance provided immediate utility for HR at MH as they began to identify and plan to improve the capabilities required by the strategy.

### About Morrison Hershfield

**Morrison Hershfield** is a market leading, engineering firm established in 1946 and anchored by exceptional technical and solution experts, thought leaders and high performing employees across North America. Their highly focused approach to the clients and markets served ensures they deliver the value our clients demand.

Morrison Hershfield sets the highest standards of ethics, technical excellence and customer service. These high standards have become the hallmark of Morrison Hershfield. They continue to be guided by the values of integrity, accountability and mutual respect and believe in continuous improvement, quality and teamwork.

Key HR functional areas that the SuccessFinder assessment supported included the following

- **Culture change:** aligned with company-wide development of key success traits required to deliver on growth strategy
- **Succession planning**
- **Leadership development:** tracked against scientifically-validated success criteria established for each level
- **Career and development planning:** including discussions related to retention and engagement
- **Recruitment:** screening applicants against the newly-prioritized behavioral success criteria
- **Performance management:** including performance-based job design and accountability
- **Negotiation and team building**
- **Stress and absence management**

“**SuccessFinder** provided our managers with specifics to use in managing and developing staff”, said Pelly Shafto, *VP HR*. The clarity of each element in the tool has proven to be extremely valuable and has supported managers having conversations that are context-specific and focused on the behaviors important to individual roles. At a team level, it’s also been valuable. One business unit had the goal of becoming number one in North America. They used their aggregated SuccessFinder competency scores in a US/Canada team-building session, to great success. They reviewed the tendencies of the entire team compared to the “high performance” team benchmark. This was a **powerful way to increase awareness** of the strengths and weakness of the team and focused them on what they needed to work on and develop.”

## BUSINESS RESULTS

Morrison Hershfield has achieved significant traction in meeting the goals established as part of their **Vision 2020 growth strategy**. In addition, understanding and interest by management in behavioral-based HR practices (based on SuccessFinder) has skyrocketed. Validity in behavioral decision-making moved from 30% to over 80%. Today, **SuccessFinder is used across the whole employee lifecycle** and has proven to be the “radar” MH needed to drive individual and organizational performance.

Some of the recognizable wins include:

- Better hires are being made, while **reducing hiring bias**
- **High potential successors have been identified** across key roles in the organization
- **Retention has increased** due to better fit hiring and meaningful discussion
- Employees ask to take the SuccessFinder assessment because **they see the value** in personal effectiveness, performance and organizational alignment
- **Company culture has been enhanced**

MH has executed on its’ strategy of growth and rebuilt a set of robust talent management practices based on the SuccessFinder framework. Management hires staff based on behavioral fit against benchmark data — in addition to skill, knowledge and experience. Internal candidates are then trained, managed and promoted against these key behaviors. The end result is that the company has maintained the culture of quality work by talented professionals and has also been able to grow and improve in a highly competitive business environment.

## SUCCESSFINDER FOR KEY ROLES

One of the key business roles at Morrison Hershfield is the Project Manager. When this cohort was evaluated, it showed **only a 30-35% fit** against the high performer benchmark. To improve this, a strategy was created to hire and develop against the SuccessFinder recommended high performer competencies for this role. Hiring managers have become more aware of the strengths necessary for success in this role, and today the Project Management cohort has become **one of the most successful teams** at MH by virtually every performance measure.