



Texas A&M

Valin Case Study

Customer Profile

Industry: Distributor of automation, filtration, fluid handling, heating and process control products and systems for a wide range of high purity and industrial applications

Locations: California

Employees: 162

Website: Valin.com

Business Need

Valin Corporation began in 1974 as a distributor in the semiconductor industry providing fluid-handling products, services and system delivery services before diversifying into other distribution sectors in the early 2000s. Since then, Valin has grown by acquiring dozens of small, independent distribution companies expanding their product portfolio to include automation, process heating, process control valve and filtration solutions.

Because of their sprawling size and array of sectors, Valin needed a way to promote company loyalty, develop leaders, and distribute top talent into appropriate positions. Upper management was looking for ways to ensure consistent communication across sales, operations, and marketing teams while building a cohesive future for the company as they continued to acquire smaller businesses.

Solutions

Valin leverages Texas A&M's Master of Industrial Distribution (MID) program to develop employees who are experts within their departments. Professionals who graduate from the

program bring back a deeper understanding of the distribution industry, preparing them to grow into company leaders.

Valin's Application Engineering Manager and MID graduate Corey Foster says, "The degree has helped me understand the rest of the company and taught me to continually ask questions."

His newfound understanding of the business allowed Foster to reach out to other departments and get involved in new projects. This activated him to move out of his sales manager position and initiate his own specialized role that bridges silo-ed departments.

Because the MID program prioritizes applicable curriculum and capstone projects designed to improve students' organizations and their positions within them, Valin has seen their MID graduates like Foster immediately improve in-house best practices.

Benefits

Retention

As Valin acquires new companies, it identifies high-potential employees as candidates for the MID program who are eager to learn and grow. As the current culture trends toward job-hopping, Valin sees the MID as a more sustainable way to grow valued employees for the long term rather than simply offering a retention bonus structure. Valin also sees the program as an organic networking tool, introducing them to new talent and connections.

The MID curriculum helps students make inroads into new areas of the industry. Instead of climbing a corporate ladder, the program builds loyalty in employees by encouraging them to forge new paths, creating roles that reflect their skills and interests by gaining exposure to all departments within their company.



Foster still uses the results of his MID capstone project because it helped him to define the right type of salespeople, then create a process to hire and train them. "I learned how to communicate by using data and not just stories to help put people in positions they are going to succeed in." He increased retention and job satisfaction exponentially through his learning.

Common Language

Valin's foundation is built on acquiring smaller companies and combining them into one business. "Imagine buying 10 to 20 companies and each one of them has an owner who is used to running the business his way," Foster says. "Thirteen years ago when I came to the business, the lack of cohesiveness was obvious, so the CEO committed to a long-term strategy of developing a common language and thought process by putting two or three people through the MID program every year."

The MID education has created new leaders who can see the company far beyond the scope of their job roles and understand the bigger picture of operations to think critically about the business. People who come from sales learn about marketing and accounting and HR professionals learn to think from an operational perspective. When everyone learns how to read a P&L report and understands the ins and outs of sales management and operational best practices, they gain deeper knowledge of the company which promotes the kind of leadership that facilitates complicated integrations.

Improved Culture

Further education via the MID offers employees a valuable growth opportunity and a path to expand their role in the company while introducing the larger picture of how different

departments work and move together. Graduates learn better communication skills and processes as well as shared experiences that create an invaluable cohesion that makes coming to work more relational and enjoyable.

"The level of trust in each other as well as the ability to communicate and appreciate what each person is doing and work together is huge," Foster says. Camaraderie can be undervalued in business, but the MID has created a common technical understanding that has not only strengthened communication at Valin, but has also initiated a more positive working environment.

As a result of the MID program, Foster has noticed that as more overlap is shared between different teams, trust flourishes in the work environment.

Results:

- Sustainable employee benefit
- Organic networking tool
- Increased employee loyalty and hiring practices
- Higher retention rates
- Cohesive teamwork and communication
- Thoughtful cross-trained leadership
- Role promotions and development
- More positive working environment

"Since graduating from the MID program, my appetite for learning has been insatiable. When our CEO sends out articles, I read and study them. I've taken to deconstructing our organization and the world around me, especially the cause and effects of people and organizations." – Corey Foster, Application Engineering Manager

About Texas A&M's Master of Industrial Distribution

Texas A&M's Master of Industrial Distribution (MID) is a 4-semester, part-time, mobile learning graduation program designed for working professionals. By incorporating both academic professors and industry leaders who co-teach each course, students not only learn theories, but applicable supply chain management, logistics, and profitability of distributors and manufacturers in industrial channels.

Request more information about the program and learn more.