



Gephardt Group Works with CenturyLink’s Mobile Technician Workforce to Improve Customer Service, Quality and Cost

CenturyLink, a Monroe, Louisiana telecommunications company acquired Embarq in 2009 and Qwest in 2011. After these acquisitions, Karen Puckett, CenturyLink’s Chief Operations Officer, recognized that one of her main integration challenges would be the merging of three distinct company cultures. It was clear to Karen that each legacy company had unique strategies for management training and customer service and therefore CenturyLink’s customers would have a different experience depending upon their location in the country.

While meeting with employees from both Embarq and Qwest, Karen came to the conclusion that employee engagement was lower than at CenturyLink, and therefore, the organization was not reaching its potential. Karen called on Gephardt Group because she understood how the Atlanta-based consultancy partners with management to quickly drive cultural change in an organization. “Gephardt Group’s tools and techniques are straightforward and can be implemented quickly, which was critical for me as I needed to unify our culture immediately. I was confident that their High Performance Workplace (HPW) methodology would also lead to improved business results quickly.”

Gephardt Group worked with CenturyLink to develop a project plan based on a 5-phased process for establishing a high performance workplace:

1. The **ASSESSMENT** phase utilized **employee surveys** and **focus groups** to develop a baseline measurement of the current levels of employee engagement and business performance at 7 locations across the Qwest, Embarq and CenturyLink markets.
2. In the **PLANNING** phase, Gephardt Group worked with CenturyLink leadership to **define its vision** for the culture, to **redesign management processes** to improve customer service, quality and efficiency and to create a **detailed training and implementation plan** that would meet leadership’s objectives and timeline.
3. The third phase of the process was the five month **PILOT** phase. CenturyLink selected one technician garage in the Denver market in which to implement new management processes. Utilizing a series of workshops, Gephardt Group **trained CenturyLink** supervisors on HPW tools that could be implemented quickly in each department and that would demonstrate immediate improvements in employee engagement and business performance. These HPW tools were focused in the following areas:
 - Communication within departments, cross-functionally and from leadership
 - Employee led continuous improvement
 - Accountability measures and performance evaluations
 - Teamwork
 - Employee recognition
4. The fourth phase of the engagement was the **EVALUATION** phase. Gephardt Group met with a cross-section of employees to observe how HPW tools were being implemented and

adopted and worked with CenturyLink management to review the changes in performance metrics. Where necessary, **coaching was provided to supervisors** in order to adjust their approach and to help them develop confidence in the new way of managing.

5. Phase 5 was the **ROLL OUT** phase. While the Denver market was implementing HPW practices in the remaining 15 garages in the area, Gephardt Group worked with the other 5 regions across the CenturyLink footprint to kick-off the project locally. Each Region President selected two garages in their markets to implement HPW as a Center of Excellence, **servicing as a model for other areas in the region to visit and learn best practices**. The markets chosen were Hickory, NC, Raleigh, NC, Albuquerque, NM, Tucson, AZ, Olympia, WA, Tacoma, WA, Omaha, NE, Minneapolis, MN, Branson, MO, and Rolla, MO. The markets are a mix of former Qwest and Embarq markets and each has unique business practices that have been adapted to the HPW model.

The results of the HPW project at the CenturyLink have been very strong:

1. Due to early results, the Pilot in Denver ended 2 months early and roll out began
2. Quality, as measured by Repeat visits to a customer, has improved by ~50%
3. Productivity, as measured by Jobs Completed Per Day, has improved 12%
4. Net Promoter scores have increased and customer churn has decreased
5. Expenses and OT are tracking well below budget
6. Supervisors are focusing on higher value work leading to higher job satisfaction
7. HPW practices are creating a “one team” culture in each garage
8. Employee-led Innovation Teams are designing sustainable solutions, thus increasing ownership and accountability for continuous improvement
9. Union grievances have been virtually eliminated

Karen Puckett, CenturyLink Chief Operating Officer, said, “As a direct result of our HPW project, workers began pointing out areas for improvement and customer service, productivity, quality and employee satisfaction have all improved and are on an upward trend. Gephardt Group was instrumental in helping us develop a unified, high performance culture.”

About Gephardt Group

Gephardt Group specializes in high performance workplace implementations, cultural change consulting and labor relations. Gephardt Group uses a sustainable and measurable methodology designed to help meet your business objectives. Whether you’ve recently gone through a leadership change, you’re planning for a corporate transaction, or you are solidifying an already strong culture for tough times ahead—Gephardt Group has the experience and solutions you need.

Contact:

Matt Gephardt
Gephardt Group Labor Advisory Services
mattgephardt@gephardtgroup.com
Phone: 678-205-2086