

Marlin Business Services Corp

Insurance Sector, International Presence, Iconic Brands, and Complex Challenges



THE CHALLENGE

Marlin Business Services Corp. is a commercial finance company providing finance and working capital loans to small business across the United States so those entities can acquire equipment and technology while preserving capital.

The company’s CEO, Jeff Hilzinger, says Marlin already had a tremendous amount of raw material developed over the first 18 years of its existence:

“It was a profitable company and not in need of a turnaround but there was a sense, on the part of the board, that the company was under-leveraged and that it wasn’t achieving its potential.”

Jeff admits he thought he was already an effective leader when he joined the company in 2007 and was required to complete the Leadership Circle Profile.

“It took me a while to conclude that there was a significant opportunity to improve my leadership effectiveness through this process.”

“I had been a senior officer of a large public company. I had worked in Europe and had hundreds of people working for me. I had

done a start-up. I thought my leadership was pretty effective.”

“That’s all true but, as I eventually discovered, you can even be better.”

Two years later, after repeating the Leadership Circle Profile and taking an even deeper look at his potential for further development, Jeff made key changes to how he operated.

Since then, he and Marlin have gone from strength to strength. The leadership team, and the rest of the organization, have in turn gone through the Leadership Circle Profile exercise.

“Follow-up is excellent in the program”

THE APPROACH

Under Jeff’s leadership, Marlin has been going through a dramatic transformation.

A senior leadership team has been built and they have created a vision and mission for the business that is based on a set of shared values.

This transformation has been aided by the Leadership Circle Profile’s three key steps: start with yourself; develop leadership teams; and build leadership systems.

Once its team of leaders was in place, the next step was to build strong alignment around the organization’s purpose, vision, and strategy, a precondition for scaling-up leadership across

the company.

Jeff acknowledges the benefits of this approach.

“The thing I like about this process is that it gathers information from people who interact with you in all parts of your professional life.”

“How many of these kinds of 360o programs have you been in where you go off-site for a day or two and then you come back and never hear of anything again?”

THE RICHNESS AND THE DEPTH OF THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE DATABASE ... MAKES IT A HIGHLY CREDIBLE APPROACH

THE IMPACT

Jeff has been impressed not only with the outcomes but also with the support offered afterwards.

“With the Leadership Circle Profile, follow-up is excellent in the program.”

“The continuing feedback is also excellent.”

“The richness and the depth of the Leadership Circle database – in terms of being able to correlate behaviors to leadership effectiveness – makes it a highly credible approach.”

Now Jeff leads by example. He asks for, and gets, feedback all the time. He benchmarks with best practice and he encourages others at Marlin to do likewise.

His leadership teams measure the results and outcomes of their efforts.

All that has, over time, enabled Marlin’s CEO to focus on one big thing: building high-achieving teams that are aligned on the company’s vision.

This has unlocked enormous potential and taken the business to the next level.

“It’s been a terrific experience being able to practice the things that I’ve learned and to see some terrific results.”