



Cargill Incorporated

A global leader builds its future on creative thinking

Cargill got its start as a single grain elevator in Iowa in 1865. Today, headquartered just outside of Minneapolis, it is one of the world's largest privately owned companies with 90 different businesses around the globe.

As the organization continues to grow in the 21st century, it is doing so with a customer satisfaction strategy that involves fully tapping the creative energies of its workforce. "Building a powerful innovation culture in our business units is an important long-range goal for Cargill," said Ipek Uzer of the company's Organization Effectiveness Group.

Cargill began working toward this ambitious objective several years ago by developing an Employee Engagement Survey to measure critical factors in the work environment. Once a year, all 97,000 employees are given the survey. The findings of the survey are then used to identify specific areas for change.

The company's commitment is reflected in the way it has established a full developmental process, augmenting the work of the annual survey through the addition of different creativity-improving instruments. One of these tools, the Center for Creative Leadership's KEYS® to Creativity, is helping Cargill assess how it's doing in terms of promoting or inhibiting creativity and innovation. The organizational assessment tool is being used by the company's different business units to make positive changes; the biggest project to date has involved some 500 employees at three Cargill facilities in Turkey.

"What KEYS mainly does for us is let us see the underlying culture and behaviors," said Uzer. "We have a lot of confidence in what KEYS tells us because the data closely mirrors what employees have said in the Employee Engagement Survey."

The KEYS project in Turkey involved an extensive analysis of the findings. "We had lengthy

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify specific management practices supporting the work environment and capitalize on best practices
- Reduce the level of obstacles and barriers to creativity
- Build powerful innovation cultures within business units

OUTCOMES:

- Individuals developed action plans focused on recognition, feedback and teamwork
- A communication plan was developed to focus on organizational support and encouragement
- Employees became more engaged in their work environment

meetings and discussions, and the more we dived into the results, the better we saw the patterns throughout the business," Uzer said. "We also identified the best practices within the business, which helped employees build their self-confidence. We crafted a communication plan as well, and that has been very beneficial in helping them move forward."

The employees created action plans that encompassed recognition, feedback, communication, teamwork and expectations around creativity and innovation. "KEYS gave them good and reliable indications of where to focus their energy and resources with the highest priorities," Uzer said.

Principal among the tangible benefits Cargill is expecting from this long-term investment in its workforce are innovative products and services that will secure the company's success in the future. The company knows the future rests in the ideas of its people. "We want to raise the potential for employees to come up with creative ideas and solutions," said Uzer. "It's not just a way to get the most out of them. It's about creating an environment where people are engaged, where they want to come to work and do more."