

Case Study

# Mentorship Program Success and Employee Engagement with Birkman

## Executive Summary

Founded in 1938, Dillard's, Inc. ranks among the nation's largest fashion retailers. Dillard's stores offer a broad selection of merchandise, including apparel and home furnishings, and features products from both national and exclusive brand sources. With more than 40,000 employees, the company operates nearly 300 stores and operations centers spanning 29 states. Birkman has helped Dillard's improve teamwork, engagement, and performance through mentorship and talent development.

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“This assessment has really put a spark back in the company.”

Elizabeth Childers

**Director of Financial and Statistical Analysis,  
Dillard's Inc.**

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## The Objective

When Elizabeth Childers, Director of Financial and Statistical Analysis, started working at Dillard's, she was looking for opportunities to increase employee engagement across the company's workforce nationwide and bring more meaning to work. Researching options, she learned about using a personality assessment to increase team communication, understand each individual's stress triggers, and connect more as a united group.



With the number of options on the market, she faced the challenge of finding an assessment that fit the company's needs and struggled to gain approval from management to implement it. Childers found that most assessments were either vague regarding personality data, were expensive for the information the organization would receive, or too specific regarding the job type. After having a feedback session with her boss using a new assessment, The Birkman Method, Childers was able to prove that this assessment had a balance of hard-hitting, real-life data, unblocking pathways for employees to thrive within an organization.

## ■ The Solution

Once she gained approval from management, the next step was to figure out how to apply The Birkman Method within the Dillard's talent pool. Childers and her team decided to implement a one-year mentoring program that paired mentors and mentees across the nation based on personality fit. The mentoring program was seen as not only a way to provide associates with a tool for personal growth, but to create deeper connections between employees that would create purpose in their daily work and a sense of community. To ensure the pairings would be successful, Childers and her colleagues examined Birkman data to find behavioral matches that would allow for learning and an overall positive experience.



Along with building connections within her group, the program also helps provide a psychological safe environment for employees, allowing them to feel safe expressing thoughts and ideas to their mentor. Childers states that “with the Birkman, employees can better understand their teammates and themselves. It’s a great tool for generating self-awareness, understanding team dynamics, and goal setting for personal growth and contribution.” Due to the well-matched pairings, the mentors and mentees were quick to bond. This opportunity allows for employees to find their purpose through one another and create meaning to their work lives.

The Dillard's mentoring program lasts a year and the measure of success is set within each mentor/mentee partnership, allowing for individuality and social connection to create a highly personalized experience. As a check and balance, Dillard's uses mid-point and post-program surveys conducted by the committee to ensure that the mentoring program is fruitful. For teams in the program, each individual sets their own goal to determine what they would like to get out of the program to create a personal sense of fulfillment.

## ■ The Results

While the pilot program continues to grow at Dillard's, Childers received initial positive feedback about the mentoring group. The program has now expanded to several other departments in the company and Childers and her colleagues are looking forward to continue their investment in connecting employees.

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Given the success thus far, Childers' next goal is to implement the program and assessment more widely across the country. **“I truly feel this would be a phenomenal tool for all of our store families,”** Childers said.

Due to the assessment's robust personality data, Childers says, “this assessment has really put a spark back in the company. Our teams know that we're investing in them, and this goes a long way towards our success.”





## About Birkman

Birkman International is a behavioral and occupational assessment company headquartered in Houston, Texas with an extensive global reach. The company began assessing personality through a proprietary methodology founded by innovative organizational psychologist Dr. Roger W. Birkman in 1951.

The Birkman Method remains a preferred instrument to better understand interpersonal dynamics and achieve higher performance through positive psychology. It is used widely in the fields of career coaching, leadership development, human resources management, and organizational design today.