

Highlights

Rapid Financial Results; Lasting Cultural Change

Before the team at Jenner Ag began playing the Great Game of Business, they were doing well – growing at about 5% per year. But thanks to Great Game practices, the company kicked its annual growth rate up a notch to 10%. The company was also very profitable, which was shared with employees through an aggressive bonus plan.

Then corn prices dropped from \$8 to \$3 – which threw the whole industry into a downward spiral. “Our focus shifted from making a bonus to saving our jobs,” says CEO Steve Jones.

And yet, while some dealerships were reporting sales dropping by 50%—or more—Jenner Ag saw a decline of “only” 20%. “Even in what many term a down market or a recession – which we refuse to participate in – we have been able to remain profitable, gain market share, retain loyal customers, gain new customers and strengthen our brand like never before,” says Jones.

Jones credits the fact that the various practices that make up the Great Game of Business system – huddles, MiniGames, scoreboards and more – have become entwined in the organization’s DNA and culture.

Case in point: when the company ran an organization-wide MiniGame to help reduce expenses when sales were threatened, employees began bringing in their own toilet paper from home so they wouldn’t have to put in a replacement order. “When people get that serious about expenses, you know they are bought in,” says CFO Clint Hohenstein.



Organizational Background

Jenner Ag, the Case IH Agriculture Application Equipment Distributor for the states of Illinois and Indiana, has been serving its customers for 56 years and counting.

“The three biggest reasons that most employees don’t engage at work are: they don’t feel that they matter. They don’t have a voice. Nothing is going to change. The Great Game of Business solves all 3 of these questions.”

~ Jason

Playing the Game Together

Teaching financial literacy has become a big unifier for the Jenner Ag team. But that was only after they overcame an early mistake, in thinking they just had to open the books and the rest would take care of itself. “We thought we were educating just by giving people the numbers,” says Hohenstein. “But we were just confusing them.”

Jones say that most of his employees had never been taught business before – especially concepts like days sales outstanding. But once they began holding regular financial literacy training “boot camps,” the results soon followed. “It was an eye opener for most of the employees,” says Jones. “It was knowledge that began to change their lives, not just at work but when they brought it home with them.”

Today, financial literacy training is an integral component of Jenner Ag’s huddles – where every meeting concludes with a mini-quiz to help make the lessons stick.

“The business and financial knowledge I have gained thanks to playing the Great Game of business has affected my personal life dramatically.”

~ Leroy

What’s Next?

Jenner Ag is already in the midst of reinventing how they play the Great Game of Business. “We’re a company that likes to stay fresh,” says Jones. “Maybe we felt like we were checking the box. It felt like a routine. We also didn’t have any standards for consistency in our agendas or scoreboards. We wanted to change all of that.”

Using input from an employee-led Gameplay committee, one of the first areas Jenner Ag focused on was overhauling their huddle structure as a way to maximize involvement and engagement. Every huddle – including a new “big” huddle that involves all three of their locations – now follows the same structure, beginning with opening comments, followed by MiniGame recaps, numbers reporting, scoreboard forecasting, financial literacy, and then closing comments.

Hohenstein adds, “We’ve seen an incredible change over the past six months, and we want to keep building on that momentum, creating more opportunities for folks to get together and an environment of open communication. People would be lost without it.”

“The Great Game of Business gives all team members something in common. From shipping, to receiving, to service, to sales, to maintenance. All team members have a common thread: a Stake In The Outcome.”

~ Jason
