

Are you ALL IN?

How CultureShoc helped Allied Mineral Products' sales team connect, create and commit at its annual conference



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– Paul Jamieson,
Corporate Vice President of Sales,

Allied Mineral Products – a global manufacturer of refractories and precast shapes – struggled for years to make its annual global sales conference a forum for new ideas and inspiration. Three years ago, Corporate Vice President of Sales Paul Jamieson decided to look for a new way to motivate his team.

“Our sales conferences had gotten a little stale,” Jamieson says. “The buzzword you hear is ‘innovation,’ but in the refractory industry, innovation is slow.”

Another run-of-the-mill annual meeting for Allied’s 125 sales and support staff from around the world wasn’t going to cut it. Jamieson hired CultureShoc, the Cleveland-based culture development firm whose sweet spot is training, motivating and building corporate culture.

THREE STEPS TO ALL IN

Jamieson brainstormed with CultureShoc Founder and CEO Ron Kaminski’s team to identify an overarching theme and settled on “ALL IN.”

“With A-L-L being the first three letters of Allied, and our message being focused on team building, it was a natural fit,” Jamieson says.

The next step was to give substance to the slogan. They established a three-year plan to share what the new theme meant for Allied, for the conference and for attendees.

YEAR 1. CONNECT

CultureShoc recommends that companies take a multiyear approach to building high-performance teams to ensure that their efforts build and have lasting impact. Year one started with the basics.

“It was about connecting with people inside the organization,” Jamieson says. “Everyone was challenged to leave the conference with three to five new go-to people within Allied.”



A language barrier often led employees to socialize in cliques with those from their own countries and cultures. To facilitate new connections, CultureShoc and Allied chose space at an Ohio state park. The move got attendees out of corporate facilities where meetings were traditionally held and threw them together into randomly generated teams. They were asked to complete fun tasks together, such as building bicycles to donate to kids in the community, while overcoming cultural and language barriers.

Not only did they make it work, they had a great time while team building and connecting with new people. And the kids loved their shiny new bikes.

YEAR 2. CREATE

"Get outside of your little box and get things done, whatever it takes," Jamieson says, describing the message of year two.

To inspire creativity, CultureShoc created a series of activities that required Allied employees to find creative solutions to fun obstacles.

One game challenged teams to design a hole for a golf course using random objects such as rowing oars, swim noodles and tennis balls. At the end of the challenge, teams got to play the final course – complete with playful, off-the-wall obstacles – to see how their creativity paid off. Another memorable activity had teams working together to build desks and chairs for Habitat for Humanity homes, giving kids a place to do their homework.

YEAR 3. COMMIT

The last phase of the three-year plan was completed in September 2015.

Bringing the ALL IN message full circle, CultureShoc invited a former U.S. Navy SEAL to be the conference keynote speaker. Attendees listened in fascination as the SEAL team member discussed mission, dedication, perseverance – and commitment.

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Once again, Allied employees also engaged with each other through interactive activities. This time, the mission was for small teams to construct a section of a roller coaster using tubing, buckets and other random materials. Only when they connected their sections was the coaster complete, sending marbles racing from start to finish.

Finally, Allied rewarded individual commitment by giving select employees poker chips featuring the ALL IN theme. The company plans to hand them out throughout the year to recognize high-achieving employees.

THE IMPACT OF ALL IN

Jamieson has seen the impact of ALL IN firsthand, both through the positive feedback he’s received from employees and through strong employee engagement.

After the first year of ALL IN, CultureShoc measured employee engagement for Allied’s global sales conference at about 83 percent. This number shot up to over 90 percent after year two, Jamieson says.

“CultureShoc got to know us, listened, adopted our vision and gave us options,” he says. “Ron and his people instinctively knew how to craft conferences that reflected the messages we wanted to impart – and they’re as fun to work with as they are effective. Our sales conferences used to be a chore to attend. Now they’re an event.” 