

“What Would Turknett have Us Do?”

Bob Cross, Chairman, Talus Solutions

“Our company, Talus, is in the business of helping clients make more money by helping them understand customer demand,” says Bob Cross, CEO. “We use large computer systems to forecast customer demand and then help the company optimize the price and availability of its products. This, in turn, maximizes the company’s revenue. The process is called revenue management. For the most part, our clients are airlines, hotels, cruise lines, and rental car firms and we help them determine the scope of their promotions and availability of discount seating.”

Talus was founded in 1984 and, as the result of a merger in 1997, has offices in both Atlanta and Mountain View, California. In the mid-90s, the company was growing at the rate of 50% a year. Such dramatic growth meant the company was changing and bringing in new people at a rapid rate. “As you might imagine, our company faced a lot of issues related to such rapid and significant growth. We especially wanted to ensure that the leaders of the company were all on the same page,” says Mr. Cross.

To deal with this challenge Bob Cross called in leadership consultant Bob Turknett, founder of the Turknett Leadership Group. “Most of us were entrepreneurs,” says Mr. Cross, “and we needed to improve our management skills. We knew how to make a business grow, but we weren’t necessarily the best managers. The Executive Development Program Bob brought to our company made a tremendous difference for all of us, both individually and for the good of the company.

“What was great about the program,” continues Mr. Cross, “was that it assessed our skills, including our communication abilities. I feel that most issues, whether personal or professional, arise because of communication problems. Another very valuable part of the Executive Development Program (EDP) was the 360-degree feedback. It was a great assessment tool that gave us added insight into our strengths

and weaknesses as managers.

“Personally, one of the big benefits and surprises I received was discovering that I was doing a lot of things right. One thing I did learn was that I wasn’t playing to my strengths as much as I should. As CEO, I was getting a lot of opinions from the other executives about what they would do in my position. The result of their input, which many times was critical, was that I had become somewhat indecisive. But during the 360 degree feedback process that Bob introduced to our company, I discovered that even if people didn’t always agree with me, they still had confidence in me and trusted my ability to make decisions. That was great to hear. I began

having more confidence in my decision-making abilities and started taking action on things with less delay.

“As a group, the work Turknett did made us all work together much more effectively. Now, when we get into a heated debate and the blood pressure starts going up and the volume is escalating, one person in the

group is sure to say, ‘Well, what would Turknett have us do?’ When we hear that, we automatically cool down and take stock of the situation. In all honesty, that has become a magic phrase for us. It helps remind us that people have different opinions, they come from different backgrounds and they have different personalities. It helps us create a space in which a consensus can be reached and decisions can be made.”

“All in all, Bob Turknett and his associates at Turknett Leadership Group have had a tremendous impact on our executives and on our ability to work together as a team. Our “magic phrase,” alone, has transformed many meetings into sessions of genuine collaboration where valuable solutions to difficult situations have been agreed upon. These solutions have then gone on to benefit our entire organization. From one-on-one coaching to 360 degree feedback, our experience with the Turknetts has been one of real benefit for all concerned.”

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