



## Case Study Developing Great Leaders

begins with continuous feedback

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**Kristi Johnson-Noble**  
Human Resources Manager

### The Challenge: Enabling people to contribute, develop, and grow.

Founded in 2009, BIG RED DOG Engineering (BRD) has always been a place where team members enjoy working in an open and collaborative work environment. Everybody is accountable for their daily work and engaged in the future

of the company. There's even a team member profit-sharing plan appropriately named "Bone-Sharing" to fit the BRD lexicon. Most importantly is the ever-present opportunity for everybody at BRD to continuously learn and grow.

The Texas-based civil engineering company had gotten to be a leader in its field because it was consistently willing to embrace what's new and what's next with unrelenting enthusiasm. So, when Kristi Johnson-Noble joined the company as its first Human Resources Manager and recognized a strategic new need, it quickly went to the top of BRD's collective bucket list of key things to achieve.

"When I arrived, I recognized that our leaders had no convenient access to leadership training. No process for team members to give feedback that could help our leaders adjust and tap into best practices," she said.

The firm's Public Infrastructure Services Marketing Director, Dan Hennessey, who had joined the senior leadership team a year earlier, agreed with Johnson-Noble's assessment. "It was important for me to receive feedback from my team. I know I can make the numbers, however I want to make sure that I am also creating a work environment where my people can contribute, develop, and grow," he said.

The question on Johnson-Noble's mind was, "What was the right leadership module for the company? There was no doubt that leadership training was something we needed. I wanted something our leaders could get excited about. Something that aligned with our entrepreneurial spirit and culture, wasn't 'one-size-fits-all' – and would not take up a lot of time," she said.



**Headquarters**  
Austin, Texas



**Industry**  
Civil Engineering



**Employees**  
105



**Solutions**  
Compass<sup>SM</sup> powered by ADP®

## The Action: BRD adopted Compass powered by ADP Leadership Development and Coaching

With no software to install or centralized system configuration required, Compass powered by ADP provides a unique new way to help BRD's team members and leaders grow. "Compass is a good fit for us and our culture. We're a young company. Our average team member is about 34 years of age. They love to give feedback and are very open to receiving it, too. The product is automated, easy to work with and not time-consuming. Training isn't lengthy, either. Email instructions let you walk through everything step by step," Johnson-Noble said.

Using secure and confidential email communications, Compass lets a leader's direct reports and other stakeholders provide confidential and anonymous feedback to the leader on his or her leadership behaviors and collaborative habits. After receiving a personalized online assessment report, the leader has access to an automated coaching service, with highly focused suggestions for improvement delivered via weekly emails, based upon feedback gathered from team members.

"As a leader, I like that my emails are short and so positive. Compass gives me the opportunity to read a five-minute email or, if I have more time, to take 15 minutes and read an article that will help me think and deal in a positive way about the development areas specified in my team member feedback. Compass makes it clear what I need to work on and it helps me get better at being a leader," Hennessey said.

Learn more about Big Red Dog at: [www.BIGREDDOG.com](http://www.BIGREDDOG.com)

## The Impact: Broad interest and high participation

The leaders at BIG RED DOG actively encourage feedback and participation in projects and initiatives that can help the company build its brand and contribute to future success. For instance, before adopting its structured leadership development program, BRD leaders would schedule occasional lunches with team members to receive feedback. When Compass entered the picture, it helped BRD take team feedback to a whole new level in a big way.

"We do team surveys about once a quarter. On average, we typically see a 65 to 70 percent participation rate, which is good. The Compass survey came in at 88 to 89 percent, which is really high. Everyone is interested in the initiative and they are participating," Johnson-Noble said.

While it is too early to measure the success of Compass against full ROI metrics, team interest and participation is being fueled by wide acceptance from BRD team members and their leaders.

"With more of our younger team members going into leadership roles, the Compass leadership and coaching initiative is a useful and convenient tool that can help them in a big way. Good leaders become even better leaders with feedback from the people they are leading – and by having a personal willingness to keep learning and improving," Hennessey said.

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Dan Hennessey  
Public Infrastructure Services Marketing Director

