

From Day One: How FMD Transformed Hiring and Retention with the Talent Pipeline Program



Executive Summary

In the competitive Defense Industrial Base, attracting and retaining skilled talent is a persistent challenge. To overcome this, Fairbanks Morse Defense (FMD) partnered with the Talent Pipeline Program (TPP), an initiative designed to strengthen the defense workforce. This collaboration empowered FMD to re-evaluate its approach to talent management, leading to transformative changes that ensure every team member feels valued, supported, and crucial to the mission from their very first day.

The Value Stream Mapping Exercise

A pivotal moment for FMD came during the TPP's Value Stream Mapping exercise. This deep dive into existing processes was an "eye-opener," revealing significant opportunities to enhance the new hire experience. While previous practices were functional, the TPP introduced a new path that set both new employees and management up for greater success.

This led to the creation of the "World Class First Day" concept, a series of simple yet impactful changes. New hires now receive an FMD T-shirt for their first day, get a check-in call the day before they start, and begin their journey by meeting with their supervisor before diving into paperwork. This approach conveys a powerful message: "we know what we're doing, we know what we're looking for, and we knew how to find it." Making people feel important from day one has become a cornerstone of FMD's long-term retention strategy. It communicates that each new hire is the missing piece needed to elevate the company to the next level.

Retention-Focused Initiatives

The insights from the TPP sparked further innovation, particularly around retention. The "Aha" moment during the Value Stream Mapping process led to the development of Leadership New Hire Retention Training. This initiative underscored that communication is key to success and that employee satisfaction directly impacts retention.

FMD also committed to implementing a structured 30/60/90-day follow-up schedule. These regular pulse checks provide new hires with dedicated touchpoints to clear up struggles, highlight successes, and connect with their managers. The check-ins have been greatly appreciated by new team members, reinforcing that they have the resources and support needed to succeed. This framework instills a culture of shared responsibility, where recruiting and retention are understood as a team effort.

Promoting Growth and Recognition

FMD's commitment to its employees extends beyond the onboarding process. The company actively promotes from within and invests in its workforce by hosting in-house training sessions on advanced machinery and software. This focus on internal development provides clear pathways for career advancement.

Furthermore, FMD reinforces a culture of appreciation by recognizing employee achievements through awards, shoutouts, and team events. These initiatives serve as consistent reminders to employees that they are valued members of the team. By celebrating contributions and investing in professional growth, FMD fosters a motivated workforce that is committed to learning, thriving, and achieving great success together.

Impact and Future Outlook

By embracing the strategies and tools offered by the Talent Pipeline Program, Fairbanks Morse Defense has fundamentally changed the way it thinks about talent acquisition and retention. The focus on a "World Class First Day," structured follow-ups, and continuous employee recognition has led to increased satisfaction and a more cohesive, engaged team.

Looking forward, FMD will continue to innovate its talent strategies, holding itself accountable for creating an environment where every employee feels supported. By ensuring new hires have a great onboarding experience and feel valued throughout their careers, FMD is not just filling positions—it is building a sustainable, highly skilled workforce ready to support the U.S. Navy and the future of national defense.