

the respect of one of the biggest window companies in the country and established their insulating glass plant as the very best in the world.

– Cardinal IG Fargo Leadership Handbook

When Dave Pinder, the newly hired plant manager of Cardinal IG, arrived in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1998, the future plant site was nothing but a flat grain field. He had been hired to start the plant from the ground up—build the new factory, hire and train new employees, and develop relationships with his customers. Along with these responsibilities, CEO Roger O’Shaughnessy gave him complete autonomy to establish the corporate vision of “designing and fabricating the most advanced residential glass products in the industry.”

The 33-year-old Pinder brought an unlikely background to the position. A graduate of West Point, a commander in Desert Shield and Desert Storm, his last military assignment had been tactical officer in charge of 200 cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point. While in the service, he completed a master’s degree in leader development and counseling from Long Island University. He spent a brief time with International Paper before being approached by O’Shaughnessy to join the Cardinal leadership team.

Getting started was a daunting task, beginning with building the leadership team. Pinder did not hire glass experts. He couldn’t find any. Instead he hired people with leadership potential, a positive attitude, and a passion for learning the business and teaching others. In his words,

We started with a group of 40 people in a 140,000 square foot building. We knew nothing about making glass. Our first employees jumped into a van and traveled to Iowa for training at another Cardinal IG plant to learn how it was done. We asked those first employees to trust us.

Today, Cardinal IG operates out of a state-of-the-art 500,000 square foot facility in Fargo. The plant runs seven days a week, three shifts per day, supplying the majority of insulating glass found in Marvin Windows. Pella and Anderson Windows are also customers of the company. The Fargo plant became a leadership training center for other Cardinal plants, and Pinder’s responsibilities expanded to include troubleshooting and leadership coaching at other manufacturing sites. Cardinal’s workforce of 183 people is made up of 55 percent New Americans from 15 different countries, astonishing diversity in a region of the country where U.S.-born Caucasians make up 93 percent of the demographic mix.

Cardinal IG operates in a competitive business environment, and the economic recession and downturn in the building industry added volatility to its challenges. In spite of this, leaders have had to make only incremental changes in operations. The Fargo plant continues to be the best performing plant in the Cardinal manufacturing system.

MISSION AND VISION

Before hiring anyone, Pinder had a good idea of what he wanted to create.

I had a vision for what I wanted the organization and the culture to look like and a plan to get there to maintain the culture. I wanted a world-class facility—the best of its kind on the planet. The culture must enable you to get the vision. I wanted my employees to love to come to work every day because the work was challenging, meaningful and fun; the

plant was clean and well lit; they felt like they had ownership and a say in the business; they were treated with dignity and respect; and they felt like they were part of a disciplined team ... I wrote my leadership philosophy before I hired anyone. I use it to guide all that we do.

Cardinal IG's mission melds the business purpose with Pinder's vision of how that purpose will be achieved. The mission is a constant reference point for all Cardinal IG is working to achieve. It is simple and straightforward:

To make money, by thrilling our customers with our product and service, and by taking care of our people.

The mission influences the hiring process, reward system, leadership, team culture, and work processes. Signs posted throughout the immaculately clean manufacturing floor and training rooms reinforce the mission, report team performance, and emphasize excellence. The company is intentional in keeping all three mission objectives (profitability, customers, and employees) paramount and visible.

VALUES, PRINCIPLES, AND BEHAVIOR

As defined in the *Cardinal IG Leadership Handbook*, company values include loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal and moral courage. Values are the foundation of culture but remain abstract unless they are lived in day-to-day actions. Pinder's West Point background and beliefs are reflected in these values and made real in the behaviors he models and expects of his employees. The values are further translated into specific expectations in Cardinal's Guiding Principles, statements that serve as a code of conduct for the way employees do their work and treat one another:

- **Safety**
Nothing we do is more important than safety. It is our #1 priority.
- **Quality**
We ensure that every product we ship to our customer is flawless.
- **Service**
We treat our customers like they are the most important people in the world.
- **Training**
We develop, implement, and maintain a top-notch training program.
- **Leadership/Teamwork/Communication**
This organization is led as a team to make Fargo IG the flagship of the company.
- **Cost Awareness**
We will spend money wisely here—as if the money is our own.
- **Respect for Others**
We treat others with dignity and fairness while encouraging others to do the same.
- **Care for Families**
We encourage our people to spend time with their families and balance work accordingly.
- **Integrity**
When in doubt, do the right thing. Trust is an important part of our relationship.