

BRINGING VALUES TO LIFE

We have given a great deal of thought to what we are all about as an organization over the past 30 years and while much of it has been well documented we recognize that it is only through our people that these ideals are brought to life. Without a commitment to a shared vision and values, these ideas are little more than words on a page.

With this in mind, we created an initiative called Conversations about Culture which isolates an important Urban Systems philosophy or value that we then focused on for the year with the following objectives in mind:

- To reinforce a key value or philosophy
- To focus on common ground – experiences to which everyone can relate
- To engage all USL staff in discussion and/or experience related to the theme
- To focus on what has worked/is working (rather than trying to fix problems)
- To share leadership for these initiatives amongst all staff

Our first theme in 2003 was **Collaboration** which involved group sessions throughout the company where we shared our most positive collaborative experiences with one another. The process allowed us to zero in on some of the common themes associated with good collaboration (e.g. open communication, camaraderie, commitment, etc.).

In 2004 our focus was on **Generosity** with the project leadership provided by our Novice Consultants (NC's) in each branch. After branch discussions took place around the topic of sharing and how it relates to Urban Systems, the NC's developed projects designed to bring the topic to life. The results were both touching and inspired and included such things as; a Generosity calendar with suggested random acts of kindness for each month, videos about generosity involving skits and interviews with local charities, and programs to donate pizza money from staff meetings to local food banks. A Generosity Calendar and our Generosity Video has been included in our application.

In 2005 the theme was **Looking Out For Each Other** or **LOFEO** as we like to call it (we love a good acronym!). The initiative was led by our CEO with LOFEO teams in each of the offices who carried out monthly, sometimes weekly, events to get people out of their offices to take a breather, have some fun, connect with and appreciate each other. Listed below are just some of the initiatives from around the company that flowed from this initiative:

- Bi-weekly Massage - Staff could sign up for 10 minute massage in office every second Wednesday
- Donutless Thursday - Once a month the Thursday donuts were replaced with yogurt and fresh fruit for those who want healthier options. Weekly health facts posted to the LOFEO board in lunchroom.
- Laughs at lunch – once a week a funny video was shown in the lunchroom (Seinfeld, Monty Python, etc.)
- LOFEO Fish - Siamese fighting fish were passed around the office to appreciate a co-worker, recognize a good deeds/kind acts or just because someone might need a lift. The fish was then handed off again within a week of receiving it.
- The Kelowna Chronicles – branch newsletter profiles one employee per week

- Plant growing contest – all staff received a mystery seed and in a few months time the person with the healthiest looking plant was declared the winner.
- Lunch Auction – all staff were given LOFEO money to bid on mystery lunches
- Field trips for treats – trips to the ice cream shop and hot dog cart
- LOFEO tree – a cork covered pillar with blank sticky notes and chocolate bars. When people leave a note of appreciation about someone they get to take the chocolate bar.
- Tricycle race – teams built and then raced tricycles through the halls of the Calgary office. Bikes were personally delivered and donated to the Salvation Army by staff.
- LOFEO Cook Off - teams were challenged to make the best meal with same food in a limited amount of time.
- Wine Tasting – staff brought in their favourite bottle of wine for a “taste off”
- LOFEO team swap – members from each LOFEO team traveled to a different office on October 19th to host a surprise LOFEO event for branch staff.

Our current theme is **Commitment to Excellence** which involved discussions in each branch where hallmarks of excellence were identified under the framework of Urban Systems’ core strategy of “great people providing great service to great clients”. These hallmarks will then be used as measures of success when it comes to celebrating examples of excellence at Urban Systems including:

1. Recognizing and appreciating PEOPLE who demonstrate excellence (i.e. individuals or teams)
2. Showcasing examples of SERVICE excellence (i.e. innovation, teamwork, adding value, projects)
3. Appreciating great CLIENTS by acknowledging what makes them special (formally and/or informally)

Overall, the objective is to engage staff in thinking about and discussing what it means to be excellent in our personal and professional lives as well as heighten awareness about what we’re already doing well and reinforce a quality mindset in everyone.

Although we have no way of really measuring the impact of these kinds of initiatives, it is common feedback to hear employees say that they feel like Urban Systems is a caring company. If this is true, and people do feel cared for in Urban Systems, we can say with confidence that our efforts in manifesting our core values and beliefs has been critical in our success to date.