

Enabling Collaboration through Conflict Resolution Training

Challenge

Alliant National Title Insurance Company was founded in 2005. They provide title insurance services including underwriting and claims processing to independent title agents across the U.S. Like all insurance companies, Alliant National faces a constant tension between managing risk and developing sales. In Alliant National's case, however, that tension led to two opposing factions, each led by one of the company's founders. By 2012, this conflict had become so deeply entrenched that it threatened the company's very existence.

Alliant National had made several attempts to reconcile the two sides of the business. Each effort ultimately failed to solve the underlying issues. In fact, the bungled interventions backfired, worsening an already divisive situation. An atmosphere of mutual skepticism, mistrust, and hesitancy reinforced each side's conviction that their position was unequivocally correct. The stalemate fostered a growing dysfunction and hobbled business productivity company-wide.

Arbinger's tools provided a format to consider all stakeholders and how we interact with each other in the company and with our customers. This allowed for different parts of the organization to both see and align our people to a unified big picture.

Bob Grubb – President & Chief Executive Officer

Solution

In 2013, one of Alliant National's founders read *The Anatomy of Peace*. He recognized that the inward mindset depicted in the text was the same root problem that plagued the company. At the co-founder's request, other members of the senior leadership team read the book and they came to the same conclusion. The leadership team turned to Arbinger for conflict resolution training and help moving forward.

After assessing the situation, Arbinger conducted a two-day workshop for the senior leadership team. Many approaches to conflict resolution training emphasize communication techniques or other behavioral tactics. While behavioral skills are certainly important and can be helpful, they alone cannot successfully transform persistent conflict patterns. In addition to providing actionable tools to Alliant National's leaders, the Arbinger workshop facilitated personal insights and a shift in mindset that ultimately proved even more crucial for creating change. The leadership team began to see how they were each contributing to and perpetuating the conflict. This breakthrough realization, made possible through a change in mindset and honest accountability, enabled senior leadership to quickly start addressing and defusing the tension.

Alliant National's leaders wanted the transformative experience of Arbinger's conflict resolution training to extend beyond the workshop. By utilizing the tools they had learned in the training, they began to embed an outward mindset in their day-to-day work, enabling more effective collaboration and a greater emphasis on results. To spread the influence further throughout the organization, they chose to send a senior executive to be trained by Arbinger as an internal facilitator. She then worked to train and support the rest of the company in understanding and utilizing Arbinger tools.

Arbinger consultants then led Alliant National's senior leadership through Arbinger's Strategic Planning and Execution process. As part of this endeavor, Alliant's leadership was helped to reconceive the company's work and redefine its objectives to ensure they were aligned with the needs of Alliant National's key stakeholders. They then recalibrated their own roles and company functions to better support one another in reaching the company's overall goals. With this foundation in place, Alliant National's senior leaders then developed detailed personal work plans that outlined how each individual's work served those who were impacted by their efforts. This process expanded their vision from a narrow focus on personal objectives to a broader understanding of individual impact on supervisors, co-workers, employees, and core customers.

The sky is truly the limit in terms of how Arbinger's tools will help us as individuals, teams, and as a company trying to make a difference.

David Sinclair – Chief Operation Officer

Results

By implementing Arbinger's conflict resolution training and working to deeply integrate an outward mindset, Alliant National has achieved dramatically improved results. When conflicts occasionally arise, they are handled in a positive, relationship-sustaining manner. There is a sense of openness to new ideas and willing collaboration between risk management and sales. Alliant National has used Arbinger frameworks to reduce conflicting objectives among employees, align resources to better achieve corporate goals, and create personal responsibility. Employees have responded powerfully to this new way of working, enthusiastically embracing the invitation to redirect their focus and accomplish objectives while prioritizing coworker and organizational success.

The overarching impact of all this work has been to unite Alliant National as a single team pursuing the common goal of serving independent agents. The noteworthy internal impacts of this shift are reflected in external metrics as well. The company has grown at a rate nearly twice that of its competitors, received the official "Great Place to Work" designation, and become one of the top ten title insurance underwriters in the United States.

While the public recognition and business results speak impressively about Alliant National's progress, there is another result that may be even more telling. Because of the changes in the company, one of the founders felt comfortable enough to retire, placing the future of both his company and his retirement in the hands of the other founders.

Alliant National is a fun place to work! The culture no longer one of conflict. Planning is more creative. People are energized and excited about the future. Our unity throughout the company is attractive to potential employees. People want to be a part of Alliant National because of how we work.

Bob Grubb – President & Chief Executive Officer