

# Employee Development And Retention Through Award Winning Career Development

A Case Study



PILOT

EMPOWER EMPLOYEES.  
ACCELERATE PERFORMANCE.



## MARK RODRIGUEZ

Vice President of Human Resources



SouthWest  
Water Company



## THE CHALLENGE

Southwest Water Company is a utilities management company based in Sugarland, Texas. It employs 475 people across five states. When their CEO made a commitment to invest in employee's careers, the company's HR team was thrilled. Focusing on employee development always builds a better organization.

To put this plan into action, the HR team looked for an innovative career development solution to grow their employees' skill sets. It was crucial that this program would benefit everyone at the organization -- both the office staff and the staff who worked in the field. Investing in the leadership and management skills of the whole team would help ensure all employees were equipped to take on future positions within the company.

“Employee development is currently a critical, strategic long-term item for us. We need that, in order to be a better company. Like a lot of industries, we have a lot of employees who are starting to retire... so succession planning is a big deal [for us].”

- Mark Rodriguez, VP of Human Resources

Mark Rodriguez -- the Vice President of Human Resources at Southwest Water -- wanted to find a solution that would bring out the best in his top talent. He knew it would have to be scalable, so that it could be offered across the entire organization. He also knew it would need to apply to employees occupying different types of positions and living in multiple states.

Mark knew that typical talent management solutions tend to be aimed at only top-tier executives and senior managers. He was determined to bring development opportunities to a much larger number of employees at Southwest Water.

“PILOT came in to meet a specific need for us, [to] help our supervision, [our] first line management... improve their skill sets as leaders, supervisors, [and] coaches... I saw PILOT winning this award for innovation, and we did the diligence and looked into it further”

Furthermore, Mark wanted the program to be easy to scale and quick to implement.

“In our group, you're not looking for complexity. You're looking for something that's very simple, easy to administer and user-friendly. And I found all three of those items in the PILOT program.”



# 100%

of surveyed members said that offering PILOT to other employees at Southwest Water is a good idea.



## SOLUTION

Mark's search for the perfect solution led him to PILOT -- virtual coaching & mentoring software. He was immediately impressed at the awards PILOT had won and reached out to the PILOT team. Through his research, Mark decided that PILOT was the right solution for his employee development needs.

The next step required buy-in from his C-Suite leadership team. Mark wanted both his Board of Directors and his Senior leadership team to see PILOT firsthand, to get an understanding of its potential. After presenting PILOT to the larger group, SouthWest Water was excited to move forward with bringing PILOT to their employees.

**As an experienced HR executive, Mark knew there were two imperative requirements for PILOT's success at SouthWest Water:**



1. **For the leadership team to buy into the solution.**



2. **For employees and their managers to embrace and engage in the offering.**

These two elements went hand-in-hand. Thanks to strong support from the Senior leadership team throughout the PILOT program, employees showed record levels of engagement in PILOT, and really began to take initiative in owning their careers.

“ I am **taking control of my career** and building my road to growth and advancement. I'm not waiting for someone to build it for me. ”

- Southwest Water employee.



“ I learned that **my success is completely in my hands**, and that only I can determine the future of my career. ”

- SouthWest Water employee



## RESULTS EMPLOYEE GROWTH

During the six-month program, Southwest Water employees saw improvement in a variety of key areas of their career growth, including:

**A feeling of career ownership**

**The impact they have at work**

**How they optimize their time**

**How they include themselves in teams**

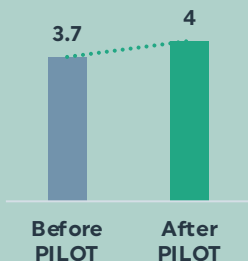
**How they learn and grow in their careers**



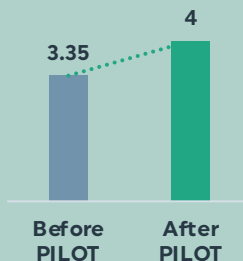
I own my career.



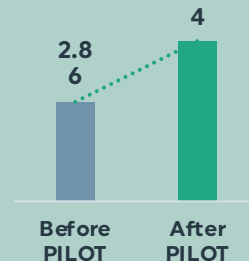
I am able to have significant impact at work.



I optimize how I work to be my most efficient self.



I take responsibility for how satisfied I am at work.



## EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS

PILOT understands that a manager's commitment and active engagement in employee development is essential. But managers often have little capacity to develop and often lack the skills to grow their employees. With this in mind, PILOT created a right-sized approach to involving managers in the development process. PILOT coaches the managers using an effective development model which empowers them to have meaningful development conversations with their employees throughout the PILOT program. These managers assess and provide truly meaningful, future-focused developmental feedback at the beginning and end of the PILOT program.

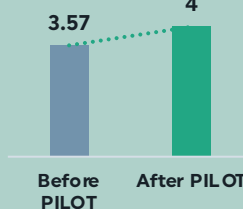
**Data showed that at Southwest Water, the PILOT members' direct managers observed significant improvement in every single core career development competency!** This impressive data proves that managers saw large, noticeable growth in their employees over the course of the program, and as a result, Southwest Water was able to create real change in their organization by empowering employees to own their own careers, through using PILOT.

“A lot of times in companies, [the] culture is pushed down from the top, and what you're really creating here is actually a culture change in the company that starts in a more upward movement...”

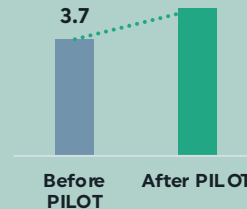
- Keith Fischer, Executive Vice President, SouthWest Water Co.



I actively manage how I integrate into teams at work.



I continually seek to learn & grow in my career.

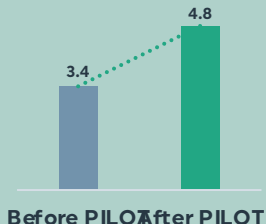


“Being a manager who had two direct reports in the PILOT program, I found myself being even more challenged to step up, and we had a lot better conversations in our one-on-ones. It was great to see, and almost a challenge to stay on top of it. Which is a good thing!”

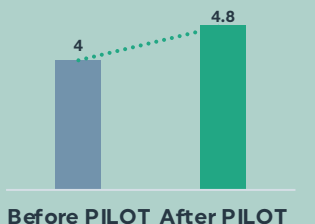
- Joanne Elliott, Director of Human Resources



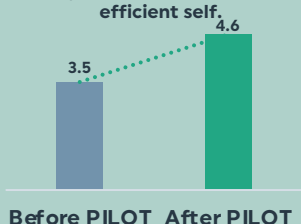
My employee owns their career.



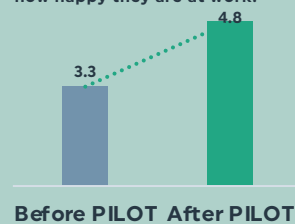
My employee is able to have a significant impact at work.



My employee optimizes how they work to be their most efficient self.



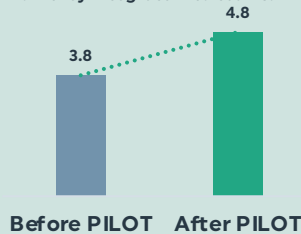
My employee takes responsibility for how happy they are at work.



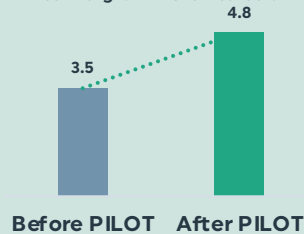
My employee takes ownership for the quality of their relationship with me.



My employee actively manages how they integrate into teams.



My employee continually seeks to learn & grow in their career.



## RESULTS OVERALL

Upon completion of the PILOT program, Southwest Water employees described feeling honored to participate, and said that they felt valued and invested in by their company. 100% of participants recommended that their fellow employees also get the chance to participate in PILOT. In fact, their feelings of gratitude and appreciation reached all the way up to HR, as Mark

With the help of the PILOT program, Mark and his team at Southwest Water were able to invest in employees at a scale like never before.

So what's next for Southwest Water? Well, Mark and his team are running two more cohorts with PILOT this year to develop 50 more employees. They will also be implementing PILOT's new Scaled Mentoring offering. This approach to mentoring gives employees at all levels unique and intimate access to multiple executives in a facilitated fireside chat dynamic. This offering also gives employees the valuable opportunity to learn from role models and get to know their leaders better. Mark says:

**“We received several unsolicited feedback comments, both emails and verbal, that've been very positive. They're actually applying their learnings from the sessions. It's been a good investment, and we've gotten really good feedback from employees, unsolicited - you don't get that too much [in HR]”**

**“We are very pleased with the product, it's results-oriented [and] we have seen employees putting it into action. As the head of HR, to get positive feedback from the C suite team is a win-win. I look like a champion here... [I'm] very pleased with PILOT, and I would recommend PILOT... I'm confident enough to invest in them in 2021”**

Participants were asked whether they saw themselves working at Southwest Water in 2 years time. 100% of respondents said yes. The data shows that this group of employees who were invested in by their company felt positive enough about Southwest Water to plan to stay and grow within the organization.

**I see myself still working at my employer in 2 years time.**

5.0 Mean Score



% Favorable

■ Benchmark  
■ Southwest Water



“ Mark and his HR team have done a superb job of elevating the importance of career development and professional development across the organization. Our win-win partnership has had significant impact thanks to HR's engaged role. ”

- Ben Brooks,  
Founder and CEO of PILOT

## Career Development that's Inclusive & Easy for Everyone

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