

# Success built on trust

## THE POIRIER GROUP

**KATHRYN BOOTHBY**  
*Postmedia Content Works*

The Poirier Group is a boutique management consulting firm focused on process improvement, strategy execution, and sustainable business transformation for clients across North America. David Poirier founded the organization in 2005. Under his leadership, The Poirier Group (TPG) has established a strong corporate culture built on trust, open and honest communication, and fun. Its culture is a badge of honour that drives excellence in its employees. And, it is a key differentiator in the field of management consulting.

“Despite our current distance, due to COVID-19, our team remains committed to supporting one another and our clients, and building an even stronger culture for the future,” notes Poirier. “We have always had a strong foundation of values and ensure that everyone in the organization understands them and responds with the appropriate actions.”

Those values have helped TPG win a 2020 Canada’s Most Admired Corporate Cultures Award in the ‘emerging’ category. A commitment to learning, serving, excellence, and integrity drive sustainable performance for the organization and its clients:

■ Continuous learning is instilled across the organization, from CEO to interns. It stems from a common thirst for knowledge that helps innovate and raise the bar. Company-wide information-sharing and

thought-leadership reinforce this value, as does recognition and reimbursement for the achievement of relevant certifications.

■ Serving is not only directed to clients, but the community at large. It means striving for excellence on behalf of customers while giving back to the community through not-for-profit organizations.

■ Excellence is demonstrated by the 15-year, 100 per cent positive customer experience that TPG has achieved. It is a testament to the value and exceptional results that it delivers to its clients. But it doesn’t mean resting on one’s laurels. It provides a guiding light upon which to challenge and continuously improve every assumption and project, notes Poirier.

■ Integrity defines the open, honest and direct communication and accountability demonstrated by the TPG team. “It is about owning responsibility for decisions and outcomes, working with others collaboratively rather than competitively, and achieving the best possible results for our customer,” explains Poirier.

“We live and breathe our values as an organization every day. They have served us well, certainly in terms of talent retention, repeat business, and active referrals. A true testament of our engagement came when one of our consultants received an employee of the month award from a client” says TPG partner, Michael Taylor

When the pandemic changed the rules of that engagement, The Poirier Group had several client projects in play. Pivoting from working onsite with customers to a virtual connection almost



Staff members gathered for a fall, 2019 off-site session in Collingwood, Ont.

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overnight required a major shift in terms of technology and communication.

“Typically, we work with organizations during times of change and stress. When COVID-19 hit, it exacerbated an already challenging situation for our clients,” notes Taylor. Yet, TPG has not only been able to meet and even exceed client expectations during the year-long crisis, but it has also gained additional work, in large part due to the trust built with clients before the pandemic, and our reputation for excellence in the industry. “When you engineer something great, build the right team, and have a culture that makes people want to step up, that’s when the magic happens. There is no doubt that a winning culture drives higher performance.”

The team at TPG has a very diverse set of skills and backgrounds that span engineering, process improvement, finance, change management, strategy, and business, to name a few. Subject matter experts cover retail, supply chain, consumer packaged goods, manufacturing, private equity, services businesses, as well as government.

“Delivering on our commitments to each client means building the right team for every project.

Bringing the necessary skill sets to the table is just the beginning. Building trust, both internally and with our customers, is critical because it is the foundation of our work approach,” says human resources lead, Kayla Brar.

Finding the right fit begins at the recruiting stage. “We want to ensure that values align, and that whom-ever is hired has demonstrated our values in their previous work. It is not simply about hiring someone with the appropriate background. We look for examples where candidates have gone above and beyond for clients,” notes Brar.

Once hired, onboarding begins with a month-long partnership with a work buddy. The buddy provides support and an introduction to the company and culture. Weekly feedback sessions help alleviate any roadblocks and provide any additional resources that are required. “Our mentorship program allows employees to choose who they would like to work with. It is a very personal relationship, so it is important that there is a comfort level on the part of both parties,” says Brar. “There is a lot of informal feedback and encouragement at TPG at every level and it all begins in the

first few weeks of employment. It helps to effectively bring each new recruit into our family.”

Employees are encouraged to put their fingerprints on the organization and, regardless of tenure, make a long-lasting contribution to the company. “No one is limited for growth here – you are not waiting for someone to move on or up for you to get to the next step. Success is self-driven,” says Brar.

TPG retention is very high, with a turnover rate of just 6.6 per cent, which is below consulting industry norms. “Our people are our most valuable asset. We invest in developing each team member to achieve both their professional and personal goals,” Brar notes.

Poirier adds, “We are a very caring organization and we have a lot of fun together. We are like a family – we look out for one another and we don’t always agree, but everyone is comfortable being a part of the whole, and knowing we are here for one another for the long-term.”

That caring also translates to a strong sense of corporate social responsibility that runs throughout TPG. It is exemplified through its Purpose Beyond Profit initiative. Through the program, a por-

tion of the team’s available resource hours are donated to provide in-kind specialized consulting services to not-for-profit organizations. Our service finds resource efficiencies and administrative savings allowing the charitable organizations and not-for-profits to focus more of the funding and donations on their causes.

“Our goal is to create exponential value for the charities we work with. By putting consulting expertise to work for an organization, we can help create three to four times the value per year for the services we provide, which brings a far greater reward than writing a cheque. It is extremely fulfilling to see organizations better off for our having connected with them. It is also a tremendous boost for our team members,” notes Poirier.

Last year, TPG donated over \$200,000 in consulting service hours. Some of these services have helped foundations, community organizations, not-for-profits and charities find additional government funding, enhance board management, and streamline roles and responsibilities.

During the holidays, the team continues to give back to the community with a “holiday Pay-it-Forward” initiative which provides staff \$100 to donate to a cause of their choice. Some match the donation, others create care packages for the homeless, and others broaden the match with family and friends. It helps build a broader spirit of community and accountability.

“When you are a small company with just 45 employees, everyone is a key component of the culture,” says Brar.

Poirier says, “Our vision from the beginning was to create a consulting experience based on trust and transparency. That vision has served our team and our clients well over the past 15 years and, certainly, during the past year. We will continue to uphold and build on that trust as we move forward.”