

The Vermeer Podcast – Episode 8

Leading Through a Crisis

Doug Hundt:

Hello everyone. My name is Doug Hundt. I serve as President of our Industrial Solutions Group at Vermeer. And one thing that really sticks out in my mind as a lessons-learned from the tornado is the importance of communications to all of our stakeholders. And in particular, those outside of the Vermeer mile. And as you well know, we had about 500 dealers and customers on our campus that day. And when I think about that, we were so grateful nobody was injured. But there was a lot of concern, and really trauma, that that group experienced.

So one aspect of communications that happened right away was just the care of those people by our Vermeer team members. Walking with them, reaching out to them days, weeks, even months after the tornado, to make sure that they were okay and they were in a good spot. So that was really key.

Then the other aspect of communications to our external stakeholders is just the understanding of how important Vermeer is to their business, and how they rely on Vermeer every day for their success. And in particular, the number one stakeholder is our dealer network. We have over 3,000 employees employed by our dealers, so we really took a very, let's say aggressive stance, to keep them informed. That was everything from social media updates, we did weekly calls to our dealers, a lot of updates in writing. And then there was, of course, a lot of one-on-one communications to make sure that they knew that we were going to be back as soon as possible and we were committed to keeping our support of them intact so they, in turn, can support the retail customer.

And then beyond our dealer network, there was a lot of work that went into communicating to the industry. So again, via social media. A lot of posts that went out to our customers so they knew where we were in our rebuild process and what to expect. And again, just that strong message that we were there to support them and they can continue to rely on us.

And then I would say the third aspect of that was just a lot of communications with trade media. So think about magazines, you think about radio, you think about other venues that our customers, our dealers, tuned into. And did a lot of video interviews, we did a lot of podcasts amongst different Vermeer team members, just to keep our industry informed of what's going on. So tremendous support from our trade media partners as well.

So all in all, I think the importance of communications in a crisis is one we've learned. It's one we'll continue to take forward because so many people rely on Vermeer for their day-to-day success. And again, we've got thousands of dealer employees and we've got tens of thousands of customers that rely on us every day. So that was a big lesson learned. And again, so grateful for the Vermeer team members that did that so well. Thank you for listening and have a great rest of your day.