

BOCB Awards Bank Culture: Training and Development Programs Category

First State Bank's Next Level Leadership Program

Brief Program Summary:

At First State Bank, our culture is powered by one simple question: How can we help our employees succeed? A positive work culture is a group effort, made possible by every individual working in harmony, building an environment that encourages growth and celebrates success. First State Bank has been fully committed to workplace authenticity and the pursuit of progress since 1905, maintained by the unity felt across the enterprise. We believe great leadership makes great culture, and with our Next Level Leadership program, employees of all levels can come together and learn from one another, improving their skills and overcoming challenges. Because at First State Bank, our employees are our family, and families support each other through thick and thin.

Documentation of Program:

At First State Bank, our mission is to treat the community as our home, customers as our neighbors and employees as our family. Our culture is founded on this mission. A positive work culture is a necessity that grows alongside the dedicated individuals working together to make greatness happen. That's why in 2021 we established our Next Level Leadership (NLL) training program, which helps our employees thrive in their personal and professional lives. This program gives seasoned and upcoming leaders the opportunity to learn on the same level and understand one another's perspectives. By fostering trust and camaraderie through our culture, our teams form unbreakable bonds that withstand challenge and time.

The Next Level Leadership program was born from the need for change. With so many young and eager talents joining the workforce, our leadership team discussed how to keep up with the changing times. We wanted our traditional work culture to evolve and ensure a positive environment for everyone. We accomplished this by working with Evolve Coaching Group, an organization dedicated to creating a custom training program for businesses seeking improvement. We made a coaching curriculum curated to the needs and goals of First State Bank. That's how NLL came to be which allowed us to break from the outdated patterns in the financial banking industry and embrace positive change in our work culture.

Our goal was to coach our younger employees before they became leaders, but we also realized the current managers and leaders needed to know how to approach working with this new generation with effective communication. It was clear to see that current leaders were hungry for this development and wanted to grow alongside their younger coworkers as a team. With entry-level and long-term employees learning together on the same level, our familial and supportive culture can only grow stronger. First State Bank has a different mentality than other banks as we embrace change fearlessly for the betterment of our employees and our culture.

At First State Bank, empowerment is infectious. Our emerging leaders are supported by their managers to achieve greatness, and in turn, the eagerness of our new talent inspires our tenured

leaders to continue to improve themselves. The NLL training teaches a coaching style to leadership in which the ideas from younger employees are welcomed and encouraged by their leaders. Here, the unbreakable trust between a leader and their team makes anything possible. Our leaders are learning how to manage sideways and manage up, guiding their teams supportively and maintaining harmony among other managers. A coaching leader maximizes their abilities to spread their wisdom with their team, cultivating growth and camaraderie across the workplace.

Our NLL program is proof of what embracing change can accomplish. While banking has tended to be a more reserved industry, First State Bank remains forward thinking and understanding of the changes in the market. If we want to remain competitive in the market and attract top talent, this type of training can rocket our organization to the top. Our future only goes as far as our willingness to embrace change, and we're excited to see where our Next Level Leadership will take us.