



**DISTINCTIONS, INC. | CASE STUDIES**

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# The Work Behind the Results

Selected engagements exploring how leadership, culture, strategy, people, transformation, and execution come together to shape organizational performance.

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## **SELECTED WORK ACROSS**

**CEO & Executive Advisory**

**Organizational Transformation**

**Leadership & Culture**

**Strategy & Execution**

**People & Performance**

**Continuous Improvement**

Every organization is different. The work begins with understanding what matters, what may be getting in the way, and where attention can make the greatest difference.

## THE WORK

# The work is rarely just about one thing.

A business challenge may reveal a leadership issue. A strategy may require a different culture. Growth may expose weaknesses in structure, communication, or execution.

Sometimes the work begins with a CEO. Sometimes with an executive team. Sometimes with a process that isn't working, a culture that needs to change, or a business that has outgrown the way it operates.

**What needs attention - and what will make the greatest difference?**

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## THE COLLECTION

- |           |                                                |                                                                                           |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>01</b> | <b>CEO &amp; Executive Advisory</b>            | An enduring CEO-advisor relationship across three organizations.                          |
| <b>02</b> | <b>Operational Transformation</b>              | Freudenberg-NOK and the connection between people, processes, and continuous improvement. |
| <b>03</b> | <b>Innovation &amp; Collaboration</b>          | Cross-functional work that contributed to market-share growth and cost savings.           |
| <b>04</b> | <b>People &amp; Organizational Performance</b> | People practices translated into measurable operating results.                            |
| <b>05</b> | <b>Enterprise Change</b>                       | A \$15M ERP transformation delivered on time, on budget, with minimal disruption.         |
| <b>06</b> | <b>Leadership &amp; Collaboration</b>          | Joint management-labor leadership work at Ford Motor Company / UAW.                       |

# Nearly 20 Years. Three Organizations. One Enduring CEO-Advisor Relationship.

For nearly 20 years, John Hopkins has repeatedly chosen to work with Leo M. Tonkin and Distinctions across three private-equity-owned education organizations. As the organizations, leadership teams, ownership environments, and challenges changed, so did the work.

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## ONE CEO

A relationship that began during a period of significant organizational transformation and executive alignment.

## THREE ORGANIZATIONS

The advisory relationship continued as Hopkins moved into successive private-equity-owned education organizations, each with different circumstances, leadership teams, and business needs.

## NEARLY 20 YEARS

The work evolved from executive advisory, coaching, leadership alignment, and strategic planning into culture, organizational transformation, associate experience, leadership development, strategy execution, and periods of embedded strategic leadership.

## SELECTED PROOF FROM THE RELATIONSHIP

Across the relationship, the work has accompanied periods of significant growth, expansion, recapitalization, leadership and culture transformation, and measurable improvements in the associate experience. The deeper three-organization case study will document the results by chapter rather than compress them into a single set of numbers.

## THE DISTINCTION

**The value of a trusted advisor isn't knowing today what the organization will need tomorrow. It's knowing the organization and the people well enough to remain useful when tomorrow arrives.**

# Collaboration as a catalyst for operational transformation.

## FREUDENBERG-NOK

Distinctions worked within a complex North American manufacturing environment during a broader transformation of how the organization operated. The work connected leadership development, collaboration, communication, continuous improvement, and the implementation of Six Sigma practices with the realities of how work was actually being done.

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## GROWTTH

Get Rid of Waste Through Team Harmony

Leadership development was aligned with operational and re-engineering milestones rather than treated as a separate initiative. GROWTTH connected the drive to eliminate waste with the collaboration, communication, and team harmony needed to make improvement sustainable.

### THE WORK

The engagement reached across the organization and close to day-to-day operations, helping leaders and teams strengthen the human side of continuous improvement while broader process and operational changes were underway.

### THE DISTINCTION

**Operational transformation isn't only about improving processes. It also depends on improving how people work together.**

# When the people closest to the customer weren't part of the process.

## JOHNSON & JOHNSON

**+5%**

MARKET SHARE

**22%**

COST SAVINGS

### THE SITUATION

A global pharmaceutical and consumer-products organization was under pressure to improve how new products were developed and launched. Researchers, developers, and engineers drove the historical process while sales and marketing - the people closest to customers - had little input.

### THE WORK

Distinctions mapped the existing process through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and operational analysis. Cross-functional teams brought together marketing, sales, R&D, engineering, management, and administration around common metrics and new ways of working.

### WHAT CHANGED

The initiative sparked new projects that contributed to a 5% increase in market share. Seven additional projects produced 22% cost savings.

### THE DISTINCTION

**Collaboration isn't simply about people working well together. Bringing different perspectives into the work can change the business result.**

# When people practices became a business performance issue.

**17%**

MORE PRODUCTIVITY

**22%**

LOWER ABSENTEEISM

**88%**

FEWER CLAIMS & ISSUES

## THE SITUATION

A national auto-finance organization needed greater consistency in management practices, employee relations, leadership, accountability, and performance.

## THE WORK

Distinctions evaluated existing policies and practices and worked across leadership, management development, coaching, communication, teamwork, competencies, performance measures, and HR practices.

## WHAT CHANGED

The documented results included 17% increased productivity, a 22% reduction in absenteeism, and an 88% decline in employee claims and issues.

## THE DISTINCTION

**People issues and business issues aren't separate. How people experience the organization shows up in how the organization performs.**

# The technology was changing. The organization had to change with it.

## OFFICE DEPOT

|                    |                |                  |                |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>\$15M</b>       | <b>ON TIME</b> | <b>ON BUDGET</b> | <b>MINIMAL</b> |
| ERP TRANSFORMATION | DELIVERY       | DELIVERY         | DISRUPTION     |

### THE SITUATION

A long-established consumer-products business was transitioning from a family-run operating model toward a global, technology-enabled enterprise.

### THE WORK

Distinctions worked alongside the Project Management Office and corporate HR to map current and future organizations, define roles and competencies, identify gaps, and develop the training and change architecture required for the transition.

### WHAT CHANGED

Employee buy-in and commitment were established. Operational disruption was minimal. The \$15 million project was completed on time and within budget.

### THE DISTINCTION

**Technology can change a system. Transformation requires changing how people work within it.**

# Leadership Across Management and Labor

FORD MOTOR COMPANY / UAW

**110%**

OF ESTABLISHED METRICS

## THE SITUATION

Ford wanted a leadership-development experience capable of crossing management and UAW lines while working within established policies, guidelines, and time constraints.

## THE WORK

A joint project team of union and non-union members helped shape a custom nine-session leadership program built around collaboration, communication, consensus, decision-making, and measurable follow-through.

## WHAT CHANGED

At three- and six-month follow-up, 110% of established metrics were realized. The pilot was endorsed by Ford and the UAW and achieved highly recommended status within the company's leadership curriculum.

## THE DISTINCTION

**If you want people to own the outcome, involve them in creating the way forward.**

## MORE FROM THE WORK

# Different situations. Connected work.

### CROSS-COMPANY REORGANIZATION & ALIGNMENT

A major home-improvement retailer consolidated nine regional offices into three. Distinctions created joint cross-functional teams and new channels for communication and information sharing between the retailer and a major vendor significantly affected by the change.

### PHARMACEUTICAL REORGANIZATION & SILO REDUCTION

Distinctions helped address isolated brand teams, duplicate roles, inconsistent management practices, and limited sharing of best practices through organizational assessment, process mapping, communication, shared performance measures, and clearer accountability.

### EMPLOYEE RELATIONS TURNAROUND

At a North American automotive supplier, Distinctions worked with employees and management during a period of significant employee-relations challenges. Documented results included 17% lower absenteeism and 16%+ improvement in quality and customer satisfaction.

### BUILDING THE CULTURE AND STRUCTURE TO SCALE

A national long-term acute-care healthcare organization grew from 3 to 14 facilities in two years. The work included leadership structure, executive coaching, Tribal Leadership, cascading competencies, a culture assessment involving more than 2,000 employees, and a national leadership curriculum.

## A PERSONAL CONVERSATION

# What are you working through?

You may already know what needs attention. Or simply know something could be better. Either is enough to begin.

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