

| Case Study

Utilizing Mindset Data and Leadership Development to Increase the Speed of Innovation

■ Executive Summary

The Teamwork Sharks® Leadership Challenge, created by Mike Goodfriend, is a Shark Tank-style leadership development program designed to help organizations invest in their next-generation leaders while increasing their unique market advantage for the future. With more than twenty-five years of industry experience, Goodfriend is a Teamwork Engineer, Leadership Coach, Author, and Birkman Master Certified Professional (BMCP). He has been using The Birkman Method for more than 30 years, serving clients across many industries.

■ Driving the Future of NACE International

NACE International equips society to protect people, assets, and the environment from the adverse effects of corrosion. Already an extensive user of the Birkman, NACE contracted with Mike Goodfriend because of his experience as a Birkman consultant.

After a year of providing one-on-one coaching to key NACE executives and staff to better utilize Birkman information, the executive team at NACE wanted to invest in their high potential leaders to drive the future strategy of the organization. Mike proposed his Teamwork Sharks Leadership Challenge to Bob Chalker, CEO, and Pam Birk, Chief Talent Officer, at NACE, and the proposal was accepted. Pam Birk saw the value in this program stating, “The Teamwork Sharks Leadership Challenge has a

unique experiential learning model. It is a competency-based approach to developing leaders where they apply their learning on the spot by making and pitching a business case for actual initiatives.”

Goodfriend’s Teamwork Sharks Leadership Challenge is a six-month, three-phase leadership program that includes one-on-one coaching to help participants prepare a bold plan for their development as leaders. This program also encourages experiential group learning for employees to become more effective strategic leaders that drive innovation. Leaders gain experience presenting compelling business cases for cross-functional business opportunities to the Teamwork Sharks judges.

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Mike Goodfriend
Leadership Coach



■ Driving the Future of NACE International

Phase 1 of the NACE Leadership Program focused on self-discovery and self-development. This phase consisted of one-on-one meetings between Goodfriend and each of the participants to consider 360 feedback and **uncover the personality drivers through the Birkman Signature Report to assess their “core” strengths and areas for improvement as a leader.** The Signature Report reveals **nine areas of behavior that help leaders understand their natural tendencies** for traits like assertiveness, thought, social energy, and self-consciousness. These sessions cultivate vulnerability and help the participant discover their personal motivators to achieve leadership breakthroughs.

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strengths as leaders,” Goodfriend said. Phase 2 of the program involves group learning to develop leadership skills around strategic thinking and innovation to better drive organizational strategy. Topics that are covered include Multiplying Strategic Thinking, Being a Disruption Advocate, and Exploring Business Opportunities. Prior to these group workshops, **Goodfriend met with each leader individually, using the Birkman Mindset report to help them understand how they influence the strategy conversation.**

Birkman Mindset is a tool designed to uncover the deeply-rooted set of perspectives that guide our behaviors and can reveal our blindspots. For example, one of the four elements this report dives into is Distinctiveness, or the extent to which you see clear distinctions in the world around you and how that may guide your levels of openness to different strategic options. This data-point **helped each leader consider what innovation looked like to them and where innovation might fall, ranging from disruptive to incremental.** Other Perspectives the report covers are **the extent to which you have realistic expectations of other people’s behaviors and attitudes, the degree to which you present yourself in a conventional way, and the confidence you display in persuading others.** Goodfriend helped these leaders understand their individual mindsets and how they could become uniquely effective in leading innovation.

Goodfriend's goal in this phase was to increase each leader's readiness to explore the cross-functional business opportunities they wanted to lead and to become more collaborative with each other in the quest to explore. Goodfriend helped these leaders understand how their contrasting mindsets impacted the team and how they could become uniquely effective in leading innovation.

Goodfriend not only facilitated the sharing of Birkman Mindset data between the participants in a group session but also facilitated a session that included the participants and the organization's executives. This session highlighted some key differences in perspectives between these high potential leaders and the executives and how that might impact how NACE would need to collaborate to deliver on their strategy of the future. **One of those Birkman Mindset differences included how some leaders' perspectives were rooted in the history and tradition of NACE, while others were more open to exploring new strategic options.** These different perspectives helped the group gain greater clarity on the priorities around evolutionary vs. revolutionary change for the future.

“Collaboration improved tenfold through Mike’s Teamwork Sharks process.”

Pam Nicoletti
Director of Education,
Nace International



Birkman Mindset helped the leaders understand viewpoints different than their own and the benefits that other mindsets can bring to the table. “I came to view cross-functional collaboration as a necessity. You can’t drive the future without it,” said Pam Nicoletti, Director of Education at NACE International. “Collaboration improved tenfold through Mike’s Teamwork Sharks process.”

By using the Signature Report in Phase 1 to help the leaders better understand their personality, and the Mindset report in Phase 2 to understand different perceptions, leaders had a solid foundation for the peer-to-peer competition in Phase 3. In Phase 3, each participant presented a cross-functional business opportunity they wanted to lead to the Teamwork Sharks judges. The participants used Goodfriend's book, Breakthrough Time, as a guide to developing their business case. This book is about how Mike's grandchildren come from the future to get Mike and his colleagues, the Teamwork Sharks, to help them commercialize a revolutionary technology.

“By using The Birkman Method within their organization, Nace International had a greater return on their investment.”

Mike Goodfriend
Leadership Coach

“In this phase,” says Goodfriend, “participants can see how their hard work in improving their leadership skills and knowing how to leverage their natural strengths is key to being effective at making a compelling business case.”

Goodfriend and one of the members of the Board of Directors for NACE International served as judges and awarded the Teamwork Sharks Tooth Award to the winner. The next day, the NACE executive team had a meeting to evaluate the business opportunities proposed and decided to approve all the opportunities for go-forward implementation. Kim Ray, the 2019 winner of the Teamwork Sharks Tooth Award, reflected on her growth as a leader during this program. “Everything about my potential as a leader came to light through my individual sessions with Mike,” Ray stated. “We dove deep into my Birkman Method results. Since then, I have unleashed my authenticity and am more confident in expressing how I feel and in challenging others.”

■ The Program’s Success

The Teamwork Sharks Leadership Challenge was a great success at NACE. Bob Chalker, NACE CEO, stated, “The Teamwork Sharks is a leadership program that more than pays for itself.” The three most significant gains from the program were:

1. The program provided a groundwork for NACE leaders to develop their foundational leadership skills by harnessing their unique strengths and learning new ways to think in areas where they have blind spots.
2. The participants’ common challenge in submitting and presenting compelling business cases for cross-functional opportunities created an urgency to collaborate, which helped break down silos, build trust, and make collaboration sustainable following the completion of the program.
3. The program provided a spark for these high potential leaders to drive innovation and help deliver on the organization’s strategic commitments for the future.



In this Teamwork Sharks Leadership Challenge at NACE, Birkman was a core element of the success of this program. By using Birkman as the guide for the program, leaders gain a more in-depth insight into their greatest strengths and their areas of improvement. But more importantly, it contributed to changing the trajectory and pace of NACE, delivering on its strategic commitments for the future.

The business opportunities presented are moving forward towards implementation. The company's leadership growth and collaboration are ongoing.



“The Teamwork Sharks Leadership Challenge is just one example of how NACE International is continuing to embed the Birkman into the fabric of the organization – which is why they are getting a greater return on their investment in The Birkman Method.”

Mike Goodfriend
Leadership Coach

■ Expanding Birkman Throughout NACE International

Before the success of this powerful leadership program, The Birkman Method was being utilized at NACE International in leadership development and to help employees become more knowledgeable and appreciative of the personality differences of their colleagues. Two of NACE's Human Resource leaders are Birkman certified and are instrumental in getting the most out of the organization's commitment to Birkman. “The Teamwork Sharks Leadership Challenge is just one example of how NACE International is continuing to embed the Birkman into the fabric of the organization – which is why they are getting a greater return on their investment in The Birkman Method,” says Goodfriend.





About Birkman

Birkman International is a behavioral and occupational assessment company headquartered in Houston, Texas with an extensive global reach. The company began assessing personality through a proprietary methodology founded by innovative organizational psychologist Dr. Roger W. Birkman in 1951.

The Birkman Method remains a preferred instrument to better understand interpersonal dynamics and achieve higher performance through positive psychology. It is used widely in the fields of career coaching, leadership development, human resources management, and organizational design today.