

Article for Values Section of Company Newsletter (Names have been changed for confidentiality.)

### **When it Comes to “Acting as One,” John Williams and David Jones Walk the Talk**

John Williams, Sr. Vice President of Human Capital and David Jones, Sr. Vice President of Human Capital don't just share a title, they share the same end goal: to create a unified Human Capital (HC) team and a world-class HC function. And now, they also share the same space. To signify their “one team, one goal” approach, they moved their teams together into the same area at headquarters. In some ways, it was like two separate families moving into the same household together—except, in this case, the heads of the household barely knew each other. John was hired just one month before the move. David himself has only been with the company since January.

Though John and David have a huge undertaking in front of them, they also have an advantage: they've both been married to their spouses for over twenty years and thus know what it takes to make a partnership work. They know that to be successful, it will take communication, compromise, a similar value system, a united front, and—most importantly—a commitment to putting in the necessary time and effort to make it work.

#### **Building Trust**

John and David are both committed to creating a unified partnership and team, but they know it won't happen overnight. “It takes time to develop trust,” says John. “To build it, we have a lot of one on one time and conversations.” Both claim it gets better every day. “But we're not there yet,” David jokes. It is this joking and constant baiting of each other that is, perhaps, the key to building their relationship. They are, by turns, serious when talking about what they are setting out to achieve and lighthearted about—well everything else. An obvious rapport underlies their conversations, which sometimes strays to non-work-related topics such as their Old Miss-Iowa rivalry. “It helps that we genuinely like and respect each other,” says David, “and that we have a lot in common, like being family-oriented, having a similar professional background, and having kids the same age.”

John agrees, claiming their easy rapport makes the tough stuff easier—and tough stuff there is. The HC department, which has gone through a lot of transition in the last four years, supports every segment of the business and has a lot of complexity to it and each have their own areas of responsibility. Yet, neither is territorial about them. In fact, the lines between them are blurred intentionally.

“We don't get caught up in egos or the minutia of who's responsible for leading what,” says David. “Because we're both looking at the bigger picture. Our responsibilities might be different and we may sometimes disagree—or as we call it “have a healthy debate” —about *how* to go about accomplishing something, but our end game is the same.”

### **“We’re Stronger Together”**

To accomplish their goals, David and John are committed to “Acting as One”--and it’s not just talk. They are walking the walk, spending time in each other’s offices, participating in each other’s meetings, bringing each other into the loop when someone approaches only one of them about something of strategic importance, and having a zero tolerance policy when it comes to team members from the two different areas not getting along. “Rather than fuel the fire between areas, we’ll bring the parties together to work it out,” says John. “Sometimes someone will say something like ‘Let me give you a little history first about this situation’ but I don’t want to hear history,” says John. “We’re not interested in looking in the rearview mirror. We’re interested in looking forward.”

“From now on we’ll celebrate our successes as one and work through our challenges as one,” David adds. “We’ll either win together or we’ll lose together.”

This mindset is, of course, quintessential “Act as One” behavior, a value they both obviously take to heart.

“If we can align with this value, if we can align as a team,” says John, “there’s nothing we can’t accomplish.”