



ARTICLE



Innovating at the Speed of Sound

When Kim Lody picked up last year’s Fall Continuing Education catalog from Normandale, she had no idea it would directly lead to the biggest educational initiative in her company’s history.



“Being a customer-focused organization begins and ends with our employees”

–Kim Lody

Kim Lody is SVP North America, President of ReSound, one of the fastest growing and most innovative creators of diagnostic and assistive audiology devices. ReSound has a long history as a leader in the behind-the-ear (BTE) market, but recent technological and product developments have positioned them to take some monumental leaps in the custom in-the-ear (ITE) market.

As Kim and others in the company realized, however, more attention had been paid to the technology and product launches than the development of the people responsible for making it all work. Kim and Human Resources Manager Kristina Villones visited Normandale to discuss possible learning solutions. After several conversations with key ReSound leaders to match up business and development needs, ReSound and Normandale applied for and were awarded a 3-year Minnesota Job Skills Partnership (MJSP) grant to help position ReSound to take advantage of this market opportunity.

FINELY TUNED TALENT

ReSound is more prepared than many others to take advantage of this opportunity because they already realize that employee innovation is a prerequisite for market innovation. When Kim became president, one of her highest priorities was creating a positive and transparent culture, evidenced by consistent Voice of the Employee (V.O.T.E.) meetings. As Kim says, “Being a customer-focused organization begins and ends with our employees. If we provide them with the right environment, they will meet and exceed our customers’ expectations.”

This culture is a great starting point for ReSound to achieve its goals, and Normandale will supplement this culture with the learning to make it happen.

HIGH FREQUENCY INNOVATION

In the highly competitive and rapidly evolving audiological instrument field, new product lines are a way of life. Director of Manufacturing Shawn Timm says, “If you aren’t coming out with a new product every 6-12 months, you will be overtaken.”

Every action, however, creates an equal reaction. New technology and new products create new challenges around how an organization works together and manages its processes. The educational grant is designed to teach some specific skills, but as Director of Order Management John Pettus explains, “At the end of the day, we want every person to develop a mindset of quality and an understanding of their role in the overall success of ReSound.”

While all 500 Bloomington-based employees will learn a variety of technical skills throughout the course of the grant, each learning event will relate back to the overall goal of increasing representation in the customized device market. To maintain this focus, each course will focus on creating and honing a mindset around Quality, Customer, and the Organization. As John Pettus explains, “This grant will be successful if every employee understands the importance of growing the custom market and can articulate their role in making it happen.”

LEARNING DESIGNED TO RESONATE

Normandale takes great pride in helping ReSound educate employees in a meaningful way, but we also see benefits in developing a long-term relationship with a community partner and continuing to learn how we can help other organizations. In this way, the grant is a starting point for other successes to come. Normandale President Dr. Joyce Ester explains, “We are extremely grateful to Kim and the leadership at ReSound for recognizing this need and reaching out for assistance. We want other organizations to know that we are here for them, whether it is a full grant, a more streamlined custom learning opportunity, or individual learning solutions for their employees.”

To learn more about how your organization can enhance innovation, please contact us at 952-358-8343 or ncal@normandale.edu. We look forward to listening!

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–John Pettus

Pictured:
Opposite page, top:
John Pettus

Opposite page, bottom:
Kim Lody

This page, left:
Houa Moua and
Shawn Timm

This page, right:
Kristina Villones

Photography by
Katie Heymer

