

The Inter Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair (I-CAR)

Case Study: Engagement #172-217: 2nd Quarter, 2017

In April of 2017, Lordstone Corporation was approached by the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair (I-CAR) to help find an experienced, driven IT professional that could make impactful changes across the organization to increase and enhance relevance in the auto collision repair industry.

The Company

I-CAR, a \$36M not-for-profit organization located in Hoffman Estates, IL, was founded in 1979 to serve the collision repair industry. The mission of I-CAR *is to deliver increasingly accessible, on-demand and relevant education, knowledge, services and solutions*. The organization has a strong reputation for offering neutrality and servant-leadership throughout the industry.

I-CAR employs 142 staff and 500 part-time instructors. They also have a network of 2,100 volunteers that are relied on for local marketing of training and instructor support. Employees of I-CAR are all committed to the company's vision: *ensuring that every person in the collision repair industry has the information, knowledge, and skills required to perform complete, safe, quality repairs for the ultimate benefit of the customer*.

The culture at I-CAR can be described as familial and collaborative, yet progressive and responsive. Although there is a sense of urgency and acknowledgement of change, the organization is known to be more tolerant, patient, and steadily paced. It is long-term oriented and focused on meeting the needs of the inter-industry and its employees through servant leadership.

The Challenge

In a world that is explosively digital, organizations need to ensure that they adapt and progress in all areas of Information Technology to thrive and be successful. Those who do not utilize technology to increase efficiency, develop new ideas, streamline operations and benefit customers will ultimately fall behind. Having IT professionals within an organization that can drive change is important for the business of today, but more importantly, the business of tomorrow. To keep up with the ever-changing demands of the auto collision repair industry, I-CAR needed a **Vice President of Information Technology & Digital Innovation** who would become a key player in growing the organization's technological strategy and capabilities.

I-CAR needed someone that could address legacy technologies and historical ideologies in the organization, bringing in a proactive, change-driven mindset. The new **VP of IT & Digital Innovation** would leverage IT innovations to implement digital strategies that would reshape the organization. They would help transform the IT department from a reactive, change-resistant function to one that is proactive, supportive, timely, and contributing strategically to I-CAR. This team-oriented, approachable leader would help increase harmony and engagement within the IT department so it could better serve the inter-industry clients and internal employees.

I-CAR relies heavily on nation-wide volunteers to bring on-site training to those in the collision repair industry. As digital learning options expanded, though, so were the training goals of I-CAR. Instead of only having on-site training, I-CAR recognized the need of those in the collision repair industry to have access to **on-demand, online training that was easy to use and convenient. Creating an adaptable, versatile training platform that could be delivered online was going to be of utmost importance in this position.**

Through on-site meetings with 3 senior leaders from I-CAR, industry research, and careful consideration of the new position, a custom **job scorecard** was created. It encompassed the cultural considerations, position summary, experiential and technical job requirements, accountabilities, and job competencies that the position would entail. With agreement between Lordstone and I-CAR on the job scorecard, a foundation was laid and the search for the new VP of Information Technology & Digital Innovation began.

Our Strategy

Because of I-CAR's need to transform training options, along with the organization's desire for an experienced leader who could drive and implement digital change, Lordstone began recruiting efforts by targeting information technology professionals in higher learning. A list was compiled of top-online colleges and universities in the country with the understanding that top-performing schools in the digital world were being led by transformative IT professionals. Also targeted were high-performing companies in the automotive industry who had the digital talent and leadership that I-CAR was seeking.

Chief Information Officers, Vice Presidents of IT, Directors of Technology, and Directors of Online Learning were some of the key roles that prospective candidates had. The ideal candidate was leading multiple employees in an IT department, had an extensive IT background, and had a wealth of knowledge in learning management systems (LMS) that they could bring to I-CAR.

The Solution

Although there were a number of qualified candidates near the end of the search, one stuck out: **Mr. Andy Johnson**, who was the current Vice President of Information Technology, Americas, for Tower Automotive. Johnson had extensive experience in the automotive industry, having spent 27 years at Tower Automotive. During his time with the company, Andy had built and managed a world-class IT infrastructure that included seven language integrations in a variety of countries from Japan, India, Korea, China, Germany, Italy, and Brazil, among others. As such, he had a clear understanding of what it took from an IT perspective to grow globally and succeed.

Aside from his IT skills, Andy was financially astute and had found cost-effective ways to manage IT infrastructure, remaining cognizant of expenses at all times. He was creative and strategic while still being friendly and approachable. Past superiors had called Andy *"extremely smart, very trustworthy, and highly ethical."* Through his leadership and mentoring, Andy had built strong, capable IT teams and functions in his past position. These glowing reviews of his character were predictive that Johnson would fit in perfectly with the familial culture of I-CAR. Johnson accepted the job with I-CAR in November of 2017, and now the organization has an A-player to lead and transform IT operations across the organization.

"I have never experienced a firm becoming so personally involved in candidates, after immersing themselves into learning about our business. I can't remember any prior search firm that presented such informed appraisals of candidates, and I've never had such choice in selecting the "right" professional...I was impressed." -Nick Notte, Director of Finance and Operations at I-CAR