



CASE STUDY:
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HOLMEN

Hiring and Aspiring to Excellence with Theme-Based Hiring

Overview

The School District of Holmen uses an innovative method to interview potential employees—something that catches some candidates off guard, in a positive way. Keep reading to learn more about their process to hire and develop top-performing employees, with the support of Crown Global HR.

A Better Way to Interview

Almost thirty years ago, Jay Clark interviewed for a leadership position at the School District of Holmen. This interview was different than any he had previously encountered. It focused on the ideas and actions that motivate him—not just his past experiences. The questions they asked centered on listening to Jay’s talents, goals, and motivations to compare him with their best employees.

During his interview, Jay felt confident their process could predict his success as a leader in ways no other interview could—and all this before he was even hired!

What was the secret to this interview style? It’s called theme-based selection.

Theme-Based Selection at the School District of Holmen

The journey of theme-based hiring at Holmen began years before with an early version of this process. They began by understanding the key traits, or life themes, of top performers and then looked for them in potential candidates. These were the significant qualities that mattered to the district and helped their employees achieve excellence, no matter what role they were in. Some of the key qualities they identified were service, adaptability, self-responsibility, rapport, accountability, collaboration, and positivity.

These fundamental life themes were used as building blocks for interview questions and were implemented into the hiring process. This led to a consistent approach to hiring across every position, from superintendents and principals to teachers and support staff in multiple roles. While the themes might be reinforced in different ways between roles, the fundamental drivers embedded in every position are the same.



I’m convinced the systemic presence of these themes in our leaders, teachers, and support personnel has been key to our high organizational performance. By engaging Crown as a third-party consultant, effective hiring processes will be sustained regardless of other changes in the organization.

– **Jay Clark**
Associate District Administrator
School District of Holmen



Partnering with Crown Global HR for Long-Term Success

To continue to develop their focus on life themes, the School District of Holmen partnered with Crown Global HR in 2011. Since then, the Holmen Schools have continued to select and develop staff around the personal and professional life themes that have proven to be successful in their employees. Because of their consistent investment in the process, almost the entire current staff has been hired based on these themes. Today, they're reaping the long-term benefits that theme-based hiring brings to an organization.

Crown helps organizations like the Holmen Schools bring clarity to hiring and developing the employees that will become their very best.

The Result of Theme-Based Hiring

Because of their persistence, life themes are now seen in every aspect of Holmen's hiring and development processes.

▶ Job descriptions

It starts with the job description. The life themes are used to build the job description for each role, showing potential candidates what success looks like.

▶ Interviews and onboarding

The life themes are then reinforced during each interview and throughout employee onboarding after a hire.

▶ Staff development and evaluations

Life themes are the basis for ongoing staff development as their staff evaluation tools incorporate life themes into annual evaluations.

Holmen uses three services from Crown to maintain the excellence they had unlocked with theme-based hiring:



Online Applicant Screening

Using Crown's online applicant screening, the district gained the ability to narrow candidate pools based on how they live out the life themes in their work style. This created an efficient, accurate first step in the hiring process that gave them confidence that they were interviewing candidates who matched the qualities they desired.



Interview Training

Holmen's HR team and hiring managers became certified as Crown Client Analysts through Crown Global's on-site interview training. They now use Crown structured interviews for all employment categories—leadership, teachers, and support services including education assistants, custodians, bus drivers, administrative assistants, cooks, etc. All new hires go through a similar theme-based, structured interview that focuses on the life themes the district values.



Professional Growth

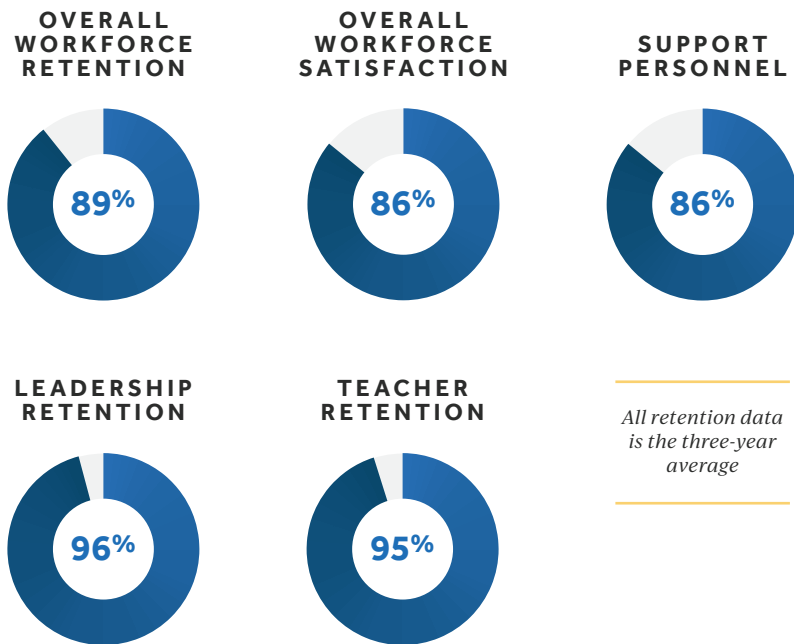
To keep developing a more unified leadership team, the district works with Crown for continuous professional growth based on their key life themes. The leaders are trained to see how they personally live out these life themes and to recognize, encourage, and appreciate them in the daily lives of their staff.

These services from Crown Global HR have helped them continue the early success they achieved through theme-based selection. Through Holmen's relationship with Crown, the district has also automated more of the candidate screening process and focused its professional development around their key life themes.

This alignment to life themes has given their district a common goal and purpose in how they make their decisions, hire their staff, and evaluate their team.

The value of this alignment shows in many ways. The school district tracks their workplace turnover and satisfaction rates across all employees, from administrators to bus drivers.

Their current performance metrics represent the tangible impact that themes have on their entire team:



Basing their hiring on a common set of organizational beliefs and practices has helped the Holmen staff understand the excellence they should aspire to reach. Knowing how the district defines success leads to employees feeling engaged in their roles, creating a sense of family and commitment.

The impact of these life themes snowballs, because as leadership is hired with these values, they look for people who exhibit the same, and so on and so on. This gives the entire organization a common purpose and the foundation they need to achieve excellence.



How important is it for you to attract, select, and retain high performing staff? If the answer is 'very important,' you owe it to your organization to learn how Crown Global can help your team become the best it can be.

– Jay Clark
Associate District Administrator
School District of Holmen

Need Some Hiring Advice?

Request a free 30-minute consultation to describe your situation, and get a few tips on making quality hires instead of settling for the best available candidate.

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