



54,000+  
CORPORATE AND  
FRANCHISE EMPLOYEES



# American Dairy Queen Corporation

a Situational Leadership® Success Story

## At a Glance

Our client, American Dairy Queen (ADQ), has been regaling consumers' taste buds with chilled and grilled delights for over 75 years. With more than 6,800 restaurants globally, ADQ has successfully navigated the ebb and flow of economy, culture and food trends to build a 95 percent consumer brand recognition through its global franchising.

With its small-town appeal and big-business presence, ADQ's franchise network continues to flourish. Ensuring each store thrives with the same resources, passion and commitment as the parent company, ADQ actively provides corporate support in marketing, operations, supply chain, development and training to achieve their corporate vision of being "the world's favorite quick service restaurant."

### Challenge

- Align organization under a single leadership model
- Adopt a uniform language of performance
- Build internal service culture
- Develop leadership skills in franchisees and store managers

### Results

- Adopted Situational Leadership® as the standard leadership development model and single language of performance
- Trained over 6,000 managers in *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*
- Conducted 200 training sessions globally
- Ranked *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders* with a 99.5 percent success rating

### Solution

- Integrate *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders* with internal management skill programs
- Certify corporate business consultants
- Upgrade from *Situational Leadership® The Core* to *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*
- Customize activities to a restaurant setting

### Products

- *Situational Leadership® The Core*
- *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*

**Interested in learning more?** [info@situational.com](mailto:info@situational.com) | 919.335.8763 | [www.situational.com](http://www.situational.com)



## The Challenge

According to Marty Davis, Director of Global Field Training for the client, ADQ sought a practical and simple framework to drive the internal service culture of the organization and franchise system. Adherent to the service-profit-chain business model, ADQ believes treating clientele well creates repeat customers which, in turn, induces profitability and complies with their mission “to create positive memories for all who touch Dairy Queen.”

In pursuit of this, ADQ utilizes a team of roughly 100 business consultants to educate and mentor their franchisees with company ideals and management development skills. Equipping the business consultants with a uniform language of performance and a single model for leadership to communicate to the franchisees and their managers would enable global mindshare and provide a paradigm for coaching effectively. Because ADQ’s global franchisee base comes from varied backgrounds, cultures and experience levels, the solution also needed to convey a straightforward leadership development methodology.

The methodology would require flexibility to resonate with the restaurant environment and address industry-specific development opportunities. As such, challenges at the store level included high turnover and unknown potential for people skills in many managers promoted to their position based on technical ability and tenure. Arming managers with leadership development skills to coach specific tasks for specific individuals could improve retention, level set expectations, redirect regressive behavior and encourage positive performance.

The solution would also need to integrate seamlessly with internal management skill programs. To strengthen basic competencies such as delegation, communication and local store marketing, ADQ wanted to train these skills with a single leadership development methodology as a guide for execution.

**Interested in learning more?** [info@situational.com](mailto:info@situational.com) | 919.335.8763 | [www.situational.com](http://www.situational.com)



# The Solution

In 2004, ADQ began training the Situational Leadership® methodology to its executives, directors of operations and, then, the corporate business consultants. Suffused with decades of familiarity and previous experience with Situational Leadership®, Davis joined ADQ in 2005 while business consultants were being certified in Situational Leadership®. Recognizing the power and benefit of the Situational Leadership® Model, Davis decided to incorporate it with basic management skills training for the franchisee level.

Global Field Training partnered with the internal curriculum team to develop a four-day leadership training program, People, Pride and Profit (PPP), with Situational Leadership® as a foundational piece. To solidify the internal service quality ideology by “leading them properly” and “giving them what they need to be successful,” the PPP program dedicates a full day to teaching participants the precepts of Situational Leadership®. Basic management skills are taught over the next few days and are connected back to the Situational Leadership® Model. According to Davis, they embed the framework of Situational Leadership® into the program as more than a theory but as “how you work.”

“This is how you train your people; this is how you keep your people; this is how you develop your people.”

With the program’s versatility, ADQ has customized the training to ensure learning transfer through relevant experience. Facilitators perform “live theater” of typical restaurant scenarios where participants respond with the correct task, Performance Readiness® Level or leadership style. By engaging in role-plays, discussions and flip chart activities, participants can create a personal connection to the material, which Davis believes is most beneficial to learning.

Before a franchisee attends Situational Leadership® training, they meet with their business consultant, who has previously received the training, to set goals and expectations. As part of this pre-class discussion, the participant establishes a leadership style goal and reconvenes with their business consultant after training to discuss support.

Initially, ADQ had been delivering The Center for Leadership Studies’ (CLS’) original foundational course, *Situational Leadership® The Core*, but in 2015, transitioned to the *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders* course. This conversion enabled a “learner-focused versus lecture-based” experience that provided more modern and participative interactions still anchored to the Situational Leadership® methodology.

**Interested in learning more?** [info@situational.com](mailto:info@situational.com) | 919.335.8763 | [www.situational.com](http://www.situational.com)

# The Results

- Over 6,000 managers have been trained in *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*
- Situational Leadership® is the required model for all new business consultants
- Situational Leadership® has been incorporated into internal management skills program
- Situational Leadership® receives a 99.5 percent “very good” or “excellent” success rating
- Client conducts 30 sessions a year of *Situational Leadership®: Building Leaders*

PPP was rolled out successfully with over 200 sessions, globally, training 6,000 managers. Davis adds that the program has been a “tremendous success” as evidenced by the number of sessions conducted annually. Delivering 30 sessions a year in the U.S. and Canada and another six to eight internationally, ADQ has seen class size double with numerous participants waitlisted.

The program’s popularity is further supported by the 99.5 percent success rating of “very good” or “excellent” from attendees. When asked which sessions were most beneficial to them, participants ranked Situational Leadership® twice as high as any other part of the program. This overwhelmingly positive response reinforces Davis’ belief that Situational Leadership® “helps drive performance in the restaurant” and lends itself to the internal service culture at ADQ.

Situational Leadership® has become ADQ’s core leadership framework and aligned the organization on one language for performance. Even at the senior leadership level, Davis hears terms such as “Performance Readiness®” in daily discussions in regard to franchisees, groups and markets. Davis has also found that those who were initially averse to a leadership model have now embraced the Situational Leadership® Model. He believes the shift in mindset is due to managers returning from training to their stores with new skills and enthusiasm, inciting others to pursue the same experience.

“We’re very excited about our training at Dairy Queen and where it’s going, and CLS has been and will continue to be an integral part of that.”

Davis credits CLS’ Situational Leadership® enrichment webinars with fortifying and challenging his team’s intellectual understanding of the model, calling them “phenomenal” and “excellent reinforcement.” He also commends the relationship as “particularly good to work with” and “such a pleasure.”

Training plans are currently underway for next year’s curriculum and Davis envisions an advanced leadership course that could integrate with additional Situational Leadership® programs. As a partner in ADQ’s leadership training success, CLS is dedicated to providing ADQ with the support and resources to continuously uphold their internal service culture now and in the future.

**Interested in learning more?** [info@situational.com](mailto:info@situational.com) | 919.335.8763 | [www.situational.com](http://www.situational.com)