

# Improving Retention and Recruitment Through Leadership Development

Case Study: Easy Auto and Sunrise Acceptance

DUKE  
FUQUA  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

EXECUTIVE  
EDUCATION

## The Challenge

Easy Auto and Sunrise Acceptance was struggling with a challenge faced by many companies—how to grow the leadership skills of executives and managers.

Employee feedback at the multi-state auto dealership and financier showed executives were struggling to communicate with employees, coach them, hold them accountable, and accept and improve from feedback. Not only did this affect the individual manager's performance, but employee retention also suffered—a problem exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## The Solution

President and Chief Operations Officer Ben Chandler recognized these leadership challenges in part because of the training he'd received years earlier. Chandler had been mentored by an executive who recommended the Duke Leadership Program to help him improve his leadership skills. Because he knew about the rigor and effectiveness of the curriculum, Chandler turned to Duke Executive Education.

He sent several members of his leadership team to the Duke Leadership Program, the same week-long program he'd done himself years before.

**In the program, each member of the Easy Auto & Sunrise Acceptance team received personalized guidance, including:**

### A personal assessment

A personal assessment of leadership strengths and weaknesses

### An individual executive coach

An individual executive coach to help them understand and apply their learnings

### An immersive week

An immersive week of hands-on, engaging classes at Duke's campus in Durham, North Carolina, to learn more about implementing the renowned faculty's proprietary six domains of leadership

### A personalized plan

A personalized plan to implement their learnings and achieve their leadership goals



“We built better personal relationships, establishing trust and an open, transparent communication channel.”

- Ben Chandler,  
President and Chief Operations Officer,  
Easy Auto and Sunrise Acceptance

## The Learning

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The results delivered immediate impact for the company.

Several leaders described how their perspective shifted from a classroom exercise designed to make leaders recognize how to lead projects forward through constant setbacks, including disruptive personalities.

“The activity reinforced that you’ll deal with different people on a daily basis, so keep an open mind and don’t draw conclusions before you start.”

- William Howell, General Manager

“I learned a lot about myself in that exercise. Even if you have someone trying to disrupt what you’re doing, you have to be able to use what’s coming at you, move forward, and not shut down.”

- Ellen Dobbs, Vice President of Operations

Leaders said these learnings made them approach conversations with team members differently.

## The Outcome

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Chandler saw immediate results from his executive team.

Chandler said the company has seen improved employee feedback scores with each executive who attended, and better recruitment and retention within each department they manage.

“Especially given the difficult years of the pandemic, they came back much more equipped to handle the complexities,” Chandler said.

“I noticed a stark difference before and after.”

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“The ROI for us has probably been 1000%.”

- Ben Chandler, President and Chief Operations Officer  
Easy Auto and Sunrise Acceptance

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Chandler said some of the biggest changes can’t be quantified, but show up in the culture of the company.

“We built better personal relationships, establishing trust and an open, transparent communication channel,” Chandler said.

The company benefitted so much that it sent another group of leaders to the Duke Leadership Program the following year.

