



AILERON

Dreams In Forward Motion

What do business leaders learn at Aileron? What sort of results do Aileron clients see after attending our programs and workshops?

The benefits of professional management can't be overstated, but you don't have to take our word for it. Let's take a closer look at a company and its owner – an Aileron client who stopped working *in* his business, and started working *on* it.

An organization at a crossroads

Jcrane, Inc. is a Dayton-based crane rental and sales provider. Founded in 2000 by Jack Stull, the company quickly moved from the start-up phase to the growth phase. In just six years its sales revenues increased 1,000%, presenting Stull and his organization with a new set of challenges.

By 2005, the rapid growth had overwhelmed Stull; he was in over his head, and needed help providing effective leadership. His sentiments echoed many owners, presidents, and CEO's when they reach the growth stage: "I often felt like our ambitious team was driving at night without headlights, with pounding hearts and sweaty palms."

Finding help: A new sense of direction

Stull's feeling of helplessness eventually led him to Aileron, where he quickly immersed himself in professional management. Task number one was to get a grip on the company's strategic direction. By early-2006, all 12 of Jcrane's employees had taken part in the **Strategic Planning Workshop**.

What did they learn? According to Stull, "this was a 10-hour process where our entire team mapped out the future direction and vision of the company. Now we were all headed in the same direction." The workshop also helped Jcrane define its organizational structure and create a system of accountability for its employees. As a direct result of the Strategic Planning Workshop, the company now holds bi-annual strategic planning sessions, where every employee is expected to provide input for the next year's plan.

Thinking like a president

Stull's next move was to take part in the **President's Course**, a comprehensive two-day program designed to show business leaders the ins-and-outs of professional management. One of his most important takeaways from this program was the idea that profitability is the direct result of advance planning. Effective internal planning allowed Jcrane to mitigate the impact of a weakening economy, helping the company determine its own profitability.



Stull's learning went even deeper, to the core of what it means to run a business. "Through the President's Course, I also learned that my job centers around vision, strategy, and cultivating others. This makes it a lot less lonely, and more fun than it used to be. I now realize the importance of involving management in every decision, and know that my managers are more capable than I ever imagined."

Stull also came to a better understanding of his company's unique culture and its impact on long-term success. In fact, he now uses Jcrane's corporate culture as the first priority when hiring new people.

Continuous learning, continuous improvement

Aileron firmly believes that learning how to run a business is an ongoing, continuous process. That's a message Stull has taken to heart.

"The next Aileron program that I'll be participating in is the **Outside Board Course**. I've learned that an outside board can steer my business in the right direction and give me a fresh perspective from objective professionals." With assistance from Aileron's experienced facilitators, Stull hopes to have a Board of Directors in place by the end of the year.

Stull also enrolled his upper-level managers in the **Senior Managers Course**. This program uses many of the same principles taught in the President's Course to get everyone on the same page, speaking the same language of professional management. His managers have been empowered to take ownership of specific areas within the company, and are held accountable for their projects.

A bright future

While Stull couldn't be happier with Jcrane's dramatic improvement, he also knows that it was no fluke. "In spite of the fact that our country is headed towards or already experiencing a recession, 2008 has been our best year to date. But what we've learned through Aileron is not rocket science – it's just basic, tried and true business principles that have transformed our company."

"The bottom line is simple: the tools that Aileron has given us have dramatically increased our profit, our enjoyment, and our sense of purpose."