

Robert Quinn

DTE Energy Case (B): Transformation of an Organization

By 2010, DTE Energy had emerged from the deep recession caused by the 2008 financial crisis not only unscathed, but healthy.ⁱ The year 2009 had been “one of the most successful financial years in our company’s history, right through the heart of the economic crisis,” said Gerry Anderson, Chairman and CEO of DTE Energy, a large diversified energy company.¹ He had asked people to step up and contribute ideas to save the company, and they willingly brought their “discretionary energy” to work.² The company exceeded its plan by 15 percent.³

But now that the crisis was over, Anderson wondered: could that energy be sustained? What could he, as a leader, do to maintain the momentum?

How DTE Energy’s Aspiration Came to Life

Coming out of 2009 and into 2010, many DTE Energy employees breathed a sigh of relief that they had not been among the 8.8 million Americans⁴ laid off during the recession.⁵ Anderson remembered one woman in particular, who came up and thanked him for what the company had done. “She let me know that her husband had been laid off, and she didn’t know what they would do if she was, too,” Anderson recalled. “Now she knew that it was going to be okay for her family.”⁶

What surprised Anderson, however, was what she said next: “Even though things are okay for my family, things aren’t okay around me. I still have neighbors who aren’t back at work. I still have relatives who were laid off. And I guess what I want to know is what can we do to about this, how can we at DTE help

i For readers who have not read *DTE Energy (A): Transformation of a Leader: Gerry Anderson, Chairman and CEO*: At the start of 2008, DTE Energy had operating revenues of \$8.5 billion and approximately \$24 billion in assets. A diversified energy company, it was the parent of Detroit Edison and MichCon, which were regulated electric and gas utilities engaged primarily in the business of providing electricity and natural gas sales, distribution and storage services throughout southeastern Michigan. The company had about 10,600 employees serving 2.2 million customers across 7,600 square miles. As Anderson moved up the ranks of DTE, he had begun changing his leadership style from a tough, hard-nosed leader to an authentic, purpose-driven one. The events of 2008–2009 had cemented his personal transformation to being a positive leader.

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