

# PHOENIX

## GLOBAL



### THE CASE FOR WILTON, IOWA

For that small site to be successful, it has to have exceptional teamwork with a great understanding of the processes we do that make us who we are. It truly is the team and having the resources and the manpower and the operational concerns and how all that comes together, it's phenomenal.

—Jim Johnson, Director of Operations Southern Region

Nick Kundert is a steel man's steel man, working on the equipment side of the business for the bulk of his career. But as the company was restructuring, a funny thing happened on the way to the mill. Nick was named the General Manager of Phoenix Global's Wilton, IA site, meaning he would now be responsible for the operations, financial, and equipment side of the business.

Steel was in Nick's blood. He'd been running equipment since he was 11 and his dad and two brothers were steel men. Nick learned the intricacies of the business and operational aspects of running the mill from his former manager and mentor, and he proudly accepted the challenges and opportunity to become General Manager.

"For him, it was about understanding, not just the nuts and bolts of the equipment, but the finances of the equipment, how to deploy that equipment in a way that returns investment, and maintaining that investment in a high standard of operation, ninety-seven percent of the time on a 23-hour basis" said Jim Johnson, Phoenix Global Director of Operations Southern Region. "He understands that."

Corporate was on board to help Nick understand the finances of his operation, where to improve, what levers to pull to increase revenue without driving costs up, budgets and forecasting, how to be smarter with his resources. He also learned fleet management and regularly works with a team to understand the assets and where they are in the life cycle. This allows for 100 percent reliable equipment that meets both customer and corporate expectations.



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Even equipment operations, where Nick was a maestro, provided a bit of a learning curve. At Wilton, Nick's team handles the hot work, the slag out, which is dangerous work that requires great skill and expertise to do in an efficient, effective way. That's par for the course in the steel business but the method at Wilton is challenging. "It's the same, but how we go in and out of the pits and the uniqueness of the customer demand there is challenging," said Johnson. "It's very unique, and it's really dangerous work. It's not for everyone, the faint of heart do not last in this business."

Nick took the challenges of his new position head-on, realizing early that the asset most important to efficiency, profitability, stability, and safety, to success, was human capital. And the key to molding his mill full of people, in all kinds of jobs doing all kinds of work, into a cohesive team was communication, which turned out was his forte. "As I talked with everyone, I took bits and pieces from everyone's personality and figured out how to connect with them on a personal level," said Nick. "It allowed me to determine who needed what kind of direction, how to communicate with them, motivate them, and eventually build them into a team."

For the equipment operators it was a natural transition. He trained many of the young guys and had worked side-by-side with many of the old hands.



Nick got me to open up more, he instilled confidence in me and really just made me want to step it up and do my best, He's great at giving me advice and seeing the potential in me, and he creates friendly competitions between us which makes us want to do better. He's very positive and makes it enjoyable to come to work each day.

—Wurman Doe, Working Lead

Pitt Digger Julian Vargas echoed those sentiments. "Communication throughout the site was lacking and it was often difficult to ask for help, and to get help," said Vargas. "Nick takes his time to talk with you, he'll tell you what you're doing right, what you can improve on and gives positive feedback like you're getting better at this or that. And with more communication we actually help each other and there is more teamwork."

Office Manager Beverly Wilford presented a different set of communication issues in her position handling the financial logistics of the site. She was used to being presented with tasks and completing them to the best of her ability but Nick opened the lines of communication and transparency. "We communicate regularly, we bounce ideas off each other and he has an open-door policy where we can address questions and concerns and discuss best out comes," said Wilford. "He has helped me to understand the business and the process better, made it easier for me to grasp what my job was and how to be the best I can."



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—Julian Vargas, Pitt Digger



With his team in place and excellent lines of communications and buy-in from the mill, mill partners and the Phoenix team, Nick was ready to put in place the Wilton success story.

“The team, both the corporate team and the local team, have worked hand-in-hand over the past year to essentially rebuild the assets on this site, put in place an operating plan that makes sense for our customers, that meets their goals and expectations without fail, and the ideas we put in place with our procedures and operations concerns,” said Johnson. “We have somebody like Nick, an extremely smart young man who understands those concerns and really does an excellent job communicating that to his team. He has great teammates and everybody pulls together in the same direction to find success together. That’s really the secret to it.”



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—Beverly Wilford, Office Manager

“Wilton has a good track record of performance,” said Executive Vice President of Operations Americas Steven Hall. “Through better cost management, increased efficiency, and personnel stability, Wilton has reached the level of profitability that was seen in 2022 prior to restructuring.”

And that’s a big deal, even for a steel man’s steel man. “I’m most proud of my guys,” said Kundert. “Seeing where they’ve come from and where they are today. I sleep better at night knowing that I can count on my team, knowing that through instilling confidence in them, it eventually instilled confidence in me.”

“For that small site to be successful, it has to have exceptional teamwork with a great understanding of the processes we do that make us who we are,” said Johnson. “It truly is the team and having the resources and the manpower and the operational concerns and how all that comes together, it’s phenomenal.”

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