

**Rick Duncan, President Duncan and Son Lines, Inc.  
Interviewed by Linda Tennant, President, Attainment, Inc.**



**Creating a High Performance Team:  
Defining Company Values and Employee Job Descriptions**

Duncan and Son Lines, Inc. was founded in 1943 by Blaine Duncan and his son, Richard Duncan. Today, it remains a family owned and operated business with Richard Duncan III as president and sons, David and Blaine Duncan as key executives. Rick is partnering with Attainment, Inc. to develop their leaders, transition to the next generation and create a high performance team.

**Linda Tennant: Rick, how has defining your company values helped you create a high performance team?**

**Rick Duncan:** *It gets everyone on the same page and working together. It is important to put the values in writing and to explain each so we can live them each day. There is no point in defining the values if they do not become part of our daily lives. We need to catch an employee living a value and thank them.*

**Linda Tennant: How have your employees and customers responded to the values?**

**Rick Duncan:** *We included our values in the employee paychecks. One day a driver came to me on the verge of quitting. He asked if we really meant what we said in our values. When I explained the action steps we were taking to support the values, he said he wanted to continue working for our company. Though we did not create the values for this reason, they are an important marketing tool with employees and customers.*

*My son, David, shared a story about one of our customers who read the values we have hanging in the lobby. The customer said ours is the kind of company with which he wants to work.*



**Rick Duncan III Presents David Duncan with  
Attainment's Leadership Development Certificate**

**Linda Tennant: What made you complete job descriptions now?**

**Rick Duncan:** *40 years ago when my Grandfather ran the company, we had 100 trucks; we had everyone in one room and could observe what was going on and provide direction. Today with 200 trucks, that is no longer possible. Employees must know what they are accountable for and how their performance will be measured. Also, like many companies, we have had a wage freeze for two years. It is time to give employees incentives, a little raise. We did not want to do this without an updated job description. We wanted to have the job description as a basis for performance reviews. Also we had several newly developed positions due to our growth.*

**Interview with Rick Duncan, President, Duncan and Son Lines, Inc.  
Creating a High Performance Team: Defining Company Values and Employee Job  
Descriptions, continued**

**Linda Tennant: Describe how Attainment, Inc. worked with you to complete the job descriptions.**

**Rick Duncan:** *We had Attainment, Inc. get feedback from each employee on his or her current job description. If there was no job description, we had the employee and the manager work with Attainment to create a first draft and then a final draft.*

*At first, it was laborious. Now we have a process and it is much easier to create new job descriptions, make changes or shift duties from one person to another. It is important to stay on top of these as things change and managers identify the need to delegate.*

**Linda Tennant: What benefits did you and/or your people see in this process?**

**Rick Duncan:** *There are a lot. The biggest benefit is it lets employees know what they are expected to do. It lets them know the importance of what they are doing. It helps employees prioritize their day and stay on track. It allows them to compare what they are spending their time on with the activities that give them the greatest payoff. It gives me as a manager something to look at when giving a performance review. With 240 employees, it helps us keep up with it all...otherwise we could not. It gives order and structure to the organization.*

**Linda Tennant: What are the major parts/sections of your job descriptions?**

**Rick Duncan:** *One important section is where we list the employee's High Payoff Activities. These are the six most important categories of activities where the employee should focus at least 80% of his or her time. This helps the employee get clear on where the company feels they will get their greatest return on the invested time.*

*Also important are the Key Performance Indicators. This reflects how the High Payoff Activities will be measured and it is where the performance review will focus. We are still in the process of developing measurement tools for this area.*

*We communicate our values right in the job description because we are serious about living them. Employees are rated on the degree they are living the values in their performance review.*

**Linda Tennant: What lessons have you learned in doing the job descriptions?**

**Rick Duncan:** *If you are starting a new company, start this right away so it is second nature. If you have been in business awhile, know it takes time and it is tough at first but once you master the process, it becomes second nature and it is well worth the effort.*

**Linda Tennant: What else have you done to improve your people's performance?**

**Rick Duncan:** *Our managers participated in Attainment's 'Effective Personal Productivity' and 'Effective Leadership Development' programs. This helps us be better organized, prioritize tasks and spend more time in our Leadership High Payoff Activities.*

*Also, we have upgraded our IT systems. We have put mobile communication units in our trucks, installed dual monitors at desks and have given drivers and dispatchers cell phones for faster response. With the mobile communication devices, tasks can be done via internet when appropriate. We envision this will totally change the dispatchers' work flow. They can control information distribution rather than having the drivers calling all at once looking for information.*

*We can update the system when we make a delivery, hit a button and the freight bill is completed and sent to accounting. This speeds up cash flow and saves a lot of time. Dispatchers used to successfully handle 25 drivers; now it is 40 to 45. We are investing in technology and our people as a way to grow and to create a high performance team.*