

Building leaders at the speed of growth

How Mortenson built enterprise-ready leaders to compete, differentiate, and scale

A VIEW FROM THE TOP



What Did Mortenson Value?

“You are dedicated to understanding your customers. You are not an off-the-shelf consulting firm that sells a program or a product. You tailor to customer needs, which requires a lot of investment. The larger firms don’t appear as willing to make that investment.”

- **Jason Ortmeier**
Vice President, Talent Development
Mortenson

Organizations need their next generation of leaders to assume greater leadership scope, responsibility, and complexity at a rate faster than their predecessors. Much will be asked of these future leaders. The concern is, of course, are they ready? What do proven experiences look like that truly prepare your high-potential, emerging leaders to meet and exceed expectations?

Ensuring leader readiness

The growing need for a talent strategy that identifies, develops, and accelerates high-potential leaders helps explain the overflow attendance at our MDA Leadership Breakfast Briefing, *Accelerating Your High Potentials’ Preparedness to Lead*. During the session, Jason Ortmeier, Vice President, Talent Development at Mortenson, shared the organization’s high-potential strategy and program that’s grounded in an innovative action learning methodology. This proven approach accelerates both individual leadership growth and organizational capability by engaging high-potential leaders in real-world, strategic business projects while intentionally leveraging the meaningful, coachable moments that emerge along the way. The result is measurable organizational impact, maximized individual learning, and deeper insight into leadership potential.

Mortenson builds its leadership pipeline

From its founding in 1954 through the early turn of the century, Mortenson primarily operated in traditional commercial construction sectors—office buildings, hospitals, higher education, and energy. While successful, Mortenson grew dissatisfied with its ability to compete and differentiate itself in the market against other national general contractors.





“MDA does an incredible job of pinpointing strengths and development needs as well as sharing insights. The firm also provides feedback for individuals, gives feedback in a development-oriented way, and supports development plans in a meaningful manner.”

– Jason Ortmeier
Vice President, Talent Development, Mortenson

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As the organization contemplated its future, two headwinds to business growth became glaring: first and foremost, the organization recognized that a large number of senior leaders in the company were nearing or at retirement age with no clear successors. Second, the distribution of Mortenson’s offices across the country constrained its collective knowledge of leadership capabilities—the organization simply didn’t have visibility into whom they might call upon to step into roles of increased responsibility.

While continuing to win business and expand its footprint and portfolio, Mortenson found its greatest limiter of growth was its lack of known and activated leadership capability. The organization urgently needed to identify and prepare its next generation of senior leaders in an accelerated time frame to meet the demands of the business and its aspirations for growth.

Mortenson answered this challenge through the creation of a strategic high-potential program, Advanced Leadership Development (ALD), with a singular goal: prepare and ready leaders to succeed and win in broader, more complex leadership roles.

As Mortenson continued to grow and evolve, leadership development needed to move beyond discrete learning experiences toward a fully integrated, holistic approach. The organization sought to strengthen collaboration,

Impact

Mortenson has more than tripled in size from \$2 billion in 2010 to \$6.7 billion in 2024 (#22 on the ENR 2025 Top 400 Contractors list by revenue and #17 on the Top 100 Contractors list with \$9 billion in new contracts). Its growth can be attributed to many factors, but one key is building the leadership capability necessary to launch multiple new businesses, create a strong competitive differentiation, and deliver the highest levels of customer satisfaction and team member engagement that the firm has ever had. The senior team views these collective metrics as evidence of program success.

expand leaders’ ability to operate across the enterprise, and deepen self-awareness through meaningful assessment insights. To drive scalable capability, Mortenson embedded a proven action-learning framework—team-based problem solving grounded in real business challenges—into the core program, connecting learning, coaching, assessment, and application.

For over 10 years, Mortenson’s Advanced Leadership Development program has incorporated:

- ✓ **Personal development**—Leaders focus on self-awareness, development planning and execution, and reflection, while receiving support from their career sponsors.
- ✓ **Targeted skill building**—Throughout the year, the leaders learn about topics such as authentic leadership, strategic leadership, talent leadership, and customer leadership.
- ✓ **Action learning**—Leaders gather data and generate ideas for tough strategic challenges facing the business and industry, evaluate options, develop recommendations, and present proposals to the executive team.
- ✓ **Relationship building**—Peer, group leader, and senior leadership team interactions occur throughout the program, so senior executives can build relationships with the next generation of leaders and these future leaders can develop a company network that can be leveraged throughout their careers.



MDA Leadership Consulting
225 South Sixth Street, Suite 5000
Minneapolis, MN 55402 United States
+1 (612) 332-8182

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www.mdaleadership.com

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