



BUILDING A CULTURE OF STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE WITH ADP STANDOUT®

Quick facts

Company:

Tierra Del Sol Foundation

Headquarters:

Sunland, CA

Industry:

Non-profit and social services

Employees: 300+

ADP Products:

StandOut®, powered by ADP®

Rebecca Lienhard

CEO of Tierra Del Sol Foundation

Founded in 1971 in Sunland, California, Tierra Del Sol Foundation is a non-profit dedicated to higher education and career development for people with disabilities. They are committed to championing the inclusion and value of all people with disabilities through creative pathways to employment, education and the arts. The organization was originally conceived by parents as an alternative to institutional care, and over the years has grown its mission and its reach exponentially.

Business challenges

- No mechanism to survey employee sentiment and engagement
- Lack of pathways for team members across the organization to provide feedback and inform culture
- Without a data-backed way to collect employee sentiment, improving the employee and associate experience was nearly impossible

In 2017, Rebecca Lienhard, the organization's CEO, felt that the agency had a strong culture and wanted to build on that foundation systematically. But rather than relying on her intuition, she turned to StandOut, powered by ADP to provide data to back up her observations.

What began as a means to survey their workforce, became an integral tool for building the agency's resiliency in the face of disruptions and unprecedented circumstances, like COVID-19.

Assessing employee sentiment

When Rebecca first partnered with ADP to utilize StandOut, the results spoke for themselves: Tierra's baseline Engagement Pulse showed that 32% of the workforce was "fully engaged." These weren't just numbers; they represented real people finding meaning and purpose in their work. Team members felt heard by their leaders and appreciated when conversations focused more on strengths than deficiencies.

By 2018, Tierra Del Sol had embraced the StandOut platform to support employee engagement and build a strengths-based culture. Weekly check-ins between team leaders and members were carved into the culture, and the percentage of "fully engaged" employees rose to 36%.



“This is how we will sustain the culture.”

— **Rebecca Lienhard**
CEO of Tierra Del Sol
Foundation

Navigating disruptions and bouncing back stronger

No one could have predicted what 2020 would bring. When COVID-19 swept through the world, Tierra Del Sol faced an existential crisis. Their hands-on programs for associates (their term for the people they serve) were largely dependent on in-person interaction and community partnerships.

They had to reinvent how they delivered services and, as a result, virtual programming became the norm. Check-in submission rates dropped as urgent matters took precedence. Still, remarkably, engagement scores remained high, hovering at 44% “fully engaged” through 2021, even as the organization weathered the crisis.

As the world settled into its “new normal,” Tierra Del Sol was ready to return to its roots. Six of the organization’s directors participated in the StandOut Adoption Workshop: A StandOut facilitated program designed to help organizations take their StandOut experience to the next level. There, the leaders honestly evaluated what had happened to their carefully cultivated culture. One of the biggest realizations was that one-on-one meetings had become more about metrics than how employees felt about their work.

Together, the team mapped a way forward, realigning StandOut with Tierra Del Sol’s core values and revamping new hire onboarding to emphasize the strengths-based approach that had served them so well before the pandemic.

The workshop created a palpable energy, with Rebecca sharing, “This is how we will sustain the culture.”

Growing and evolving with no slowdown in sight

Almost seven years into their journey, Tierra Del Sol’s engagement data tells a compelling story: 74% of team members checked in at least monthly, 98% of teams reported high attention from their leaders and the “fully engaged” average has held steady at 44%, well above industry norms. **Survey comments showed that team members felt valued for their unique contributions (these comments were the result of a survey in 2024).**

But the true measure of success isn’t in the numbers. It’s in how Tierra Del Sol continues to serve its associates with creativity and compassion, despite all obstacles.

Now, Tierra del Sol is ready for their next evolution. Culture-building will no longer just flow from the top down. Now, representatives from all levels — directors, managers, direct support staff and learning specialists — will all contribute to shaping the organization’s future.