



#5: Responding to Crises - Hector Padilla

Hi and welcome to “Give Me an H.” I’m Natalie, your host. Together we’ll explore Home Depot’s unique orange-blooded culture through the eyes and experiences of our associates who live it every day. Let’s get started!

Carlos Fines, District Manager, Puerto Rico, recently sat down with Hector Padilla, Home Depot’s president of the Southern Division. The two started talking about Hector’s journey to leadership within the company, but soon the interviewer became the interviewee, as Hector asked Carlos about his experiences during the devastating hurricanes in Puerto Rico. It’s difficult to talk about and difficult to hear. But with community, values, perseverance, and support, Carlos shares how they all managed to make it through the storm.

Carlos: So, Héctor, you've been at the company for 20 years. Um... How did you start?

Héctor: Well, I've been with the company for 23 years, I started out in Hialeah in 1994, when I got here from the Dominican Republic. I was actually 19 years old and I came to the United States to enlist in the armed forces.

Carlos: Wow.

Héctor: Unfortunately, that didn't work out. But I ended up here, working for Home Depot, and I found a family that really accepted me from the start and I fell in love with the company from the start. And here we are.

Carlos: So tell me. There was no work in the armed forces. You try to enlist but it doesn't work out. What happened?



Héctor: Well, I'm colorblind. I can't see colors very well. That's why I still haven't worked in the Paint Department. But when one door closes, another opens. And I've always believed that. The good thing is that I started out in Construction Department and Doors and Windows. So, I was okay there. Wood has no color.

Carlos: It's all the same color, right?

Héctor: It's all the same color.

Carlos: So... Wow. So then...At what point did you say, "This is the company. This is where I'll stay"?

Héctor: Well, the truth is that I owe everything to my department, to my department supervisor. He's the one who embraced me. He's the one who guided me from the start. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be here. Because I was a little lost at first. Imagine arriving from a Caribbean island to the United States and working for such a huge hardware store as Home Depot. But he truly guided me. He helped me very much. And I'm here because of him.

Carlos: You're currently in charge of more than 100,000 associates. 100,000 associates who are fathers, mothers, responsible for other lives. And many of your territories with those 100,000 associates were affected by hurricanes, such as Irma, such as María, right? How --tell me about all these challenges that have happened and how you've been able to respond to them.

Héctor: Well, I still view myself as an associate, as the same associate who started working 23 years ago, looking for an opportunity. And it's never...Your title is not important. What matters is your purpose. Well, we had full support from the entire company. We're a family in good times and in bad times. And in bad times, we need to work much harder to ensure that we're reaching every associate. We have people with enormous hearts helping each other. And that's the magic of the company. That's the magic of Home Depot.

Carlos: I understand. Very good point. Very good points, Héctor. If you would tell me what your favorite day at a Home Depot is, what would that magical day be? What creates the magic on that day?

Héctor: That's easy. A special day for me is being in a store, celebrating one of our associates who's just received a promotion.

Carlos: Wow.

Héctor: Well, Carlos, I know that you're the one interviewing me, but I have a question for you as well. You've been with the company for 21 years. You've just lived through a catastrophic hurricane that hit Puerto Rico. You experienced two, but one was worse. And you guys did a tremendous job helping our associates. Could you give us a few details about that?

Carlos: Wow. Um...It's difficult to talk about it. So it was definitely a moment in my life and in all our lives that was extremely rough. I would say that it was almost traumatic. I remember the night when the storm came in through Costa Azul in Puerto Rico. And it was inevitable. Knowing that it was coming and you have to consider that the island is only 100 feet -- is 100 miles by 35 miles. So you see this animal coming your way and there's nowhere to run. You're there. You have to wait and see what happens. After the hurricane went through, getting up the next day and realizing you have nothing left...There's



no electricity anywhere on the island. There's no water. There's no form of communication. The roads are completely blocked. And there's no way you can communicate with anyone. It's very distressing because the first thing that comes to mind...is your family, your associates. Right? Your community...is destroyed. So, very tough. I'm telling you, Héctor, it was something...extremely horrific and it broke my heart. When we got to one of the stores, that... After the hurricane was over, the second day you could go onto the street...I got to one of my stores and was able to see it. There were about 20 associates outside who had lost their homes or had nowhere to go. They hadn't eaten. We were able to enter the stores -- and this is something I haven't told you yet -- but those MREs, the dry military food you ordered for us two years ago, were instrumental in that moment because those associates hadn't eaten in two days.

Héctor: I had the opportunity to go a few times. Um...And I know you were doing great things, such as helping with the fund we have to help associates. But I also know that you had washers set up in the stores so employees could wash their clothes. You were making ice so they could take some ice home because they had no electricity. You were giving them food. I had no idea we had so many cooks in the stores. They were cooking three times a day. And, how did you...? Throughout all that, how were you able to motivate the team to do all the things they did? Because there are many more things I haven't mentioned.

Carlos: Look, Héctor, we won't be able to motivate them then and there. I think that as leaders, we need to cultivate -- this is extremely important -- the importance of our Values Wheel.

Héctor: We're very proud of all of you and thank you for all the leadership all of you provided to our people.

Carlos: Thank you, Héctor, for the support. It made all the difference.

As Hector shared, "We're a family in good times and in bad times." For Carlos, this value was a critical survival tool during the realities he and his team were facing. Thank you for listening. This is Natalie, signing off ... and hoping you'll join us again for our next episode of "Give Me an H."

