

# Success Story: Growing People and Performance: How Hanover Foods Invested in Its Frontline Leaders

written by Lauri Moon | September 9, 2025



In Centre Hall, PA, Hanover Foods—a 100-year-old, family-owned food manufacturer—understands that sustaining excellence isn't just about what's grown in the field or produced on the line. It's also about growing people. With a wide portfolio that spans frozen vegetables, snacks, and ready-to-eat meals, Hanover Foods is committed to continuous improvement in every corner of its operations.

During an initial outreach meeting, IMC engaged Hanover in a deeper conversation about one key area of opportunity: strengthening frontline supervisory skills. Like many manufacturers, Hanover recognized that while its supervisors excelled in technical knowledge, many lacked the leadership and communication tools needed to manage today's dynamic plant environments.

## **Plant-Floor Leadership: Tools Beyond the Toolbox**

Hanover's leadership team knew that just as a technician uses the right wrench for a specific repair, supervisors need the right "soft skill" tools to effectively lead, resolve conflict, and maintain morale. In response, IMC proposed a customized "Pathways to Team Success" development program, designed specifically for Hanover's frontline supervisors.

The multi-session training series focused on practical, immediately applicable skills—leadership fundamentals, clear and empathetic communication, problem-solving, time management, and change management. A strong emphasis was placed on building trust, managing conflict, and coaching - all critical capabilities during Hanover's intense seasonal production cycles.

To maximize impact, training was held during the off-season, giving participants time to reflect, prepare, and build confidence before peak harvest operations resumed. Each session was designed with real-world plant scenarios in mind, enabling supervisors to return to the floor with both insight and actionable strategies.

### **Measurable Impact, Human Results**

The results were clear. Supervisors reported feeling more confident and equipped to manage daily operations and team dynamics. Participants showed notable improvements in communication, time management, and decision-making. More importantly, the program fostered a stronger, more supportive workplace culture – critical for both employee retention and production performance.

Hanover Foods now has a cohort of emerging leaders ready to help drive productivity while creating a work environment rooted in respect, collaboration, and accountability. The investment wasn't just in people – it was in long-term performance and organizational health.

### **Advancing Pennsylvania's Strategic Vision**

This initiative aligns directly with Pennsylvania's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy, launched by Governor Josh Shapiro's administration. The strategy prioritizes workforce development, manufacturing resilience, and creating competitive, future-ready businesses.

By equipping supervisors with leadership tools, Hanover Foods is contributing to the strategy's vision of strengthening the **manufacturing sector**, building a **modern workforce**, and enhancing **talent retention** in a rural food manufacturing and agricultural business. The program also supports the state's broader goals of encouraging **people-first practices** and **sustainable growth** within legacy industries.