

# **LEARNING THE BEST WAYS TO SUPPORT 600,000 EMPLOYEES**

## **USPS: The MIT Sloan Fellows Program from an HR perspective**

Jeff Williamson, SF '12, Chief Human Resources Officer and Executive Vice President of the United States Postal Service, oversees all aspects of HR for the Postal Service's 600,000+ employees. He handles labor relations and manages one of the largest Human Resources Shared Services and Human Capital Enterprise Systems in operation today.

"The Postal Service and the MIT Sloan Fellows Program are especially well-matched," says Williamson. "The Postal Service provides one of the largest corporate environments to drive change and apply the power of scale and process; and the Sloan Fellows program provides crucial executive development across the spectrum of organizational disciplines we value."

An alumnus with a deep understanding of the program's lifelong value, Williamson sees the MIT Sloan Fellows Program as a key component of professional development and succession planning for Postal Service leadership. "We identify individuals of exceptional promise to spend time at MIT, accelerate their career paths, and put Sloan Fellows in a position to contribute significantly to the organization."

Williamson points to the accomplishments of three postmasters general upon their return from the program. "Patrick Donahoe, SF '93, (PMG 2010-2015) forged groundbreaking collaborations with Amazon, FedEx, and UPS, and transformed our operations through the implementation of lean six sigma practices and the use of data analytics. John Potter, SF '95, (PMG 2001-2010) guided us through 9/11, anthrax, the great recession, and introduced one of the most successful postal innovations, the Forever stamp. He also helped shape the first major postal reform in a generation. Megan Brennan, SF '03, our current PMG, is already moving ahead on strategies that improve the quality and range of delivery services, making USPS more technology- and customer-centric."

"We've consistently gained far-sighted leadership, effectiveness at driving large-scale organizational changes, depth and breadth of knowledge and perspective, and commitment to colleagues – this is why the welcome mat is always out for MIT Sloan Fellows at the Postal Service."

## **DISCONNECTING IN ORDER TO CONNECT**

Williamson says that for MIT Sloan Fellows to really connect with one another and with the full depth and breadth of the learning experience, they must disconnect from the day-to-day running of their organizations. “We want our fellows to immerse themselves in this experience at MIT. We want them to connect with their peers and the faculty and students in the MIT community. We want them to find out how the private sector and other governments around the world are solving some of the same challenges we face using very different solutions.”

Williamson believes the search for creative solutions requires exploration uninhibited by everyday concerns. “The MIT Sloan Fellows Program is a safe place to explore,” he says, “and that’s exactly what we want our fellows to do. Growth comes when you step out and risk failure. We want them to be free to leverage all the intellectual opportunities that present themselves or to dig deep into issues of intense interest.”

By unplugging from his day-to-day concerns, Williamson remembers that he was truly able to concentrate on specific challenges. “For me that was pricing and employee retention. Spending that year at MIT allowed me to investigate all the facets of the subject, consult experts, and find out the latest advances in research. When I returned, I was named Vice President of Pricing, in large part because of the knowledge I gained as a Sloan Fellow.”

## **A SUPPORT SYSTEM WORTHY OF AN AMERICAN INSTITUTION**

Williamson says the network he built in the program has served as a valuable support system and sounding board. “Even several years after graduating from the program, I still use the network for advice and for exposure to new ways of doing things. Learning how people are handling the latest challenges—and advances—in human resources all over the world helps me to shape forward-thinking HR policies for USPS.”

The United States Postal Service pre-dates the Declaration of Independence. And many a household name has worked for the USPS, including Walt Disney, William Faulkner, Charles Lindbergh, and Bing Crosby. With a legacy like that, Williamson says, he considers leading change at USPS a weighty responsibility. “We all feel a sense of responsibility to the institution and to the people who embody it. The MIT Sloan Fellows Program has been a crucial tool in helping us develop knowledgeable, informed, innovative leaders who can advance this institution, which plays such an integral role in the American experience.”