



## JARED ECKLER

### SUPERLATIVE WINNER

"As we wind down this work year, we have one Superlative left to award, The Terry Kucel Leadership Award. My father (Terry) and I took the reigns this year and decided to go with our hearts and yours and award this to Jared Eckler. Under normal times and circumstances, Jared would never allow himself to be the winner of a Superlative even if he is the top vote getter in the category which he often is like he was this year, but these have not been normal times, have they? A small group of us surprised Jared today to spend a little time thanking him on behalf of all Partners for being an incredible leader during these past two years. We said a lot of things to him but I will recap in a fashion I know Jared approves of, with a Top Ten List of reasons Jared has exemplified the spirit of the Terry Kucel Leadership award for 2020 and certainly onward into 2021.

**10.** During stressful meetings and moments these last 2 years, Jared held his composure while Partners shared their frustrations and emotions. He was a safe sounding board who always took the time to listen fully, no matter how busy his day was, to each and every one of our concerns, worries, and frustrations and then guide us calmly with his always forward-thinking advice that does not judge but rather aids us in moving forward with a clearer head.

**9.** Jared showed us how to count our blessings, enjoy the "small" things, and make moments of fun even in times of stress. He is the biggest contributor to Workplace and Twinning photo master, often pre-arranging with Partners to



#### TERRY KUCEL LEADERSHIP AWARD



#### About This Superlative Award

Our Terry Kucel Leadership Award is awarded to a Townsend Partner in Terry's name, and encompasses many Townsend-valued leadership qualities, such as; philanthropy, vision, drive, resilience, creativity, passion, respect, and integrity. Terry always inspired, motivated, challenged, supported, and taught people. This award is given to a Partner that motivates others, no matter the group, with a sense of support and depth of values.



coordinate together so they could share a moment and photo together. Also, when Jared is a fan of something (like say the Dolphins, or Marvel movies, or the show “The Office”), he is all in and uses that as a jumping off point to connect with Partners who have the same fandom. He finds the fun and silliness and optimism and positivity and comradeship in things he loves and wastes no time giving energy to negativity and ugliness. Which God knows we get enough of outside of Townsend.

**8.** His words and perspective often helped us frame the larger struggle we have been up against and to give perspective whenever we all needed it. Through his many encouraging posts on Workplace, his Shop Talk emails and posts, and one on one “how are you doing, Partner?” emails and work chats, he used his gift of words to make us all feel better, take a deep breath, and focus on what matters most.

**7.** He helped us find and celebrate the good things that have happened these past 2 years even during days we had to distance physically. Partners’ milestone anniversaries, team’s successes, or individuals’ own personal stories of success or triumph, there is not much he lets slip by without recognizing it, honoring it, and celebrating it either publicly or privately with that person or team(s).

**6.** He always shows the servant leadership that Terry and Barbara Kucel taught us so well but never so much this year as when he managed to not only stay involved at a high level and with great detail for many of our top customers, hosted and worked alongside our many Bombardier and other customer visitors who needed more attention than ever, all while directing traffic in production, supporting and cheerleading partners and then rolling up his sleeves and working many many hours in Sorting. Just when it looked like Kevin Lindsley and Jared found a promising candidate for sorting in Tommy Carter, it also happened that Tommy would have the opportunity to lead Cutting. Jared was so happy for Tommy and believes in his potential, he was more than ok with making that move happen even though he knew it would mean he needed to continue to work long days and into the night in Sorting.

**5.** He cares about us as whole people, not just as employees. Some of the deepest talks and coaching he has done these last two years had very little to do with one’s work path and development but more about their growth as humans. He preaches and teaches vulnerability by showing it and has taught others that in a year of hot tempers and differences in our country and non-stop stressors, we can choose to be better people and treat others with kindness, respect, and compassion.

**4.** He has integrity in all he does even when decision-making has been so difficult and divisive and has been able to walk a fine line of respecting our differing opinions and viewpoints on difficult subjects related to the pandemic. He ensures we follow guidelines that address our safety and well being and makes decisions that take into account the well being of the company but he also never judges or shames us for how we feel about things. When Partners start seeing that we don’t all have the same beliefs and start to hold that against each other, he reminds us that is ok to believe differently as long as we respect the rules and each other.



Believe me, so much guidance we have gotten from outside agencies and groups has been frustrating to deal with, confusing, and often upsetting. Jared never overreacted to it but rather had faith that we would find our way together and be “Stronger Together” for it which I think has proven true.

**3.** He loves making leather and making it beautiful. He reminded us what was most important throughout the ups and downs of staffing and other pandemic issues and constantly brings us back to the “basics”. Make beautiful leather and do it with passion, kindness and appreciation for those doing it with you. Know what you are working on, care about it, what it will be used for, and why it matters to the customer and our business. He has helped us find meaning and purpose in our work with each other through a time many of us questioned even the meaning of life itself!

**2.** His handwritten anniversary notes in the mail (a practice he says he started when he witnessed my Mom doing it years ago), literally helped sustain many of us through our darkest and most stressful days. We all needed to be “seen” this year. It often felt like we could not do enough and quickly enough to please our customers. It felt relentless and grueling and many of us felt like failures at some point or like our work did not turn the dial or make a difference. His notes always spoke to what he valued in each of us on a specific level that helped turn around and uplift us and fuel us to carry on.

**1.** His wife is really awesome! Hahaha just kidding! Wanted to make you laugh if you read this long.

My real number one is he has our backs always. My favorite story customer-related this year was when Jared told a top customer they needed to back off on the intensity, over the top urgent calls and e-mails, demands for endless conference calls and line by line item review of ship dates, etc. to our team. He shouldered more of their difficulty than most if not all of us but his line in the sand was when he witnessed the burnout and total disrespect directed at us at times that was taking a dangerous mental and emotional toll on our hard-working team. He was ready to go to war with a top player in this situation not for himself but for his Partners . . . but you know what? Jared’s ability to speak openly and honestly but also respectfully actually opened this guy’s eyes and is making him reevaluate not just how he treats a supplier but his own team. Jared has been thanked by many on his team because he had the courage and integrity to tell a top customer that their behavior towards us and his own team was unacceptable and would not be tolerated. That is truly powerful leadership and influence that I am hard-pressed to witness in many places these days.

Congratulations, Jared! We love you!

Townsend Leather Partners, feel free to share a reason Jared deserves to be recognized for his leadership on Workplace at any time.

Thanks for giving Jared a reason and purpose to dig even deeper these last 2 years. He told us he made it through and found strength because of each of you." - Sarah Eckler

