

Case Study: Leadership Development

A privately held, high growth credit and collections firm banks on leader development to spur further gains.

Working directly with the President, we helped devise a challenging leadership development curriculum that would help “founding” Executives, Directors, and Managers acquire the skills necessary to operate and sustain a much larger firm in an increasingly competitive space.

The Firm: High growth, high performing credit and collection firm operating with Fortune 100 clients in Canada and the U.S.

The Challenge: This client’s senior executive team – so much a part of their strong past – now found themselves several more levels, and several hundred employees, more detached from the day to day operation of the business. The top team needed to ensure that the processes, methods, leadership style, and culture that led them to triple digit growth in their first 5 years, could be maintained by Directors, Managers, and Supervisors throughout the organization; however, their President also realized that stagnation of innovation in the industry was a huge threat to sustainable growth and competition, requiring a renewed effort to foster innovation. Finally, it was obvious that rapid growth was stretching several people – at all levels – past their comfort zone and current skills.

The Solution: We created a multi-level program that included:

- Refinement and development of the strategy and necessary activities based on a balanced scorecard/strategy map themed approach.
- Direct links from strategic activities to specific Executive and Director-level behaviours that assist in strategy execution.

- A high fidelity leadership learning experience for the rapidly expanding Director-level that helped them develop hard-to-learn skills like inspiration, motivation, and development of staff. We created case-based, participative, simulation-heavy experiences that were spaced out across the calendar year to provide time for pre-work, follow up, and peer-driven activities that reinforced learning.
- A business focused action learning project involving the President and top team (as mentors), and Directors (as participants). This involved separate teams tasked with inventing the “next big idea” for the firm. We facilitated regular meetings of this group and supplied and discussed foundational materials such as the basics of strategy/competition, innovation, and influencing. Groups presented business cases and reflected on leadership lessons in presentations to the Executive Team at the conclusion of the program.
- Fundamental “Management 101” skills development for lower level managers and supervisors.

The Results: “The client described results as profound”, said the president. “Our strategy exercise and subsequent communication plan fostered acceptance to agreed upon action plans. Everybody knows the behaviours that drive the business forward and are excited about where we’re going and why.” The client has measured and reported immediate uptake of critical behaviours and more aligned, speedier decision making. In the clients words “...even in the first meeting, we were able to identify style-gaps or habits that led to ineffectiveness.” In the Director group, the feedback sessions and group learning experience created transparency around development and broke down silos and improved communication across business units. As the President stated, “The active style of learning and application to the business has also been a big win and engaged our talent immensely, as well as providing us the fodder to invent and improve our business.”