

When a multi-billion dollar human resource company faces a downturn in business, a **comprehensive leadership program** enables significant business transformation.

Taking a Leap into a New Future

► The Challenge

After many years of profitable growth, a multi-billion dollar human resources company suffered a rapid reversal in business performance. The firm responded with a multi-faceted recovery strategy that included reducing costs, leveraging a successful but aging line of products, growing the R&D product pipeline, and strengthening brand loyalty. Senior management quickly and correctly realized that accelerating the development of high potential talent was essential to achieve these objectives, and the full-scale business transformation that was required.

► Linkage Solution

To help the company effect its business transformation, Linkage consultants developed a three-year Leadership Enhancement and Assessment Program (LEAP) specifically for leaders at the VP level with potential for GM and officer positions. The program enhanced the knowledge and skills that leaders needed to contribute to the strategic objectives of the company. At the same time, LEAP provided experiences in action learning that focused on real business issues, with senior leaders participating by selecting business projects and serving as team sponsors and subject matter experts.

The three-tiered curriculum for LEAP involved the following:

- **Year 1** focused on leadership self-awareness, team leadership, and change leadership skills. Through assessment and feedback, participants clarified their strengths and development areas. Through action learning teams, they developed their team and leadership skills, and participants received and began to employ practical tools for self-development, coaching others, leading teams, and driving change.
- **Year 2** focused on strategic thinking for organizational influence. Participants sharpened their strategic thinking while working on more substantive projects requiring greater interface with key stakeholders. With concrete tools to help increase their effectiveness, participants formulated and then presented their business case to senior-level executives.
- **Year 3** focused on systems thinking for strategy formulation and execution. Participants were given critical projects related to a priority initiative with both cross-organizational and cross-cultural reach. Participants forged real solutions to real challenges faced by the company.

► Results

As a result of LEAP, the company has experienced a number of positive business outcomes, including the following:

- Leaders have learned to work across organizational structures and to break down barriers to solve problems.
- Senior management has adopted and implemented creative measures and solutions that the LEAP action learning teams identified to strengthen the company.
- The company now possesses an identifiable, growing population of leaders that have the skills and tools to effectively lead the changes needed for the organization to regain its competitive standing.

When an international organization needs to provide inexperienced managers with new capabilities, **management training, individual coaching and team building activities** increase productivity and ensure project success.

Enlisting Talent and Developing Managers

► The Challenge

An international organization with headquarters in Geneva received an assignment from a European foundation that was outside of the normal core work of the organization. While two senior leaders from the international organization stepped up to lead the project, numerous managers and supervisors were also needed to run the critical day-to-day operations of the three-year project. The organization's full-time managers on staff were already committed to other work, and lacked the core subject matter expertise. As a result, the organization recruited a cadre of highly-skilled professionals from several different European nations. They accepted the managerial and supervisory posts based upon their commitment to the outcomes of the project—a commitment so great that they were willing to interrupt highly successful careers in other organizations. Unfortunately, these individuals, although talented, lacked managerial experience. The project soon began breaking down because of issues within and across teams, and the parent organization properly recognized the need to quickly enhance the management capabilities of the managers and supervisors in order to keep the project on track.

► Linkage Solution

Linkage partnered with internal HR and training managers to develop and implement a management development training program that was designed to provide the managers and supervisors on the project with basic management skills training -- and much more. The two-day program was presented first to the managers and then to the supervisors. The curriculum focused on providing managers and supervisors with:

- A common language and a common approach to leading their teams
- Skills and capabilities to enable them to provide more coaching and feedback to their teams
- Training on how to use the Powerful Conversations Model to manage conflict more effectively
- A forum in which to discuss the issues they faced

As a result of their experiences in the program, the project team asked for additional support from Linkage. The additional support activities included:

- A team building session with the two senior leaders and all of their direct reports
- Individual coaching sessions for both managers and supervisors
- Team building sessions for intact teams
- Follow-up sessions with both managers and supervisors

► Results

As a result of the management development training program and the follow-up initiatives, the managers and supervisors on the project improved in the following areas:

- Raising issues and managing conflicts within and across teams through feedback, coaching, and the use of Powerful Conversations
- Clarifying performance expectations by proactively setting goals, rather than depending entirely on the job descriptions
- Surfacing and removing obstacles to individual and team success at an early stage

These improvements enabled the managers and supervisors to spend more of their time proactively driving project results and ensuring project success.

When a publishing company needs to accelerate growth, an **Action Learning Program** creates new ideas, cultural change and increased revenue

Generating Ideas (and Revenues) Through Action Learning

► The Challenge

A mid-sized publishing company was faced with a Board mandate to accelerate business growth over a five-year period. In the past, strategy development and planning had been done primarily at the highest levels of the organization with very limited involvement of senior managers and editorial staff. The owners realized that, in order to grow the business, they needed to expand the strategic thinking capabilities and contributions across a much wider range of employees.

► Linkage Solution

Linkage partnered with senior management to develop and implement an Action Learning Program to address the issues faced by the company. The focus throughout the program was on strategy. The formal program began with the CEO giving his commitment to develop strategic thinkers at all levels of the organization. Five cross-functional teams were then created based on “franchise” areas that existed within the company. With guidance from a senior management team sponsor, each team was given the mission to make strategic market recommendations that would grow the business. The resulting action learning process involved:

- One-day facilitated learning sessions conducted once a month for six months on subjects such as marketing, strategic thinking, systems thinking, innovation, and implementation planning
- Facilitated team check-in sessions conducted once a month
- Regular interaction sessions between the teams to promote idea sharing and feedback
- A final off-site meeting where each team made recommendations to senior management in an open forum

Three months into the process, the CEO announced his decision to dispense with the traditional strategic planning process and instead rely on the recommendations from the teams for the company’s strategic planning for the year. The announcement further increased the stakes of the learning project, as well as the excitement and commitment of all participants. In the end, each team made strategic recommendations designed to enhance the competitive advantage of the company and accelerate the growth of the business.

► Results

As a result of the Action Learning Program, the company now has:

- New growth strategies and market plans to accelerate revenue generation
- Enhanced strategic thinking, change leadership, and teamwork across the company
- Deepened senior management insight into how to develop and leverage employee productivity
- An evolving culture focused on greater innovation, creativity and business results

When a financial services firm combines subsidiaries into a single company, a **change management initiative** enables a successful transition.

Ensuring Productivity During Transition

► The Challenge

As a way to enhance long-term competitiveness and profitability, one of the world's largest financial services organizations decided to combine three of its subsidiary organizations into a single company. The decision called for the integration of key processes, systems, and technology across the three subsidiaries over a period of 12 to 18 months. The leaders of the company quickly grew concerned about the impact this change would have on employees. Nearly every employee would likely experience a mild degree of uncertainty regarding the future—and those employees in the areas most significantly impacted by the integration would potentially feel higher degrees of ambiguity and concern. All of this endangered not only strategic integration, but also morale, performance, and productivity within the entire enterprise.

► Linkage Solution

The company enlisted Linkage consultants to help develop and implement a change management initiative that would provide employees with the skills, knowledge, and tools to assist them with the transition process and regain productivity in the organization more quickly. Specifically, Linkage:

- Designed and facilitated nationwide, half-day manager and employee sessions to help individuals understand the process they would be going through, and to develop action plans that would enhance their ability to successfully grow and remain productive through this time of significant change
- Delivered a customized four-day “Leading Organizational Transition” certification program on-site for 20 internal trainers to provide them with a framework and tools to help people deal successfully with organizational change—and to provide the organization with the internal capability for ongoing, long-term change management
- Conducted half-day facilitator certification session that emphasized key facilitation skills and applications to further enhance the effectiveness of these internal trainers

► Results

As a result of these transition programs and overall strategic change initiative, the company has:

- Helped ensure the success of the strategic integration of the three subsidiaries
- Enabled the translation of corporate values into measurable behaviors across the company
- Implemented a model for balancing small, local interventions with large scale, consistent messaging around change
- Developed strong facilitation skills in its HR/OD leadership team, as well as a gameplan for powerfully deploying those skills
- Created an integrated and lasting approach to managing complex change within the enterprise

When a multinational pharmaceutical company decides to realign its business strategy, a company-wide leadership initiative develops new global leaders to drive cultural change.

Becoming a Truly Global Company

► The Challenge

In the face of continued globalization within the pharmaceutical industry, a multinational conglomerate of pharmaceutical and consumer businesses decided to realign its business strategy to become an integrated healthcare company. Although it had companies around the world, the company had for years operated largely as an American multinational. The management style and culture were results-oriented, hierarchical, and risk averse. Business units operated with different processes around the world, which hindered productivity, quality, cross communication, and learning. The approach to leadership development was decentralized, disjointed, and clearly non-global.

► Linkage Solution

Linkage consultants responded to these challenges by partnering with the company's Senior Management Committee to develop a leadership program focused on the challenges and opportunities of globalization. The Global Leadership Program (GLP), now in its seventh year, is an eight-day program aimed at 36 high potential leaders at the divisional Vice President level. Through action learning teams, organization-specific case studies, team-building activities, individual 360° feedback, and coaching, the program has succeeded in:

- Creating a focus on the global talent bench strength
- Improving networking across business and functions
- Providing a common viewpoint on company issues, history, and approaches
- Creating a shared understanding of challenges, business, and marketing approaches
- Assessing leadership capability
- Enhancing team/collaboration competency
- Promoting action learning on current global business issues

To make the program truly global in scope, participants came from every region of the world. The program focused on global issues, such as global marketing, finance, communication, leadership behavior requirements, and globalization. The faculty consisted of external and internal leaders with a global perspective.

After several years of success with GLP, the company's CEO decided that he wanted the program to be rolled out to a wider range of leaders within the company. Linkage developed a three-day Executive Leadership Program (ELP) conducted in the United States, Europe, and Asia for 2,500 managers at the Director level and above. The emphasis of this ongoing program is on individual leadership development, individual behavioral change, the use of tools to strengthen teamwork, and coordination across teams.

► Results

As a result of the Linkage leadership programs, the company now has:

- An integrated, systemic approach to leadership and talent development
- An expanded leadership cadre at the executive level with greater leadership capability
- Improved organizational team structure, compensation and performance management systems, and supply chain management due to the implementation of action learning projects
- Realigned human resources systems to support ongoing leadership development
- A culture that has shifted from numbers, hierarchies, and silos to quality and profitability, creative networks, leaders acting as teachers, and integrated global teams