

Leadership Challenge to Make Better Commercial Decisions

Description

Challenge

A major international investment bank, seeking to grow profitability and shareholder value, contacted Kaplan with the requirement to improve workforce effectiveness.

Whereas in previous, more buoyant times, the approach to do this would have been revenue focused, the leaner economy meant there was a need to control costs.

The client felt that there were two key drivers for success: commercially and financially astute decision-making (based on a proper understanding of how the bank made and lost money) and people's ability to work more effectively together and find better and less expensive ways of working.

Action

Working closely with the client, Kaplan co-developed a day residential program aimed at those in back and middle office roles that covered the following key themes:

- The importance of developing a successful and flexible strategy
- An appreciation of the financial implications of all decisions
- The need for continuous improvement and innovation
- The need to understand, anticipate, and beat the competition
- The importance of understanding client needs and how to build and foster client relationships
- The potential to add or destroy value through the quality of talent management processes and programs

At the core of the solution is the Kaplan Business Challenge (KBC), an interactive business simulation.

Participants were split into teams, and each team acted as board directors who had taken over an ailing company. The teams competed in a defined market to see who could best deliver a return to profitability and position the company for continued future growth.

Participants developed their strategy, put it into effect, and amended it as necessary. Along the way, they interacted with various stakeholders —customers, suppliers, the workforce, banks (all role played by the facilitators) — emphasizing that successful businesses are not run in a vacuum.

The better they developed their interpersonal skills, the more they learned, and ultimately, the more successful they were.

At the end of the program, each team presented their strategy to both the facilitators and fellow delegates, and one or two senior managers from their area, as if it were to their company's shareholders.

Results

The program has served to highlight that those working in the back and middle office roles do make a significant contribution to the success of the bank through their commercial decision making, effective interpersonal skills, and a drive for continuous improvement and innovation.

"Many of the participants will have been introduced to the issues in an academic setting but this experience brings it all to life. The lessons learned are far more memorable than any traditional training event. More than ten years later, participants can recollect vividly what they did." – Executive Director of HR

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