

Developing the Next Generation of C-Suite Executives

Situation

A \$17 billion manufacturing company wanted help in preparing a small group of senior executives for C-Suite positions. While the group of 12 executives had outstanding track records in creating and executing business unit or functional strategy, they were not experienced or ready for corporate level strategic thinking. They needed to be able to think in terms of the enterprise and to learn how to influence and make decisions as a team.

Intervention

A comprehensive developmental process was created to:

- Determine the skills and mindset needed to be a successful C-Suite executive at the client company
- Assess and coach the 12 executive against these criteria
- Provide the executives with the needed knowledge and skills
- Provide the executives with experiences to give them the “look and feel” for what it means to be a member of the C-Suite team
- Provide them with an opportunity to practice these new skills and behaviors on real strategic issues
- Provide participants with regular feedback on their progress.

A program was designed that included:

- Individual coaching and feedback by external coaches
- A 5-day workshop that included:
 - Sessions by external faculty on strategy, finance, and influence skills
 - A customized computer simulation designed to:
 - Give the participants an experience that would help them understand what it would be like to be part of the C-Suite.
 - Integrate the 3 previous days’ sessions on strategy, finance and influence skills.
 - Participation by the executive’s coaches so the coaches could understand and support the new skills and behaviors, as well as observe behavior
 - Observation and participation by the client’s current C-Suite team
- Action learning projects chosen and sponsored by the client’s executive committee and facilitated by the external coaches.

Outcome

The client’s final evaluation report stated the program was an “unequivocal success” that “accelerated the development of potential C-Suite executives.” Participants were “stretched outside their comfort zones”, gained “new ways of thinking” and took in “difficult feedback from multiple sources (coaches, managers, executive sponsors and peers).”