



Your Advantage

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

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Develop Your Leader Bench Strength

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta averted a looming leader shortfall by growing crucial leader bench strength — and justified the effort by making a significant positive impact on broad business metrics.

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is highly regarded as one of the nation's top pediatric hospitals. In 2004, Children's faced two challenges that required a change in its approach to leadership bench strength development.

First, the Atlanta area pediatric market was the fastest growing in the country and threatened to grow beyond the hospital's ability to provide services. Children's needed more leaders than it could possibly hire and assimilate effectively. Second, healthcare was becoming increasingly complex. Children's needed leaders who understood the Children's multiple hospital system and had the skills to drive change throughout the growing organization.

Vice President and Chief Learning Officer Larry Mohl put it simply, "The organization was going to have a tremendous leadership gap."

Guarantee Business Impact

Mohl's solution was straightforward: instead of struggling to hire talent, Children's should grow its own. His vision was a Center for Leadership that would address leadership learning, succession planning, and talent management. Leaders would be grown from the bottom up and share a common language, methods, and tools for success. Learning would be provided for leaders at every organizational level.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Show the Executive Suite How People Development Improves the Bottom Line

Think these perilous economic times mean the end of funding for human capital development? Think again.

A learning investment with Advantage creates business impact. Performance improvement that's measurable and sustainable and that accelerates business results. That provides the solid metrics for taking your funding proposal to the executive suite.

"Now, more than ever, dollars spent on learning must deliver a sustainable approach that actually drives business results. Only Advantage provides this approach," says Advantage President and CEO Annika McCrea. "Every company needs to hear this message. In fact, we see a real opportunity cost to organizations that are *not* investing in their people right now."

Advantage is urging clients to act now to help their sales organizations sell differently and improve their customers' business results. To realign all functions around key strategies — such as cutting costs and creating bench strength — to get positioned for both a prolonged recession and the inevitable upturn.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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Advantage Way methodology delivers the metrics that justify pushing forward on these crucial performance initiatives right now. “We look at this economy as an opportunity,” says McCrea. “This is the time when Advantage can make a huge difference to your bottom line. Our approach enables you to show the executive level how to accomplish meaningful change via a new kind of learning that actually guarantees meaningful business impact.”

“Now is the time to act,” she advises. “Use Advantage to align, reposition, strengthen. Equip your organization to leverage current opportunities and get prepared for more challenges to come.”

*Annika McCrea,
President and CEO*

But how would Mohl get funding? Children’s was highly committed to developing its people, but resources in this nonprofit organization were scarce and carefully managed. The Board would approve funding only if metrics showed how the leader training was supporting critical organizational goals. In short, Mohl needed proof of business impact.

Advantage Performance Partner Carol Bunn explains, “A believer in our Advantage Way approach, High Impact Learning (HIL) and Success Case Method, Larry now had a process to transform learning from a series of highly customized training experiences to a true business improvement process.”

The acclaimed Advantage Way process is capped by a Success Case Evaluation Method that assesses — literally proves — how business metrics are affected by the learning people have received.

Get People On Board

The leadership initiative would demand time and attention from every leader within Children’s, so Mohl took pains to create buy-in at every level. He invited the senior team to lay all their issues on the table early and often. Throughout the initiative, Mohl and Linda Matzigkeit, Children’s SVP of Human Resources, focused on transparency and making improvements as needed. “We consistently shared what was and was not working, and encouraged everyone involved to do the same,” Mohl recalls.

The Advantage Way process itself creates buy-in even before learning begins. Participants’ managers help decide what business impact the learning needs to make and are shown how the post-training Success Case and additional follow-up activities will make sure learning is applied to create business results.



Grow Your Own Leaders

The new Center for Leadership was launched as a 16-month learning experience. This included three levels of custom leadership development and five executive-level workshops. After each workshop, Success Cases determined how the learning was working.

“The Success Case helps you understand where success is occurring and to what degree,” Bunn explains, “We look for the ‘success thread’ — from the learning concept all the way through application and then to the business impact. We are also focused on identifying any unrealized impact from the learning so that changes are quickly made to expand the success even further.”

The initiative included engaging activities and themes, often called Winning Hearts and Minds, that resonated for all the leader participants. Winning Minds referred to Success Case interviews that showed the effort participants had put into applying new skills to generate business results. Winning Hearts referred to creating pride and commitment — and celebrating current leadership success and future aspirations.

The “Leadership Next” final workshop focused on building an internal leadership community. It included a celebration where leader participants posted notes of accomplishment and aspiration on a “Wall of Success” bearing images of children and their families that had been served by Children’s.

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"This approach puts leadership development on equal footing with every other major initiative designed to take the organization to the next level."

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Impact on Multiple Business Streams

The Center's first year of leadership development brought results even broader than expected. "This was a real celebration for everyone involved," says Bunn. "We saw a significant impact on leaders from a personal perspective, on the system as a whole, on the financials, and on operating as an even stronger leader in the national pediatric community."

Mohl adds, "All attributed the Center for Leadership as a key component of these new developments." To wit:

- Personal impacts included strong competency improvements and a core of leaders ready to move up to the next level — dramatic new leadership bench strength.
- System impacts included internal hiring increased from 40% to 57% and leader retention increased significantly in critical roles. Participating leaders also achieved better retention rates in their organization than in the broader system.
- Financial impacts were dramatic. "The total value of cost savings and cost avoidance were in the multimillions of dollars, as was the incremental revenue and external funding," says Mohl.
- Operational impacts included optimized staffing; creation of effective leadership teams; improved service scores; and increased safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of care. The leadership training also expanded partnerships, grew services, and created a needed distribution blueprint.

"It is truly exciting to create this much impact on all four streams of business measurement, with great balance," says Bunn. "This is a significant performance record in pediatric healthcare."

Make Leader Development a Priority

The business impact metrics provided by the Success Case Method measurement process gave Mohl the proof he needed to fund the Center on an annual basis. "This approach puts leadership development on equal footing with every other major initiative designed to take the organization to the next level," he says.

The Center for Leadership results met the organization's crucial market challenges. Bunn explains, "Children's achieved their goals. Now they are able to develop their own leaders. They have dramatically increased their leader bench strength. They are also better able to attract and retain the healthcare leaders that will assist them in driving needed system changes going forward."

The leadership initiative was significantly expanded after the first year and senior management is now more committed than ever. The connection between learning and business results made all the difference.

"Children's Healthcare of Atlanta believes in putting processes in place that are really meaningful to their business," says Bunn. "The Center for Leadership learning initiative is a winning approach to internal development that they will continue to carry forward."

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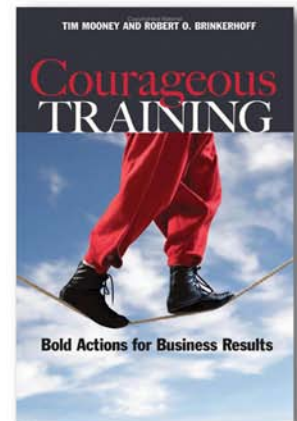
(from the book, [*Courageous Training: Bold Actions for Business Results*](#) by Advantage Performance Group's Tim Mooney and Robert O. Brinkerhoff)

Larry Mohl, Children's Healthcare Vice President and Chief Learning Officer, is a Courageous Training leader.

He made the bold decision to not pursue full multiyear funding for the executive development program up front. Instead, he welcomed the challenge of having to report on and prove the value of the program one year at a time. And he suggested that funding reapproval be based on evidence of the extent to which the leadership development program produced worthwhile business results.

This daring action to raise expectations put Mohl on an equal footing with other business operations in the vast healthcare organization. As a result, it earned even greater attention and commitment from senior leaders.

A Courageous Training leader is one who captures every opportunity and interaction to send the message: Learning should work for most of our employees most of the time to help achieve worthy business results. And none of us should rest until it does!



"We needed an efficient, clear way to create organizational alignment around the strategy and connect these strategic shifts with the shifts that individuals needed to make in their performance."

Strategies for a Tough Economy

1 Grow Your Own

Creating a fast-track internal path for leaders, versus the costly and time-consuming process of assimilating people from outside, is especially important during tough economic times. Develop leaders who understand your business and can leverage that understanding, and their relationships with internal peers and allies, to create meaningful business impact.

2 Make a Case for Investment

Given the pressures all industries currently face, organizations must require impact from every investment they make. To gain support from the senior team, demonstrate how the simple, repeatable Advantage Way High Impact Learning process delivers business impact from every learning dollar.

3 Elevate Learning as a Key Driver

Make sure the process of creating business results from learning is on equal footing with your company's other key drivers.

"Any organization can use Advantage Way and Success Case methodology to elevate performance development to the same level as other mission-critical business processes," says Advantage Partner Carol Bunn.

"Documenting and celebrating the contribution of the high performing leaders from Children's Center for Leadership is the centerpiece for Children's' continued success in attracting and retaining the 'best of the best' in pediatric healthcare."

CASE STUDY

It's Not Just "Chiquita Banana" Anymore

What's the first step when you need to align leaders across the organization around a new way of thinking? Follow the lead of Chiquita Brands International as they began the evolution from "banana company" to "fresh consumer products company."

Advantage Performance Partner Peg Ruppert and thought leaders from Root Learning®, Inc. recently partnered with Chiquita to develop an initiative that helped leaders and contributors around the world understand their roles in the company's core strategy shift.



The Business Need

Chiquita is one of the world's most recognized brands, with products sold in grocery stores in more than 60 countries.

Recently, Chiquita leadership determined that it was time to evolve from a "banana company" to a "fresh consumer products company." In redefining the company and shifting the strategy, there was a clear need to elevate the level of talent and leadership capabilities in Chiquita's 26,000 employees in 27 countries.

Concurrent with this need to communicate a new strategy, Chiquita was introducing a new performance management process, Perform to Grow. Director of Talent Management Jennifer Creed said, "We needed an efficient, clear way to create organizational alignment around the strategy and connect these strategic shifts with the shifts that individuals needed to make in their performance."

The Solution

In crafting a solution, Chiquita wanted to use a blended learning approach to reach its global audience because of the need for flexibility and scalability, and to encompass the variety of learning experiences the company wanted to provide. Chiquita partnered with Root Learning and Advantage to create two custom paper-based Learning Map® modules, with accompanying electronic learning modules to be used with geographically dispersed units.

The first map visually represented the company's strategy so employees could see the business opportunities that needed to be developed for Chiquita to reach its goals. The second map focused on the new performance management system and emphasized how employees can contribute to achieving the aims of the strategy.

In addition to allowing employees to practice the tools and steps within Perform to Grow, the online component of the solution featured an interactive toolkit. This was Chiquita's first foray into the world of electronic learning. Because of Chiquita's global employee base — with branches in Central America, Asia, and Eastern Europe — learning modules were offered on CD-ROM so the need for fast Internet connections was eliminated.

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To implement the new learning tools, Chiquita started with 120 salespeople at its national sales meeting and used a cascade method to communicate both the strategy of the business and Perform to Grow process worldwide. Used in conjunction with the paper-based modules, the e-learning modules reinforced key learning, supported practice, and gave managers and individuals the chance to practice in a safe environment before performing.

The Results

Creed reports that feedback on the project was "fantastic." Among the results:

- The Journey to a Fresh Future strategy session respondents reported that their understanding was "better or much better" after experiencing the modules:

On trends affecting Chiquita	87%
Of opportunities for Chiquita to grow as a result of these trends	89%
On how Chiquita will execute the new strategy	87%

In addition, 84% reported an improved understanding of "how my work contributes to Chiquita's success."

- A resounding 91% of Perform to Grow performance management survey respondents said that the sessions helped them understand the changes in the system. Respondents also reported that their understanding was "better or much better":

On the impact of performance conversations	81%
On the importance of defining clear expectations for performance with managers	82%

