



Connecting THE Pieces

Transforming Strategy into Results through Execution

At Varian Medical Systems, we develop and manufacture life-saving x-ray and radiation therapy equipment. Part of what makes this company great is our ability to innovate and evolve our products as technologies and patient needs change. When it comes to developing leaders, our partner, Advantage Performance Group, helps us stay ahead of the curve.

From Silos to Synergy

We first partnered with Advantage in 2007 to implement stand-alone leadership development programs for U.S. managers. At the same time, our counterparts in Europe were developing their own training separately. While the programs on both sides of the pond were successful and considered best of breed, there was no coordination between our departments and the programs were not linked to larger business initiatives. We recognized the need to develop a more synergistic global program—one that is aligned with corporate initiatives and drives organizational learning beyond the classroom.

Building a Pioneering Learning Experience

Advantage partnered with us to create a high-quality foundation for learning. The first step was to build a global roadmap for an optimal learning journey that integrates the best of brain science and

professional development thought leadership. The resulting program, called Varian Professional Manager (VPM), begins with a pre-class assessment and assignments, including participating in planning and expectation-setting sessions with the participant's direct manager. Two three-day classroom sessions are separated by three months of remote reinforcement and coaching, which allows for greater retention and application of learning. Specific activities for follow-up and reinforcement continue after the classroom training is completed.

Classroom training is guided by our corporate strategic initiatives and metrics, which are referenced throughout the program and tied back to specific learning points. Three [leadership workshops](#)—developed and customized by Advantage's strategic partner, BTS—a fully customized execution program, and a hiring program from another provider are woven together seamlessly by a "golden thread" that connects learning to the strategic initiatives and a fixed set of best-in-class leadership development concepts. The whole journey culminates with a customized business simulation called [Interplay](#) from another of Advantage's strategic partners, 10,000 Feet.

Intention Leads to Retention and Commitment

As a result of pre-class alignment sessions, managers of participants have greater clarity about what their people are learning and what they can do to help guide and reinforce the learning. Since we launched VPM in the fall of 2014, there has been a dramatic uptick in access to online resources and materials linked to the training. Because participants must be nominated into the program, leaders are more engaged, the credibility of the training has been elevated, and there is greater commitment and accountability for learning.

Our top executives have also implemented and visibly reinforced key management best practices around goal setting, alignment, and execution. As a result, the work environment has become more supportive and encourages managers to apply the learning to drive strategic goal execution and business results. The entire process has been a catalyst for greater global collaboration in workforce learning and development at Varian.

“ We consider Advantage to be a partner, not a vendor. It never feels like they are trying to sell us something. We talk about what we need and their design team works with us to develop it. Even when working with competing vendors, it's always collaborative. There's a huge level of trust in our relationship.”

– Donald Hill,
Varian Medical Systems

Two 3-day core classroom sessions

3 months on-the-job application and reinforcement

75 graduates to date, **140** expected by the end of 2015

4.4 participant satisfaction score (on a scale of 1 to 5)

up to **92%** manager-of-participant engagement

