

7 business units
40 global leaders
2 half-day sessions

Feeling the HEAT of a Volatile MARKETPLACE



How GrafTech Built Alignment with a Transformational Strategic Direction

A Business Redefined

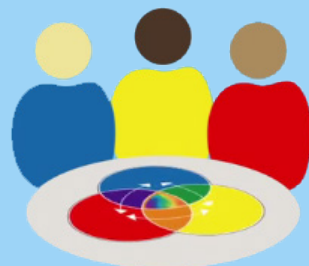
At GrafTech International, we make graphite and carbon products that are used in the steel manufacturing, defense, transportation, and energy industries. When your business depends on the health of the global steel industry, the market can be unpredictable and challenging, and we have suffered heavy losses in our core business over the past few years.

As CEO of GrafTech, I was looking for an innovative way to align our top 40 global leaders with GrafTech's new reality and strategic direction during our annual global leadership conference. I had heard about a business simulation called *Interplay* and called Advantage Performance to see if the program would meet our needs.

“ Advantage took the time to understand our business and integrate key issues into the simulation. Consequently, this was the best leadership meeting we've had in 30 years. I'm a believer! ”

— Joel Hawthorne, CEO

GRAFTECH
International



Simulating Extreme Market Challenges

I quickly realized that *Interplay*, a high-energy business simulation developed by Advantage's thought leader partner Ten Thousand Feet, would be an ideal way to introduce our new strategic direction to our global leaders. Advantage quickly got to work interviewing our entire executive team in order to fully understand our business and customize the program to our unique situation. They were able to create a completely customized solution in less than two months.

The simulation experience, split over two days of the conference, began with exploration of GrafTech's historical business model. Participants worked in cross-functional teams, helping to build understanding and provide a broad perspective of the business. At the end of the day, teams received a letter from the simulation's "board of directors" that replicated the market challenges GrafTech faces.

On the second day, teams had an opportunity to "run the business" in the face of the market challenges. They responded to a shrinking market, pricing pressures, and the need to think innovatively and invest with limited funding. They experienced the business impacts of their decisions and, in the process, developed an understanding of the factors that will impact GrafTech's success going forward. At the end of the session, teams presented their recommendations on investments and a strategic direction to GrafTech's executive team, which acted as the simulation's board of directors.

Understanding Leads to Buy-In and Alignment

After the simulation, the executive team introduced GrafTech's strategic plan. Participants discovered that the decisions and recommendations they had made during the simulation were similar to those in our strategic plan. Consequently, there was significant buy-in to our direction immediately. The participants already understood the hard choices that had to be made as well as the levers that needed to be pulled in their own parts of the business.

The executive team and I were very impressed by the simulation. The participants commented on how realistic the experience was and how well the simulation captured the realities of GrafTech. The experience resulted in our global leaders being aligned with our business challenges. That was my goal, and Advantage fully met my expectations.