

SOME Assembly REQUIRED

Aligning Leadership Understanding Through an MBA-in-a-Day Simulation

At Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC), we are committed to helping manufacturers grow and be competitive. To that end, we created our highly successful Manufacturing Leadership Institute (MLI) certificate program in conjunction with Lehigh University. This annual program, which consists of 11 days of workshops and outside projects delivered over a five-month period, provides training to enhance the skills of current and up-and-coming leaders including CEOs, presidents, GMs, VPs, and sons and daughters who are preparing to take over the family business.

“Advantage Performance was fantastic to work with because they helped us talk not only about strategic financial management but also about how everything we’re learning works together to impact the bottom line.”

– Karen Buck, Manager of Workforce Initiatives,
Manufacturers Resource Center



Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC) is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to creating jobs and economic opportunity in eastern Pennsylvania. For more than 30 years, MRC has helped small and mid-sized manufacturers become more competitive, adopt lean and agile processes, strategically grow their companies, and invest more effectively in their existing human capital.



The Quest for a Challenging, Relevant Business Acumen Program

Through our work with small to mid-sized manufacturers, we have found that many leaders and successors are not prepared to read financial reports and don’t understand how the data affects the whole company. To address this gap, we had been using a well-known financial acumen simulation for the final training day of the program, but it was too basic for our audience.

We put the word out that we were looking for a more challenging and relevant solution that would help us pull together everything the leaders had learned and give them practice making strategic decisions related to an organization’s numbers. Advantage Performance responded with the perfect solution – the *Interplay* simulation.

An Applicable and Realistic Simulation

Developed by Advantage Performance’s strategic partner, 10,000 Feet, *Interplay* is an interactive simulation that is both challenging and fun. Working in teams, participants create a mission and goals for their fictional company and then compete against other teams to produce the greatest financial impact over four periods of operation.

The simulation required teams to determine the risks and rewards of each business decision they made, and they could see the impact of their decisions right away. Beyond thinking about typical financial considerations such as revenue, profitability, and cash flow, participants had to

make decisions about hiring and allocating people to drive both tangible and intangible value. One participant told us, “Interplay made me realize that there are a lot of different factors that can impact the decisions that are made in a business. It was a good reminder about how important employees are and how to keep them engaged.”

As our partner in implementing the simulation, Advantage Performance was fantastic to work with because they helped us talk not only about strategic financial management but also about how everything we’re learning works together to impact the bottom line.

Connecting Insights to Personal, Job-Related Challenges

The simulation’s situations mirrored real life and reinforced the things leaders need to be aware of, including considerations that often fly under the radar. Participants learned to use the common language of finance, and they were able to apply all of their learning from the MLI program to see how everything interrelates in the business world. The Interplay experience will help our participants have the financial impact that they hope to have as leaders of their companies.

The feedback from the session was tremendous – in fact, our participants told us they loved *Interplay*. A participant told us, “The simulation was applicable and realistic. It reinforced the concepts we need to be aware of and showed us the difference that a good executive leadership team can have versus an average one.”

Interplay was a great success and a terrific bookend for the MLI program. We plan to run it every year.