



BorgWarner Makes the Case for Face-to-Face

The power of experiential learning transcends industry.

"We wanted to revamp our high-potential development program because we had a new competency model in place, and we wanted a partner to help us redesign."

-Laurie Schamber, Manager of Organizational Learning, BorgWarner

In early 2001, Laurie Schamber, a manager of organizational learning at BorgWarner's Chicago, Illinois, headquarters, began looking for a partner to help revamp the company's high-potential leadership development program. BorgWarner is a maker of components and systems for automatic transmissions and engines, and four-wheel drive vehicles and employs nearly 14,000 people worldwide. "We knew we wanted a simulation and 360-degree feedback," says Schamber.

Why?

"We have to assess our high-potential managers on their ability to move into an executive rank—the experiential learning is a springboard to learn about their strengths and weaknesses as leaders," Schamber explains. "We can't assess, and they can't learn as much, without seeing themselves in action."

The research bears out Schamber's perspective. A Center for Creative Leadership project that compared high potentials who reach their potential to those who do not suggests there are many similarities between "derailers" and "arrivers." They are both smart and ambitious. A key difference is that although the arrivers seem to make mistakes early in their careers, they showed a greater capacity to learn from these early experiences.

BorgWarner's new program incorporated Discovery Learning's PressTime® simulation, Decision Style Profile™, and 360-degree Leadership Development Survey. Discovery Learning certified BorgWarner's nine in-house trainers to deliver the simulation and assessment components of the two-day program, and the pilot ran in August 2001 with Discovery Learning assistance.

"There were rave reviews on the simulation," Schamber says. "Even though it's publishing-focused and therefore outside our industry, engineers responded to the roles and found them relevant, because it's about bringing a new product to market. The debrief has been very rich. Participants have gotten fresh insights about who they are

and how they're perceived." The simulation was also intensely facilitated (one facilitator for every three participants), with voluminous notes taken on the individual and group dynamic.

Followup is key to the process. "We follow up within 30 days on each individual's development plan, and discuss key things to work on, key challenges," says Schamber. "We may also give specific assignments to help them achieve their goals." Without that ongoing, in-person commitment, she explains, BorgWarner can't expect to reap much benefit from the investment.

So far, over 120 participants have been through the process. Schamber says BorgWamer plans to offer it to the top 20 percent. "This is for the cream of the crop."

Schamber says Discovery Learning stood out when BorgWarner began searching for a partner to design their program. They liked the fact that Discovery Learning had a close relationship to the Center for Creative Leadership, because they have worked with CCL and continue to use the CCL Benchmarks tool. And they felt the PressTime simulation, while it recreated a work environment outside their industry, was very relevant because of its focus on bringing a new product to market. But the most important factor was customer orientation. "They shared data and info even before we made a commitment," says Schamber. "They were willing to give us every insight so we could make this succeed on our own, and that was important."