

Fortune 500 Financial Organization Reimagines Leadership Training In The New Normal

THE CHALLENGE

In 2019, a Fortune 500 organization in the financial industry identified the need to define what it means to be an effective leader within their organization. This organization needed a scalable, accessible, and highly-interactive leadership training program that set an enterprise-wide standard of expected behaviors for leaders at all experience levels.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this training program was forced to adapt in-person components of the program to virtual formats. This shift pivoted the original plans for the program's location, equipment, and structure without compromising its effectiveness.

This financial organization needed an accessible and scalable leadership training program that incorporated their own leadership expectations with traditional leadership and diversity training from expert instructional designers.

"This program saw great change from the initial stages to where it is now. Despite these changes, like planning for ILT and transitioning to VILT to switching from Oculus to cardboard headsets, this project remained dynamic and accomplished the ultimate goal," said Rose Robertson, Director of Learning Solutions.

THE SOLUTION

This Fortune 500 financial organization partnered with Roundtable Learning to create a custom blended training program for leaders with varying levels of experience. The goal of the program was to bring leaders together and allow them to learn from each other by sharing their own experiences. Launched in the Fall of 2020, this leadership training program included pre-work, virtual instructor-led training (VILT), 360° virtual reality (VR), and post-session activities.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this program was altered to accommodate the needs of remote learners. Originally, the content was developed for a three day in-person instructor-led session, but was later adapted for virtual formats. Through collaborative skill-building activities with other leaders, this program allowed employees to learn from one another, complete relevant practice activities, and share personal experiences of being a leader in the organization. In addition to learning from each other, participants gained a comprehensive understanding of what leadership looks like at their organization.

To set an enterprise-wide standard for their leaders, this financial organization's internal team developed leadership accountability behaviors to serve as the foundation for the training program. By combining these internal accountability behaviors with Roundtable's expertise in leadership and diversity training, Roundtable created realistic training materials that participants could relate to and immediately implement into their team.

This program kicked off with pre-work built to support learning before the interactive group components of the program began each week. Participants completed pre-work weekly before the VR and VILT sessions began. The pre-work activities included:

- Reading educational articles about building trust as a leader
- Watching informational videos
- Reviewing the key steps of a manager's role in compensation and performance management





By completing these tasks, learners understood what to expect during the upcoming 360° VR and VILT sessions.

Next, the 360° VR activity for this program challenged learners with navigating important leadership topics: coaching, crucial conversations, and employee relations. This activity allowed learners to navigate realistic scenarios that were created using a real-life office setting and actors who were carefully selected to represent employees. By utilizing branched learning, leaders were able to learn from their decisions in the activity and receive instant feedback based on their selections.

While the original program was designed to use Oculus headsets, the VR activity was adapted to a remote format that allowed learners to place their mobile device inside of their own branded cardboard VR headset.

For the main component of the program, learners participated in VILT sessions. The original ILT portion planned for this program was reinvented to VILT to accommodate an entirely remote workforce. When converting the ILT program to VILT, the following elements needed to be addressed:

- Selecting the best online platform and utilizing its functionality
- Number of learners per online classroom
- Duration of each session
- Pace of instruction

The 8-week VILT program consisted of 90-minute weekly sessions. To ensure a smooth rollout, Roundtable provided pre-session support for facilitators through guides, real-time feedback, and technical assistance. After each session, the financial organization and Roundtable experts worked together to address improvement opportunities for material and make necessary adjustments to activities.

Lastly, the learners attended weekly post-session study groups with the teams they worked with throughout the program. These group activities included deeper discussions and experience sharing that reinforced ideas and concepts presented throughout the training program. Participants also documented takeaways and answered

THE ONGOING RESULTS

This blended leadership training program is the mark of a true partnership that has remained dynamic despite its transition to virtual formats. This program is ongoing with over 100 participants who have completed the pilot program so far.

According to the participants who have completed a mid-program survey, 99% agree or strongly agree that they will apply what they've learned from the training to their job.

Additionally, 91% agree or strongly agree that they've gained new knowledge and skills from the training, while 86% are likely or very likely to recommend the training program to other leaders.

This custom blended learning program continues to align with the Fortune 500 financial organization's learning needs, ensuring their organizational leaders build on the skills needed to excel in their role and lead with confidence.