



CASE STUDY



CASE STUDY:

Strengthening Competitive Advantage Through Innovative Leadership Development.

How IBM partnered with Herrmann International to enhance the efficiency, reach and impact of its global new leader development program.



OBJECTIVE:

To update the company's highly benchmarked and successful global leadership development program.

When IBM began the process of updating its highly benchmarked and successful Basic Blue for New Leaders (BBNL) leadership development program, one thing was certain: quality couldn't be sacrificed for efficiency.

Richard DeSerio, Manager of IBM's Leadership Development Programs' Global Design Team, says the company views BBNL as a competitive advantage, and as such, any changes would have to maintain the quality and level of results the program had shown since its inception in 1999. But that didn't mean there wasn't an opportunity to push the design team's thinking and innovate their approach.

"We have a globally integrated culture that prizes intelligence and innovation," says DeSerio. "That means that, even when an initiative is successful, we'll continually look for ways to remain on the leading edge in programming, ideas and efficiencies."

Part of that process, according to DeSerio, involves evaluating and improving leadership development offerings within the context of what's going on in the world today.

"Increased individual responsibility and new leadership competencies are a necessity in our current business environment, and we need to be able to rely on a globally integrated team to get the best business results," he says.



CHALLENGES:

With nearly 400,000 employees worldwide, the Armonk, N.Y.- based company, which operates in 170 countries and generated nearly two-thirds of its revenues outside the United States, was faced with a real business concern of finding a way to seamlessly and cost-effectively reach their global leaders at any time, no matter where they may be located, while reducing overall expenses and time spent in the classroom.

“At the same time,” DeSerio says, “we want to spend our classroom training time and resources wisely while making sure the learning is designed with a clear business application so people get the most out of the experience.”



With these goals in mind, IBM began discussing program design ideas with Herrmann International. The originators of the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®) assessment and pioneers of Whole Brain® Thinking, Herrmann International helps people, teams and organizations unleash transformative thinking and build the agility necessary to thrive in a complex world. The company immediately recognized that IBM was not alone in the issues it was facing.

“Increased globalization, the rise of the virtual workplace, shifting priorities and many other factors are making it that much more difficult for organizations to reach everyone in person,” says Ann Herrmann-Nehdi, Chair of Herrmann International. “But the challenge companies have faced with typical e-learning programs is that they don’t deliver the quality, interaction and engagement to match the results of the classroom.”

Echoing DeSerio, she adds, “With classroom hours at a premium, clients tell us they need to be able to devote that valuable time to business-focused applications.”



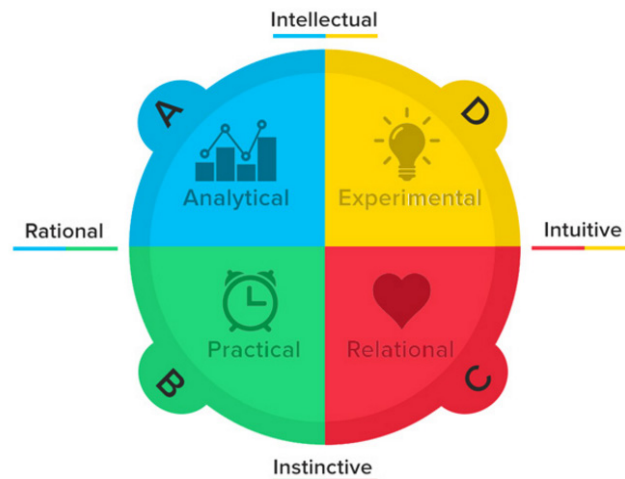
SOLUTIONS:

Combining innovative technology with pioneering thinking and learning research to deliver a blended solution aligned with learning and business objectives.

“We knew if we each focused on what we do best, we could create a blended solution that would meet or even surpass what could be achieved in the classroom alone.” –

Ann Herrmann-Nehdi, Chair, Herrmann International

The IBM team had already built up a successful track record implementing Herrmann International solutions. The HBDI®, which defines and describes thinking preferences across the four quadrants of the Whole Brain® Model, was the “instrument of choice” for the existing BBNL program. In addition, HBDI® profile debriefing workshops and Whole Brain® application modules had been incorporated into BBNL to help IBM’s new leaders enhance their leadership effectiveness by applying a Whole Brain® approach to communication, problem solving, and decision making.



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Figure 1: The Herrmann Whole Brain Model

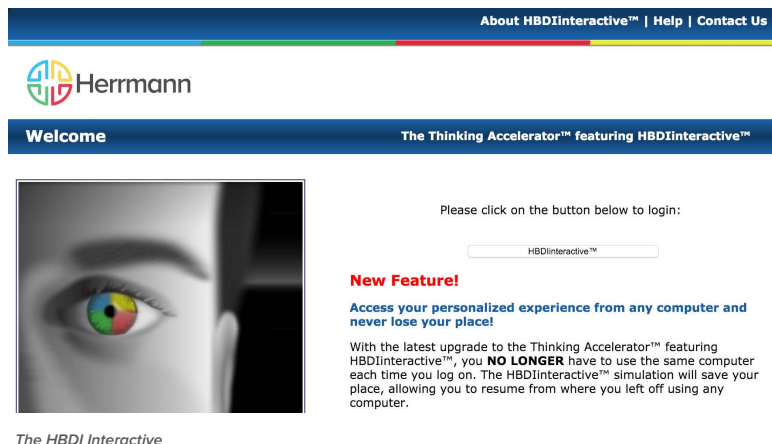
The two companies realized that the foundational Whole Brain® Thinking elements could serve as a jumping-off point and framework for a new way of delivering training to global audiences, one that would reduce overall face-to-face classroom hours while actually enhancing the business and learning impact of the training itself.

Accomplishing these goals meant focusing on two key areas: integration of state-of-the-art technology and learning design, and development of a conceptual plan to reinforce the learning’s business context and better leverage classroom hours.

“We knew if we focused on what we do best—IBM’s expertise in developing innovative technology solutions combined with our years of experience in researching and applying Whole Brain® teaching and learning methods for business application—we could create a blended solution that would meet or even surpass what could be achieved in the classroom alone,” Herrmann-Nehdi says. “We’d also be able to increase efficiencies and reduce the amount of time, travel and other expenses associated with traditional classroom-only training.”

The result of the partnership is a blended solution that incorporates asynchronous learning, including an experiential simulation program, with synchronous learning delivered both online and in person through virtual classroom learning labs, webinars, coaching and face-to-face classroom labs.

The five-module simulation program, The Thinking Accelerator™ featuring HBDI-interactive™, was developed in partnership with Herrmann International's product development team. During the program, participants learn about their thinking preferences as their own HBDI® profile results are revealed during the HBDI interactive™ segment. They are then immersed into the simulation environment of "Preference Island," where they learn more about Whole Brain® Thinking and how it can be leveraged as a critical leadership success factor. The unique environment of the simulation gives participants a personalized experience, as their own HBDI® profile is incorporated throughout the program, and they have the opportunity to create action plans and complete exercises using their own day-to-day work challenges.



The HBDI Interactive

When participants attend the BBNL face-to-face classroom lab following the ramp-up activities, they come prepared to focus on real-world business applications of Whole Brain® concepts and other leadership skills. That means they're able to spend the bulk of the face-to-face time working through issues they currently or are likely to face as leaders at IBM. Follow-up activities, including coaching and instructor-led webinars, allow them to continue applying and reinforcing the initial learning while expanding to new and more advanced levels.

An additional and important component of the program is a dedicated online portal that allows participants to access training information, the simulation, their HBDI® profile and other resources when they need it. Leaders also have the capability of inviting their direct reports to participate in learning activities, including providing access to the Thinking Accelerator™ featuring HBDI interactive™, through the portal. The result is a system that extends the reach of Whole Brain® Thinking beyond the leaders to the broader ranks of the company.

"Ultimately, to get the full advantage of Whole Brain® Thinking in an organization, everyone needs that foundation," says Herrmann-Nehdi. "IBM found a truly innovative way of making that happen."

RESULTS:

Maximizing time and resources while increasing participant knowledge and creating more opportunities for leadership skill building and business-focused development.

“The entry- and exit-level participant knowledge at the BBNL Lab is superior” to the prior program. – Richard DeSerio, Manager, Leadership Development Programs Global Design Team, IBM

Pilots of the BBNL blended solution, conducted in India, Europe and North America, indicated early on that this innovative approach and partnership was destined for success. Participant surveys revealed a 92% satisfaction rate with the virtual ramp-up activities. 96% also strongly agreed or agreed that the learning was relevant to their current or future roles as leaders. A full 100% found the Thinking Accelerator™ featuring HBDIinteractive™ to be valuable, and all respondents said they intend to apply what they learned in the overall new leader program to their current or future roles as leaders.

DeSerio says the results show the online program to be an effective alternative to the face-to-face session, “enabling precious lab time to be devoted to applications.” The pilot results also demonstrate that the live virtual classroom and ramp-up activities provide a “valuable and effective linkage” to the initial classroom lab module.

One other key finding from the pilots that bodes well for the ongoing implementation: DeSerio says that both “the entry- and exit-level participant knowledge at the BBNL Lab is superior” to the prior BBNL program.

The most important goal of maintaining a level of quality that has become a competitive advantage for IBM, has not only been achieved, but exceeded.

UNLEASH THINKING POTENTIAL

Herrmann International combines powerful psychometric tools with learning programs to prepare your workforce for a complex and volatile environment. Learn more about our assessment tools, explore our learning programs, or talk to a Whole Brain® Specialist today.

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