



## CASE STUDY

# Strengthening Competitive Advantage Through Innovative Leadership Development

*"We have a globally integrated culture that prizes intelligence and innovation which 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. 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."*

**- Richard DeSerio**  
Global Design Team Manager

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



## OBJECTIVE

IBM wanted to update their 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, said 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.

## 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 said, "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."



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## SOLUTIONS

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

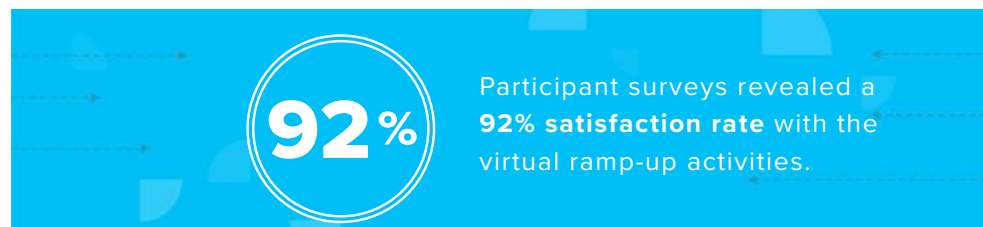
The IBM team had already built up a successful track record implementing Herrmann International solutions. The HBDI®, which defines and describes thinking preferences across the four quadrants of the Whole Brain® Model, was the “instrument of choice” for the existing BBNL program.



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.

## RESULTS

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



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. 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 said 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.”

One other key finding from the pilots that bodes did 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.

*“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 of Board and Chief  
Thought Leader at Herrmann



*“The entry- and exit-level participant knowledge at the BBNL Lab is superior to the prior program.”*

**- Richard DeSerio**  
Global Design Team Manager