



## Driving Strategic Thinking through Action Learning

### The Challenge

**To achieve its growth goals, a publishing company realizes that strategic thinking capabilities must be expanded across a wider range of managers and leaders.**

A mid-sized publishing company was faced with a Board mandate to accelerate business growth over a five-year period. In the past, strategy development and planning had been done primarily at the highest levels of the organization with very limited involvement of senior managers and editorial staff. The owners realized that, in order to grow the business, they needed to expand the strategic thinking capabilities and contributions across a much wider range of employees.

### Linkage Solution

**An Action Learning Program drives strategic thinking at all levels of the organization.**

Linkage partnered with the owners and senior management to develop and implement an Action Learning Program to address the issues faced by the company. The focus throughout the program was on strategy.

In fact, the formal program began with the CEO giving his explicit commitment to develop strategic thinkers at all levels of the organization. Five cross-functional teams were then created based on “franchise” areas that existed within the company. Each team was given the mission to make strategic market recommendations (with guidance from a senior management team sponsor) that would grow the business.

The resulting action learning process involved:

- One-day facilitated learning sessions conducted once a month for six months on subjects such as marketing, strategic thinking, systems thinking, innovation, and implementation planning
- Facilitated team check-in sessions conducted once a month
- Regular interaction sessions between the teams to promote idea sharing and feedback
- A final off-site meeting where each team made recommendations to senior management in an open forum





Three months into the process, the CEO announced his decision to dispense with the traditional strategic planning process and instead rely on the recommendations from the teams as the company's "strategic planning" for the year. The announcement further increased the stakes of the learning project—as well as the excitement and commitment of all participants. In the end, each team made strategic recommendations designed to enhance the competitive advantage of the company and accelerate the growth of the business.

## Results

**As a result of the Action Learning Program, the company now has:**

- New growth strategies and market plans to accelerate revenue generation by an estimated 100 percent over the next five years
- Enhanced strategic thinking, change leadership, and teamwork across the company
- Process improvement innovations, such as new cross-functional teams are spontaneously emerging across the organization to address emerging business issues
- Deepened senior management insight into how to develop and leverage employee creativity
- A revamped culture with creativity and teamwork at its center

## Linkage Products and Services used in this Case Study

### Linkage Customized Leadership Development Programs for High Potentials

Linkage's customized leadership development programs are typically delivered to high potentials ranging from director-level to executives over several months in chunks of 3- to 4-day sessions. The focus is on

- Individual leadership development
- Individual behavioral change
- Tools to strengthen teamwork and coordination across teams.

Programs are designed via interviews with key stakeholders, enabling identification of the specific leadership competencies that need special attention.

### Program Components

Key program components can include:

- A self-awareness component, such as individual 360° feedback
- Individual behavioral change
- One-on-one coaching
- Action learning teams focused on current business challenges/issues
- Organization-specific case studies
- Team-building
- Tools to strengthen teamwork and coordination across teams

**For more information on our Customized Consulting Services contact us at 781.402.5555.**