

Inspiring a New Strategy When Nothing Appears to be Broken



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VMware
Co-President,
Application
Platform

Embarking on a New Phase of Growth

The world's largest provider of virtualization software, VMware has grown rapidly by moving beyond basic hardware consolidation along with dramatic advances in the efficiency, availability and manageability of IT resources.

In 2009, VMware embarked on a new phase of growth that would build upon its success to lead the industry through the anticipated IT industry transformation.

The goal: a broader strategy for helping customers transform IT to achieve a more business-centric approach.

Aligning Management to the New Vision

VMware Co-President, Application Platform, Tod Nielsen needed to rapidly align the management team to the company's vision and drive home the game-changing industry forces at work. Those forces included the emergence of new alternatives for supplying IT needs (i.e. cloud computing), increased competition, consolidation, and CIOs having to do more with less. The executive team wanted to build management confidence and expertise to deliver on the new strategy. Nielsen worked closely with BTS on a customized business simulation that provided a high impact, experiential program for building strategic alignment and execution capability. The business simulation experience realistically modeled the shifts in the IT industry, integrated VMware's strategic initiatives, and anticipated future business challenges.

A Powerful Result: Strategic Alignment for 500 Company Leaders

A two-day simulation compelled 500 company leaders, with very different perspectives, to collaborate in new ways, work together, and understand the real trade-offs—as well as the real friction points—inherent in VMware's strategy. Through working together and living the roles and responsibilities of their colleagues from different organizations, senior leaders became more deeply aligned with the strategy, took a greater ownership stake, accelerated on-the-job action, and ultimately allowed VMware to kick off the year with positive momentum.

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From Skeptic to Believer in Business Simulations

"When I was told a simulation would be the key alignment vehicle for our top 500 leaders I was skeptical," said Nielsen. "My past experience with business simulations had been with off-the-shelf, lightly customized versions. The BTS custom business simulation accurately modeled our business challenges and anticipated our future evolution. The experience allowed our top 500 leaders to not just see the new strategy but to practice making our strategy and vision a reality.

Outcome: Alignment and Accelerated Execution

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Through working together, senior leaders became more deeply aligned with the strategy, took a greater ownership stake, and accelerated on-the-job action leading to results.

About BTS

BTS focuses on the people side of strategy, working with leaders at all levels to help them make better decisions, convert those decisions to actions and deliver results. At our core, we believe people learn best by doing. For 30 years, we've been designing fun, powerful experiences™ that have profound and lasting impact on people and their careers. We inspire new ways of thinking, build critical capabilities and unleash business success. It's strategy made personal.

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