

Driving Long-Term Growth: Accelerating Strategy Execution at Gap Inc.



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Confronting a highly competitive fashion apparel retail market, Gap Inc., a leading global specialty apparel retailer, continued to lose market share and revenues as customer loyalty declined across the company's five brands. Struggling to deliver a consistent product and customer experience, Gap Inc. was challenged to redefine its strategy once again. Going forward, the company is focused on driving long-term growth by expanding its customer base.

To be successful, Gap's senior management believed that providing leadership and general management with the capabilities needed to grow the business and execute the bold new strategy was critical. Gap Inc. partnered with [BTS](#) to develop a learning and execution journey designed to align executives to the company strategy and build a stronger understanding of how to develop people, improve the customer experience and drive profitability.

A Highly Customized Learning and Execution Journey

BTS created a comprehensive learning and execution journey that involved a series of engaging, blended learning experiences tailored for Gap Inc.'s top executive leaders. The fully customized program aligned leaders to the new strategy, built the capabilities needed for execution and provided a platform to sustain learning and ensure long-term success. Interviews with key executives and BTS' own research and expertise provided the information necessary to develop a program that featured three distinct phases.

Coaching, self-reflection and goal setting were three themes included in the first phase of the journey. Through meetings with managers and a series of connected-learning tools, participants were able to better understand the strategy and gain in-depth knowledge of the role each executive played in leading the retailer to success.

The second phase included a customized [business simulation](#) giving employees the opportunity to step outside of their traditional roles, collaborate in small teams, and

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explore the challenges of strategy execution in a dynamic, risk-free environment. Each program realistically modeled the shifts in the retail industry, integrated Gap's business model and strategic objectives and illustrated the implications of employee's decisions on business performance. Participants were able to apply market, competitive and consumer insights to the business strategy; develop a business portfolio strategy that aligns investments; and apply the strategic and tactical decisions necessary to execute a growth strategy over three simulated years.

To sustain learning and ensure long-term results, the final phase of the journey included feedback, executive coaching and ongoing support. Participants met with their leader to share action plans and receive ongoing coaching to ensure successful execution back on the job.

A Journey that Delivered Long-Term Business Results

The results of the program far exceeded the expectations of the stakeholders. To date, 300 global vice presidents at Gap Inc. have embarked on the learning and execution journey. In terms of developing actionable business and personal leadership plans moving forward, executives scored the program a 4.7 on a scale of 1 to 5. They also added that they feel strongly motivated to apply the skills, knowledge and concepts learned in their role as a leader. One participant commented, "The investment in my learning has energized me and strengthened my commitment to leading at Gap Inc." Another participant found tremendous value in the global program noting, "There were a lot of courageous conversations and global perspectives here—it will be important to keep this alive back across the bridge!"

Gap Inc. created a platform for leaders to grow and hone their skills and capabilities to successfully carry out the enterprise's new strategy focused on sustaining long-term growth. The program allowed executives to apply and develop new leadership competencies, increase leadership effectiveness and collaborate across boundaries. Executives were able to practice managing risk, drive revenue and profits, and create differentiated brand approaches designed to take market share from competitors and drive growth. Going forward, senior leader's wholehearted comprehension of the strategy and their strengthened capabilities will aid the company's long-term growth strategy.

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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