

Sony Empowers Front-Line Leaders to Drive Change



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Recent years have proven to be some of the most difficult in Sony's long history. Facing intense competition and unfavorable macroeconomic conditions, the company's relevance has been threatened, exposing deep vulnerabilities in spite of past restructuring and cost-cutting efforts. To thrive, Sony would have to undergo a massive strategic change to recapture the spirit of innovation once deeply embedded in the corporate culture. Sony Corporation's CEO and President, Sir Howard Stringer, recognized that the company needed "to transform into a more innovative, integrated and agile global organization."

Sony Electronics (SEL), the largest business unit of Sony Corporation of America, was the first to execute the strategic shift. However, organizational transformation hinged on two critical components.

Success Depended on Front-Line Leaders

To effectively execute the company strategy, Sony's senior leadership first recognized that SEL would have to embrace change as a critical business driver to positively impact its bottomline. Second, SEL would have to empower front-line leaders, the primary drivers of performance and engagement across the organization, to be change leaders.

Building Strategy Alignment Among Leaders

Sony partnered with BTS, a leading strategy implementation firm to engage leaders in the strategic shift, build alignment around the company strategy and develop critical capabilities. In two months, 600 leaders participated in a customized discovery-based experiential learning program in 10 locations, incorporating 24 classroom and four webinar sessions.

The customized program allowed leaders to make the connection between the company's strategic objectives and their day-to-day work.

Recognizing executive support as critical and cross-company dialogue as impactful, leaders at all levels of the organization participated in the sessions together. From C-suite executives to business unit heads to front-line leaders, the message was clear. "We're in this together and we'll get through this together."

Navigating Change Demands New Behavior

Through the customized business simulation program, Sony's front-line leaders developed new skills and a new mindset better enabling them to embrace change. The program helped build the capabilities to move the company forward, including:

- Proficiency in dealing with ambiguity
- Techniques to lead teams more effectively through the change process
- Skills to develop well-defined business cases for change initiatives
- Measurement plans to track performance against benchmarks aligned to Sony's new direction
- Confidence to implement change and identify opportunities for change that would improve business performance

The customized program allowed leaders to make the connection between the company's strategic objectives and their day-to-day work. They are better able to lead with distinction and accelerate strategy execution. The success of the engagement has strengthened the partnership between BTS and Sony and fostered new collaborations.

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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