

A Global Leadership Event for the Future: One Company's Innovative Approach to Strategy Alignment



Every few years, a leading animal health company holds a global leadership meeting for their top 200 leaders. Since their last meeting four years ago, a lot had happened in the organization, including the birth of a new strategic framework. Realizing that there was widespread knowledge of the strategy but some uncertainty about how to operationalize it, the chief operating officer and his team set out to make the upcoming leadership meeting one that fulfills three purposes: establishes alignment on the company's goals for 2020; builds appreciation for and the capabilities needed to achieve those goals; and develops awareness of what is happening in the broader industry and world that will impact the business.

In order to accomplish these goals and make the conference highly engaging, the organization partnered with BTS on the design, customization and delivery of this important conference experience. To fully understand the organization's challenges, goals and mindset, BTS started by interviewing over a dozen of the company's leaders. The interviews revealed subtle differences in perspective regarding the company's core mission for 2020, so the team leveraged the BTS Pulse digital platform in a working session to gather ideas, facilitate discussions and gain critical alignment across the group.

A small executive committee that was put together to steer the project came to agreement on their five-year mission and what a successful leadership forum would look like. To achieve the forum objectives, participants would need to share ideas, challenge themselves and the status-quo, embrace new opportunities and technology, better understand their customers, and ultimately agree on and commit to the actions they must take to make their desired future possible. The data gathered in the steering committee's Pulse working session helped refine their definition of the company mission and identify key pivots and behavioral shifts that would be critical to making that goal a reality.

Accelerating Strategy Implementation with Outside-In Thinking

It was critical to the whole steering committee that the leadership forum not just be a standard, lecture-based offsite, but rather a collaborative event that actively engaged and captured the intelligence of the audience. The event accomplished this by leveraging digital-enabled exercises, presentations, interactive exercises, opportunities for collaboration and a business simulation.

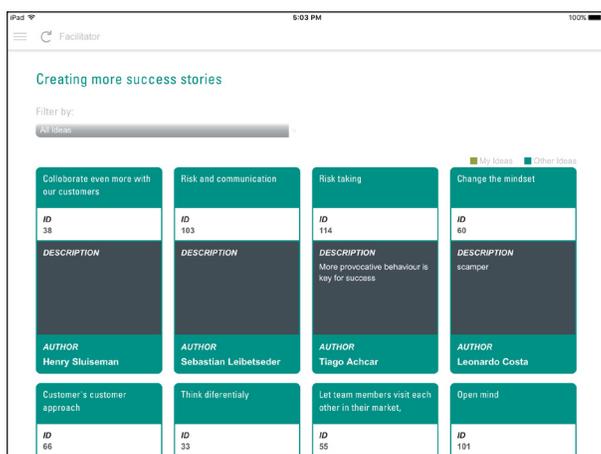
All of these elements were created to achieve the following:

- Inspire and align leaders to accomplish their 2020 mission and cultivate “buy-in”
- Explore how evolving markets, changing customers, new technology and other disruptions will impact their future
- Identify the appropriate skills, behaviors and culture leaders need to exemplify to take the organization forward
- Ensure leaders have a common understanding of the company's strategic framework and how to execute on it
- Define leaders' roles: create personal and organizational accountability, commit to specific actions, and prepare for the future every day

Setting the Stage: Gaining External Perspectives

The three-day leadership forum started with opening remarks from the CEO, in which he laid the foundation for why and how the event would explore critical issues to the leaders and the organization's success. Next, a keynote speaker took the stage to provide the audience with an important external perspective, crucial for leaders to understand when considering their industry and the position of the company within it.

Slowly narrowing this perspective from the outside in, the audience next gained insight from two key customers on their expectations and needs for the future. These changes included shifting demographics, growing key accounts, an increasingly global customer base and more. With a new understanding of how their customers were changing, the leaders then did a deep dive into how their employees would then be adapting to help customers achieve their goals and what they as leaders would have to do differently as a result.



Driving Leadership and Innovation through a Business Simulation

On days two and three, participants dove more deeply into industry and customer trends while exploring their implications on the organization and its people. To help leaders internalize these external changes and consider how to react, the program incorporated multiple strategic, sales, and leadership development elements. A sales acceleration session helped participants learn how to sell to their customers' changing needs and provide real value. For leadership development, facilitators introduced the engaging, actionable concept of “Multipliers,” provided by the Wiseman group, which contrasts effective, inspiring leaders – “multipliers” – with “diminishers,” or those who view intelligence in an elitist way that causes shut down amongst employees.

Rank	Table-Team	Customer Satisfaction Index	Employee Satisfaction Index	Evolution Index	Operating Margin Index	Pipeline Robustness Index	Weighted Total
3	Table2 Team B	108	106	112	92	100	102.1
4	Table19 Team A	111	103	112	94	98	103.6
5	Table8 Team A	107	109	108	97	98	103.4
6	Table13 Team A	107	108	109	93	101	103
7	Table1 Team A	105	108	112	91	101	102.9
8	Table16 Team B	108	105	113	92	98	102.6
9	Table27 Team A	111	103	110	93	101	103
10	Table20 Team A	107	106	110	94	101	102.9

In addition to “Multipliers,” a key component of success in the future would be innovation, a topic introduced to the leaders by guest speaker Peter Mulford, Global Partner and Head of the BTS Innovation Practice. To bring the learnings to life and allow leaders to practice the “Multiplier” behaviors that would be critical for successful, innovative change, they then went through a scenario-based business simulation using the BTS Pulse digital platform. The business simulation, like the rest of the forum aside from the innovation, sales accelerator and “Multipliers” sessions, was completely facilitated by the company’s own leaders. BTS thoroughly supported all facilitators with behind-the-scenes support such as script-writing, coaching and tool introduction.

In the business simulation, leaders grappled with imperatives from the company’s strategic framework as well as real-world business challenges and critical paradoxes resembling those that had been voiced in the customization interviews. As the leaders discussed the scenarios with their team, they were challenged with choosing innovative solutions that addressed both sides of the paradoxes. After each simulation round, the scenarios and the choices that the teams had made were debriefed by a panel of leadership team members from different areas of the business.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?	HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THEM?
Reluctance to bring external knowledge in 18 Table 29	Global approach 115 Table 5
Distraction from been innovative. 15 Table 22	Value customer input 107 Table 28
Resources 25 Table 26	Reward risk taking 10 Table 11
No focus on women power 72 Table 14	Help customer to succeed in competitive market 20 Table 27
Business structure 101 Table 19	Upscale marketing team 51 Table 18
Workplace environment (HQ) does not support informal conversation and collaboration.	Dwork on discipline and time management

The final day of the leadership forum focused on bringing home the learnings and answering the question “What am I going to do about this when I get back on the job?” Participants were given the chance to reflect on what they had learned on the industry, customer, organization and personal levels, and then committed to actions for them to personally complete over the course of the next few months. These follow-up actions were tracked in the digital system, so that each person and their team could track their progress.

Leveraging Digital Tools for Sustained Impact

A key feature of the program, these digital tools also enabled participants to access all of the content, speeches, videos and more from the event, in addition to their personal actions and notes. BTS will continue to build out elements of this tool, such as surveys, interactive prioritization exercises and more, in order to sustain engagement and keep the forum takeaways top-of-mind with leaders for maximum impact.

The participant responses gathered after the event reflected the power of the forum. Asked to rank the Pulse technology, guest speaker (Peter Mulford) and overall event on a scale from 1-7, all elements averaged a score of over 6. Some executives responded with comments such as:

"You have changed the mindset of this whole group, so now we have to continue on this path. There is no way to stop it or go back."

"I just got home and I'm actually feeling a bit sad that the program is over! 😊 What a great meeting and such a great team to work with!"

"Using multipliers in a better way is critical, and the innovation concept should be present all the time."

"I will make an effort to ensure that decisions and actions we make are aligned with our strategy."

"I see new value in allowing others space to grow."

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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