

# Leadership Development to Drive Great Strategy Execution

## A Path to Growth

With the induction of a new leadership team, an American department store unveiled a novel strategy that offered an exciting vision for the future. The new strategy would align the organization's strategic priorities to their values, ultimately resulting in a more unified business and customer experience. Although the strategy was in place, it would take the right culture to drive sustained growth.



### Defining great at all levels

The organization first revisited the values and behaviors that defined their culture. In partnership with BTS, they took a contemporary approach rather than using standard competency models and made the values relevant to all colleagues, not just executives or select groups. To do this, BTS conducted over 120 interviews with leaders across every level and function in the organization, defining "Our Behaviors" in support of the new strategy, identifying what Great looks like at every level across the organization.

With the behaviors in place, it was critical for the organization to communicate them to all leaders and allow them to experience the behaviors in an engaging and impactful way.

### Leadership development for cultivating change

In partnership with BTS, the organization created a series of customized, moment-based leadership simulations that introduced leaders to the new behaviors and allowed them to practice these behaviors as if they were acting on them in real life.

The experience would roll out in three waves, first addressing the top 1,200 leaders of the organization, next going to all 20,000 salaried colleagues, and finally to all 110,000 hourly colleagues. This approach ensured that every level of leadership would understand the new behaviors and skills necessary for success, gaining ownership of the new strategy.

## Living the behaviors

The first iteration of the leadership development program was an offsite targeting 1,200 leaders of functions and leaders of leaders. On the first day of the program, leaders were introduced to the new values and behaviors by their CEO and CHRO. They also experienced a digitally enabled moments-based simulation where they engaged with activities that allowed them to learn and understand the new leadership behaviors they would need live in order to drive growth.



The 1,200 leaders were broken into eight groups of 150 leaders, with one BTS consultant and two senior executives to facilitate each group. The simulation allowed participants to feel as if they were applying their learnings back on the job, because the simulated moments they experienced were directly modeled after scenarios that leaders would face in real life – but in a risk-free environment tailored to enhance learning. Ultimately, the goal of the first day was to help leaders practice, discuss and debate the new behaviors, understanding why they needed to change their values and leadership behaviors in support of the new strategy and path to growth.

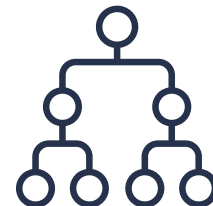
On the second day of the program, leaders crafted and practiced elevator pitches communicating these new behaviors and key messages with their teams. They also identified individual commitments to living the new behaviors in support of the strategy. Commitments were entered into Act@BTS, an automated BTS tool that provides just-in-time reminders and notifications, and themes were identified and shared back by the CEO at the conclusion of the offsite.

Ultimately the goal of the program was to have participants walk away hyper-aligned to the new culture, how to operate using the proper behaviors, and feeling committed to the role each leader and their team plays in driving the culture and strategy.



## Cascading the change throughout the organization

This methodology was taken and applied in a secondary 90-minute program for all 20,000 salaried colleagues. Leaders would experience a similar moments-based simulation as the previous cohort, but with moments that were tailored more closely to the demands of their specific leadership level. Due to the scope of this delivery, salaried colleagues experienced the program in either live face-to-face or virtual settings. The goals for the second cohort remained the same – leaders needed to live the organization’s behaviors and use their learnings to drive strategic change for the business.



Following the first two iterations of leadership development among the top leaders and all salaried colleagues, the leaders experienced modules that allowed them to integrate their learning into their team rallies, team meetings or on the floor in one-on-one conversations for all 110,000 hourly colleagues. The salaried colleagues used a guidebook that provided content and scripts for them to follow based on their setting and the time they had. Again, the experience was tailored more closely to the demands of hourly colleagues. This enabled every leader within the organization to drive the essential learnings from the top to the bottom of the organization.

## Results

The results of the culture shift are still being measured, but the program has created some impressive results. The sessions have scored an average of 97 NPS. Nearly 4,000 commitments have been submitted to the BTS ACT platform. In the most recent Culture survey, which is tied directly to the new behaviors, the organization showed an increase across all measurable areas.

### Examples of act commitments include:

"I will engage my colleagues to create a roadmap that guides our individual and collective behaviors and actions. This will support our organizational growth initiatives by continuously identifying ways to improve and acting on them by an established deadline."

"I will lead my store team with passion and energy toward a mindset of approaching getting better every day relative to personal and store growth. I will strive to keep our team energized and focused on providing a motivating and engaged environment that delivers an amazing customer experience and drive comp sales growth this year by an established deadline."

"I will commit to sharing and discussing results daily with my team which will foster a greater understanding of our wins and opportunities in the building and keep the leadership team focused on growth by an established deadline."

### Qualitative results from participants include:

"I have managers present their business results at our weekly leadership meeting. I also have them share their best and their worst. As a result, they are displaying more confidence in understanding the business and being more proactive in working with others to make fixes."

"We reviewed our behaviors and identified what can be accomplished in a consistent manner. This cannot be a one and done exercise if we are going to establish the culture and change behaviors. We now have bi-weekly meetings to discuss and review everyone's accountability."

"I am now coaching to align with committing to win, through customer engagement and experiences."

### Quantitative results from participants include:

- Delivered **101** percent to sales plan for Q1, and **104** percent to sales plan for Q2, with every metric improving
- Achieved **+2.7** percent over plan for Q1 results
- At **102.9** percent to plan on the quarter
- Getting **19** percent more inbound productivity, \$350K better than plan
- **4** percent improvement in processing time in year to date
- **Double digit** improvement from previous month in time to market

### Program Feedback:

"The breakout sessions were fantastic. Everyone at every level can always practice and develop leadership skills. Loved interacting and practicing with colleagues to better ourselves to take the best version of ourselves to our teams."

"Breakout sessions with time to practice our implementation."

"Would like the exercises we did in the first days' breakout session regarding our behaviors and the scenarios sent to us. Great exercise to do with our teams."

"The content was amazing. I also enjoyed how the 2 days were broken out with the breakout sessions. It was a great way to collaborate and discuss with our colleagues from around the country."



In addition to this highly positive feedback from participants, the program also received external recognition for its effectiveness. **The Path to Growth program was awarded the coveted Gold Brandon Hall Group award for Excellence in Leadership.**

### In conclusion

The organization is only beginning to see the impact of their investment in building their culture in support of their new strategy. Despite this, the results are still impressive. Investing in leadership has created a positive impact, demonstrated through both qualitative and quantitative feedback, showing how leaders are living the values and culture that will enable their **path to growth**.

