

## BUILDING LEADERS

# VIRTUALLY ALL OF THEM!



Consider 2020 through the lens of leadership development. One year ago today, learning leaders around the world seeking to invest in the development of their leadership teams were in the process of locking in funding and travel plans to attend conferences, gain certification in credentialing programs or glean cutting-edge insights from high-profile thought leaders on the future of building great leaders. Then, leadership development took an exceedingly disruptive, and decidedly digital, detour.

It took a couple of weeks from the onset, but – by mid-March – live events everywhere were postponed indefinitely or canceled altogether. Everybody was in a scramble. People who previously thought Zoom was something that happened when you stepped on the accelerator in your car were suddenly introduced to a video conferencing tool by the same name. Almost immediately, learning leaders started passing the controls back and forth as they conducted workshops, meetings and a variety of other virtual get-togethers.

The best example of that early agility and resilience we came across was seen from CEO.works – an executive advisory and capability building company – as they delivered a Value Coaching™ program to a team of global pharmaceutical leaders. The workshop was originally scheduled as an instructor-led session until travel bans were instituted worldwide. At that

point, executing the event presented a challenge. If CEO.works could conduct the training virtually, the show would go on.

On March 25, Shefali Salwan from CEO.works greeted a class with attendees from around the world. She acknowledged that participants were about to experience the first-ever virtual delivery of the Value coaching™ program. She offered, “I really feel like we are creating history today...”

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The reality of that sentiment is that they were, and they were by no means alone. Another global leadership development organization we have ties to reported that 70% of their sales in June of 2020 came from virtual products and offerings they did not have in April!

Digital literacy enables this kind of resilience and the results that accompany it. In response to the unpredictable change few of us had ever experienced, digital learning demonstrated the capacity and

capability to effectively enhance what leaders learn, how they learn it, and, most importantly, how they stay connected and leverage that learning to create measurable impact. Those capabilities were already available, but it took an unexpected and drastic shift in our environment to usher in an era where we gained an opportunity to actualize that potential.

Regardless of what the “new normal” of leadership development turns out to be moving forward, today we have vast and direct experience with the benefits of digital design and learning transfer. That experience applies not only to training delivery but also to the way it involves key stakeholders and sustains behavior change and desired learning outcomes. If nothing else, we are far more comfortable with the functionality, operation and format of virtual interaction. When you think about it, many of us probably logged more screen time in 2020 than Ryan Seacrest!

So, which elements of traditional leadership development will be impacted by digital capabilities in the future?

As far as we can tell, virtually all of them! 🔄

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