

# Rolling Stones

## A CLP LEADERSHIP CASE STUDY

The continuous improvement mind-set of the automotive industry in harmony with the continual customisation approach of Change, Leadership & Partners

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## THE CHALLENGE

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Several years ago, when we first started working for our client, a major actor in the automotive industry, they prided themselves on being an international market leader in technology, innovation and engineering. At the time, their organisational culture was about to be put to the test by the biggest purchase of their then 100 year-old history, merging a culture of German engineering precision and long-term customer relations with a culture of "New World" e-mobility products and a number-crunching attitude.

Our first challenge was to create leadership development programmes to equip newly-promoted C3 and C4 leaders – from both organisational cultures - for the new future ahead. Our second challenge was to continually adapt and re-design those programmes to best fit the fast-paced changes that our client was experiencing, both internally and from the market, as well as incorporate the latest trends in blended learning and virtual classroom technology.

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## OUR APPROACH

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- 1 WORK** closely with client L&D team – a core team on either side meant dedication to both the initial briefing and design phases
- 2 DESIGNATE** a CLP lead facilitator - ensured connection between learning elements, built personal relationships and created links between the learning environment and client's business reality
- 3 STRETCH** the design - readjusting the content to fit the constantly changing needs of the participants as and when the market demands changed, as well as building in more and more virtual classroom elements into the learning journey

For our client and ourselves, it meant taking an iterative approach and an agile design before these buzzwords became commonplace in the world of learning and development. From the beginning, we worked hand-in-glove with the client's Learning & Development team to better understand the salient points of their corporate strategy, as well as to be able to "feel" the history of the two organisational cultures and the vision for a culture powered by the best of both. A key success factor at this stage was having a small core team from both CLP and the client dedicated to the initial briefing and design phases. This ensured tight feedback loops and a quick turnaround of decisions.

Focusing on this close relationship with the client at these early stages also meant that at CLP we had the ability to stretch the design beyond the obvious set of leadership competences to really provide learning opportunities outside of the comfort zone, especially in guiding leaders step by step towards learning in the virtual environment.

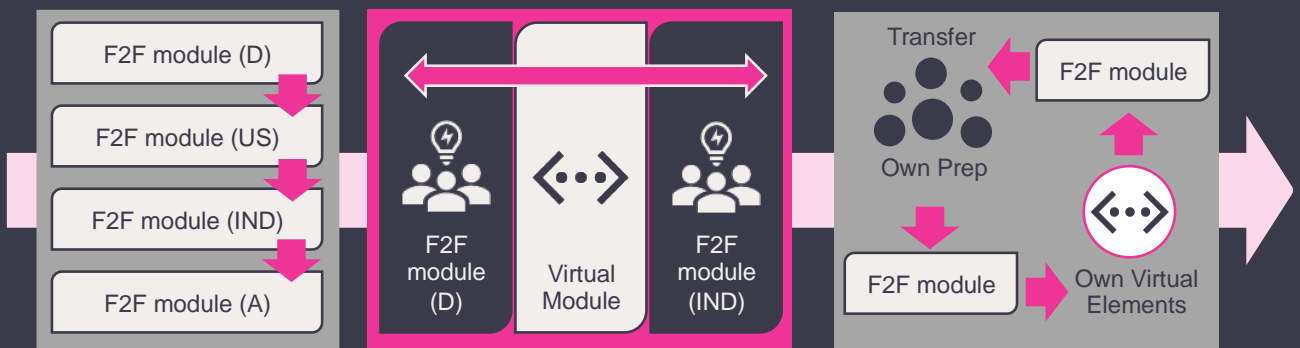
- TWO PROGRAMMES IN PARALLEL
- BLEND OF LEARNING OF ONSITE &
- LEARNING ON 3 CONTINENTS
- 95% PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION
- NEARLY 500 LEADERS DEVELOPED



## OUR APPROACH

Every learning element blended a mix of cognitive skills and emotional experiences so that learners could reflect on their own experiences and had opportunities to experiment with their conclusions in a protected environment. For each programme, a designated lead facilitator from CLP ensured the red thread between learning elements, built personal relationships with the participants over time and created the links between the learning environment and our client's business reality. This lead facilitator was responsible for the iterating design, for close communication with the client and for briefing and preparing specialist facilitators who joined the programmes for certain periods to focus on their area of expertise, whether onsite or virtually.

Thanks to the trust of our client and their closeness to both design and delivery, we were able to deliver parallel iterations of both programmes by collecting feedback onsite and afterwards from the client team and participants. The time between programmes was spent on re-adjusting the content to fit the constantly changing needs of the participants as both sides of the business grew closer together and as the market demands changed the automotive industry's structure. At a learning architecture level, over the years both programmes morphed from a three or four-module onsite deliveries into two face-to-face deliveries interspersed and supported by virtual classroom deep-dives for better individualisation and transfer of learning.



Following the availability of more and more online collaboration tools, the 'maturity' of the virtual sessions also progressed – while we started with more webinar-based videoconferencing settings, our virtual classrooms came to involve cutting-edge online collaborative instruments such as virtual whiteboards, brainstorming tools, online simulations, gamification and digital breakouts so that we still ensure an interactive, intimate learning atmosphere that creates connection and trust in the virtual environment.

The latest learning design developments involve

the rebirth of the C3 programme into a 50/50 blend of group learning and individual activity that allows peer support and trust to develop between participants but also gives individual learners the freedom to adapt the programme to their specific needs, as and when they arise.

Although the programmes have been characterised from the beginning by continual re-design and iteration, there are a few salient points that remained constant. The role of the lead facilitator mentioned above is one.

Another is the fact that, for this target group, every design iteration kept the face-to-face elements as anchors to provide personal experiences that create emotional support between participants to sustain their connection and peer support during the virtual elements.

Even though the current programme designs have more virtual learning than onsite sessions,

the personal connection between learners and the informal networking that happens when physically together continue to create a solid basis for interpersonal development and exchange. From our point of view at CLP, this is vital to ensure that learning continues offline during the duration of the programme and also at peer and individual level after the programme, particularly for this level of leaders.



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## THE RESULTS

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To date, both programmes have gone through three major re-designs and numerous design “tweaks” so that both content and methods stayed relevant to what the target group requires at the time. As the programmes iterated so did the method of evaluating their learning success.

Depending on where we were on our design iteration, many learners were asked for their feedback as “users” directly onsite on the relevance of covered topics and on what we should stop, start or continue doing in the programme delivery. In addition, the internal design team caught up with participants months after completing their programme to evaluate the

transfer of their learning into their business reality and to better adjust the balance of virtual and onsite design elements as participants became more accustomed to the virtual classroom.

Both programmes, which have the objective of supporting new C3 and C4-level leaders, are linked together in such a way that certain topics, such as change management, build on each other while others, like strategic leadership, are introduced as growing leaders require them. In our role as champions for lifelong learning, we at CLP are proud that many participants have been through both programmes as they have grown as leaders within our client’s business.

## IN HINDSIGHT

Looking back at such an iterative process, it was key for us to stay close to our client's corporate strategy. Understanding what long-term goals our client was striving for meant asking ourselves what kinds of leadership behaviours those future goals required and how much of a leader's personal interactions take place face-to-face or virtually, so every design iteration brought an adjustment of the learning objectives of both programmes as well. As a design team, it meant questioning our own assumptions about the programmes and often led to more changes than previously agreed upon, but this was a key success factor in keeping the learning content

relevant for the business reality of participating leaders.

Another important factor was that, although both programmes are part of our client's internal promotion ladder and are set up to prepare participants for their next leadership challenge, the programmes themselves did not have a diagnostic or assessment character. The trustful relationship that the design and facilitation team built up enabled us to create a safe learning environment in which participants could experiment new behaviours without feeling under pressure to perform.

## CLP's ADDED VALUE

How these programmes have evolved to fit the changing needs of the client organisation and individual learners shows the value of customising both content, learning approaches and delivery methods to suit each unique business environment. Although we at CLP are in a position to deliver high-quality leadership development in virtual learning environments, we support our client in their wish to maintain certain face-to-face elements as cornerstones for personal exchange and networking and see the

learning blend as one more factor in customising content to suit our client's needs. While some might feel that design iteration is a sign of not "understanding" learning needs at the beginning, being close to the client's business and continually adapting development programmes as needs arise pays out enormously in being able to give leaders the learning support they need, in a format they require, and at the time they can implement it. And that is at the heart of our approach to learning and development.

*In the spirit of the iterative nature of these top leadership development programmes, we continue today to redesign and prototype versions of both learning solutions, adapting them continuously to the changing needs of our client, their business and major changes in our working environment.*

*If you are interested in how CLP can adapt leadership development solutions to your needs, whatever the blend of face-to-face or virtual, we'll be happy to hear from you!*



CONTACT CLP