



## Leadership Team Successfully Helps Cox Communications Transform Its Business

Cox Communications  
Best Learning Team  
October 2018



### Company Background



<b>Company-at-a-Glance</b>	<p><a href="#">Cox Communications</a> (CCI) is a broadband communications and entertainment company, providing advanced digital video, internet, telephone and home security and automation services over its own nationwide IP network. The third-largest US cable company, Cox serves approximately 6 million residences and businesses. Cox Business is a facilities-based provider of voice, video and data solutions for commercial customers and Cox Media is a full-service provider of national and local cable spot and digital media advertising. Cox is known for its pioneering efforts in broadband, voice and commercial services, industry-leading customer care and its outstanding workplaces. For eight years, Cox has been recognized as the top operator for women by Women in Cable Telecommunications. Cox also has ranked among DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies for Diversity 12 times.</p>
<b>Headquarters</b>	Atlanta, Georgia
<b>Year Founded</b>	1962
<b>Employees</b>	18,000
<b>Global Scale (Regions that you operate in or provide services to)</b>	United States



<b>Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)</b>	Cox Communications provides advanced digital video, internet, telephone and home security and automation services to residential customers. Cox Business is a facilities-based provider of voice, video and data solutions for commercial customers. Cox Media is a full-service provider of national and local cable spot and digital media advertising.
<b>Industry</b>	Telecommunications
<b>Stock Symbol</b>	NA
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.cox.com">www.cox.com</a>

## Budget and Timeframe

<b>Overall budget</b>	\$5 million
<b>Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?</b>	14
<b>Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?</b>	25
<b>Number of contractors involved with implementation</b>	15
<b>Timeframe to implement</b>	2 years
<b>Start date of the program</b>	February 2016

## Business Conditions and Business Needs

Cox Communications completed a company-wide transformation that completely restructured its care, sales and collections operations from decentralized operating units to centralized centers of excellence (COEs). The efforts involved standing up or growing operations in select locations while phasing out operations in others. In total, the migration to a matrixed organization affected over 50% of Cox’s entire workforce.

The Leadership and Organizational Development team was created to respond to the implications of business transformation. This team was charged to align leader expectations across the organization in the new operating model while building the talent pipeline to support the future growth of the organization.

## Overview

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The Leadership and Organizational Development (L&OD) team is comprised of 14 members who provide leadership development, organizational development, consulting and team effectiveness support for all leaders across CCI.

The L&OD team identified the ways in which they would impact the organization by: providing expertise and support for efforts to build the business, the culture and future of CCI; developing leaders who inspire, engage and enlist their teams to be the best; and creating a culture to drive accountability for results, meet the plan and deliver awesome customer experiences.

There were several driving forces which helped shape the team's plan to impact the organization, including: inconsistent development experiences for leaders; the impact of leaders on the customer experience — a key differentiator of Cox's brand in the market; managers' over-compensation for employees' skill gaps due to lack of development; ineffective use of budgeted funds for development; leaders' desire for greater skill development and learning opportunities, as well as greater engagement of their leader in their development, as noted in an employee opinion survey; and more and varied opportunities to expand knowledge and experience.

The L&OD team established guiding principles for their work: ensure all development experiences are relevant to CCI's purpose and vision; always show line of sight between leadership development and attaining the plan; make connections up, down and across the network through modeling, partnership and giving/receiving feedback; align with development model that emphasizes discovery, experiential and social learning; treat development as a pathway of experiences defined in journey maps; vary learning approaches via the 70/20/10 framework to align how skills are learned.

The 20/20 Vision Leadership Series has been integrated in to the development curriculum for all leaders, supervisors through senior directors. Additionally, the content has been aligned with the executive development curriculum so there is a development path for leaders which builds on each step through their career. All supervisors through senior

directors have been required by the senior leadership team of CCI to complete the 20/20 Vision Leadership Series. New leaders must be in their role at least six months prior to enrolling in their respective program.

## **Learning Approaches**

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Using a systematic and systemic approach to conduct performance gap analysis, the team collaborated to improve human and organizational performance, allowing CCI to make the plan and, likewise, to positively impact the lives of those working in the company.

After transformation, the L&OD team conducted a gap analysis to determine the needs of CCI leaders in the new structure. This included an in-depth data collection process to understand the current state, desired state and to define the performance gap, which included a process known as “triangulation.” The team gathered evidence of the current state via the following processes: interviews at various leadership levels and with human resource partners; by conducting surveys of the target audience(s) and their leaders and direct reports; and by conducting focus groups with leadership audiences.

The L&OD team identified the need for consistent leadership experiences that would impact leaders’ ability to make the plan and enhance the employee experience while putting customers first. The leadership experience that was born of these efforts is called 2020 Vision Leadership Series and includes three programs: FOCUS for supervisors, INSIGHT for managers and senior managers (with direct reports) and DRIVE for directors and senior directors.

Working collaboratively across the matrixed organization, the team of 14 divided into three sub-teams, each supporting one of the three programs. Leaning into individual strengths, the three project teams determined the best fit for team roles based on experience, track record of results and passion. Roles per program include: project manager, designer, staff and facilitators.

Additionally, a single individual would serve across all three programs as technical support, with two additional adjunct staff members supporting administrative and logistics functions.

All three programs have evolved over time to best meet the needs of the audiences, which has led to a shift in how program content is delivered. For example, during the first two years of INSIGHT, the team hired a vendor to assist with the delivery of the program.



Based on feedback and cost concerns, the team later took over the role the vendor was playing, resulting in significant cost savings and improved program delivery. Participant feedback has been critical in the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of all three programs. The team uses feedback to enhance, edit and improve each program with an eye toward how competency development affects performance and supports internal and external customers and key performance metrics, including team culture.

Since the three leadership development programs are offered in multiple cities across the footprint, programs are designed to be delivered in the audience's home location or in a centralized location that is easy to access and enhances the participant experience. For example: FOCUS is delivered in-market based on where the audience is located. INSIGHT and DRIVE, however, are delivered on the corporate campus, where leaders can further expand their brand, influence and network with partners at the corporate office location.

Designing and selecting the best solution for each program was based on the triangulation of evidence collected during root cause analysis. The introduction of newly branded leadership competencies provided a True North for understanding the key competencies required for each leadership level. Models and programs were selected based on how they aligned with the leadership competencies, key business priorities and culture. The L&OD team researched many different off-the-shelf solutions, in-house solutions and blended approaches. Ultimately, each program used a blended approach for content development based on the audience, key stakeholders and the needs of the business.

Knowing the organization was looking for a baseline to determine the return on investment, each program incorporates a competency-based 360 assessment as participants both enter and exit the program. The 360 assessment at the program start allows participants to determine what they will focus on during their six-month program experience. The 360 at the program conclusion allows participants to create an individual development plan that reflects on-the-job experiences and challenges meant to continue the learner's journey after the program concludes.

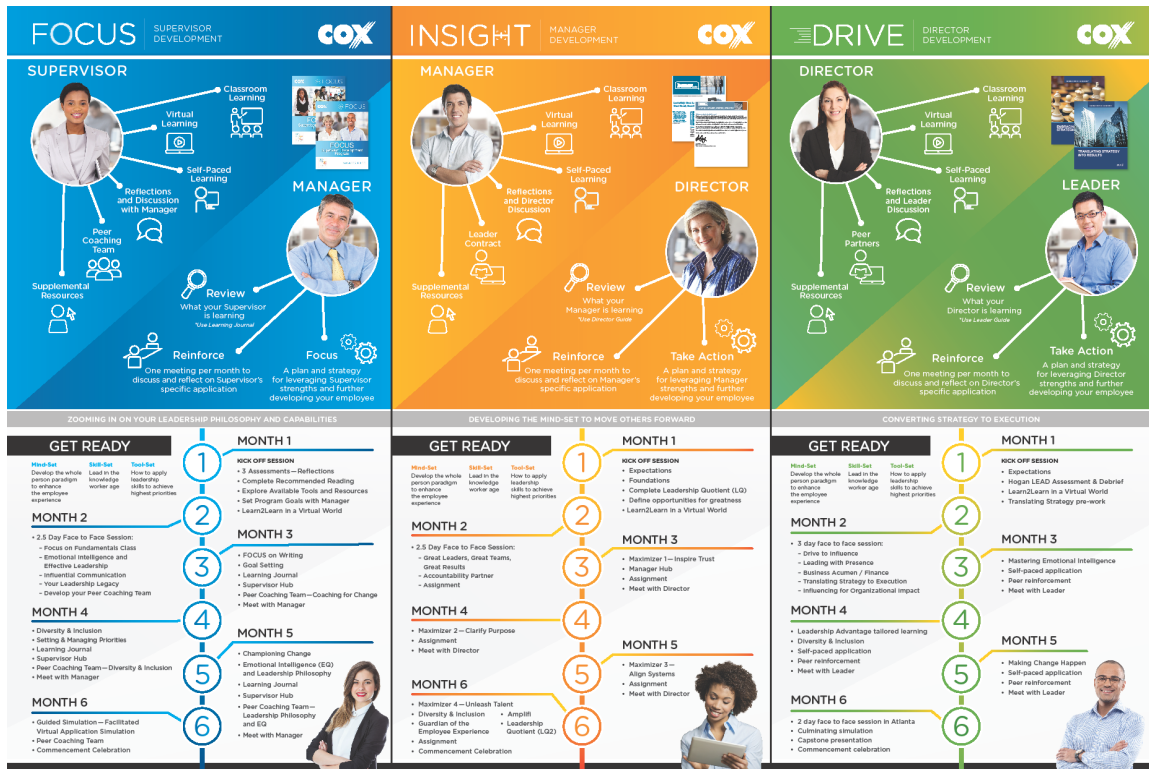
To ensure a consistent feel between the three programs and alignment with the 70/20/10 development model, each of the programs provides blended courseware including instructor-led content, webinars, web-based training, self-directed learning, social learning and application and experience back on the job with direct reports and boundary partners. Each program nests with the others, ensuring each program builds on the

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previous and ensuring a consistent and reliable development path for each stage of the participant's career.

Figure 1: Programs that Build on Previous Knowledge



Source: Cox Communications

## Delivery of Solution

Each program provides a consistent six-month experience, starting with a welcome call for both program participants and their leaders. As they enter a program, participants complete a 360 assessment to determine leadership competency gaps. Then, participants attend an instructor-led session in month two. Over the next four months, participants of each program (depending on level) then engage in webinars, web-based training, self-directed learning, social learning and application and experience back on the job with direct reports and boundary partners. During this time, they are completing assignments, holding themselves and each other accountable and meeting with their leader to discuss application and synthesis. In month six, participants meet either live or virtually to



celebrate and commence the program. Graduates receive recognition and invitations to join future sessions as coaches for new participants in the programs.

During the welcome call, leaders of program participants are introduced to their role and provided with information, tools and resources to support their participant through the six-month experience, ensuring the participant and leaders are checking in regularly and the participant is using their new skills and tools back on the job to impact business results. L&OD takes this opportunity to introduce program participants to the virtual and online tools available to them as part of their experience. Virtual and online tools are designed to enhance the participant experience, allowing them to access program content just-in-time through a mobile app and other resources.

The live session provides the main program content for each leadership level, although additional content is provided on webinars, etc. Participants review their key performance metrics and focus areas to determine how they will best use their learnings to align goals down to the frontline, ensure clarity of the most important work to be done, align their teams behind the department goals and plan to win for their teams, departments and Cox overall. Delivered by certified facilitators, the instructor-led sessions allow participants to build skills and competencies, participate in social learning, build their networks and create action plans for transfer back on the job. During the in-person session, participants select or are assigned learning partners and triads.

Relationships and partnerships are key to leadership effectiveness and successes at Cox. The learning partners and triads participate in social learning between the formal learning opportunities, via facilitated webinars. Learning partners and triads meet to discuss and synthesize learning concepts, discuss best practices, conduct peer-coaching and application on the job, challenges and even-better-ifs. Stumbling blocks or barriers can then be shared and everyone can learn together and from each other during the next formal learning opportunity with facilitators. This allows program audiences to own their learning and be accountable for results.

Participants are part of a cohort called a bundle who navigate their six-month journey together. Several bundles launch each year depending on the number of audience members eligible for programs. A graphic below illustrates the 2018 cadence for bundles.

As program participants commence each program, they have an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and where their journey has taken them. As they exit each

program, they participate in a second 360 assessment related to competency development. When compared with their initial 360, program participants can track their growth and make decisions about next steps in their development based on any identified gaps on their 360 assessments. Gaps are identified as those competencies that can drive business and performance results per individual.

**Figure 2: Program Vision**



Source: Cox Communications

## Measurable Benefits

Cox Communications (CCI) uses CEB Metrics That Matter™ to enable more precision in strategic talent decisions, moving beyond big data to optimizing workforce learning investments against the most business-critical skills and competencies.

Three types of surveys were used ranked on a 5-point Likert scale.

- Post-event:
  - Sent to participant within 24 hours of course completion.
- Participant follow-up:
  - Sent 90 days post-event.
- Manager follow-up:
  - Sent 90 days post-event.





The following chart illustrates the 2020 program results outpacing benchmark on the following: ROI, job impact, support, learning effectiveness, online delivery and courseware.

(N Count = the number of respondents.)

**Figure 3: Benchmark Data is DII Telecommunications Excluding CCI**

Category	Return on Investment	N Count		Average	
		CCI	Benchmark	CCI	Benchmark
<b>Question</b>					
	The training was a worthwhile investment in the employee's career development.	263	6,232	78.33%	76.47%

Category	Job Impact	N Count		Average	
		CCI	Benchmark	CCI	Benchmark
<b>Question</b>					
	I have been able to successfully apply the knowledge/skills learned in this class to my job.	260	25,184	78.85%	76.41%
	I will be able to apply the knowledge and skills learned in this class to my job.	1,219	325,032	91.63%	90.09%
	The employee has been able to successfully apply the knowledge/skills learned in this class to his/her job.	257	5,881	70.04%	66.26%

Category	Support	N Count		Average	
		CCI	Benchmark	CCI	Benchmark
<b>Question</b>					
	After training, this employee and I discussed how he/she will use the learning on his/her job.	259	5,714	74.13%	70.95%
	I provided adequate resources (time, money, equipment) to this employee so he/she could successfully apply this training on his/her job.	260	5,973	91.15%	78.65%
	I set expectations with this employee for this learning prior to their attending/participating in training.	252	5,951	69.84%	69.49%

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Category	Learning Effectiveness	N Count		Average	
Question		CCI	Benchmark	CCI	Benchmark
I feel this employee has learned new knowledge or skills from this training.		255	5,996	74.90%	74.39%

Category	Scrap Learning	N Count		Average	
Question		CCI	Benchmark	CCI	Benchmark
What percent of new knowledge and skills learned from this training did you directly apply to your job?		262	17,000	32.02%	34.70%
What percent of new knowledge and skills learned from this training did you observe being applied by the employee to his/her job?		260	2,451	37.62%	44.72%

Category	Online Delivery	N Count		Average	
Question		CCI	Benchmark	CCI	Benchmark
The online delivery had the right level of user interaction or involvement.		763	213,087	89.25%	85.37%

Category	Courseware	N Count		Average	
Question		CCI	Benchmark	CCI	Benchmark
Effectiveness of the practices within each lesson to reinforce the knowledge and skills learned in the session.		1,205	4,624	90.87%	79.94%
The examples presented helped me understand the content.		788	329,363	90.86%	89.88%

Source: Cox Communications

## Overall

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The L&OD project manager team meets weekly to ensure lessons learned are being applied, that the program content still meets the needs of the business and that the project remains on track and moving forward.

The team meets regularly to review participant feedback, discuss business impact and review survey results. Based on results over time, some themes emerged related to change management, participant technology challenges, learner fatigue, leadership support, technology failures and obtaining the feedback needed to ensure the programs were achieving intended results.

Learners were being asked to take control of their learning in the new blended learning environment and this was a significant challenge for highly tenured employees used to being shepherded in classrooms. The use of technology was a significant challenge for learners who showed up late to virtual classes or could not figure out how to log on to WebEx. Working independently and in triads and peer partner groups on lessons were new concepts and people were unused to scheduling their time to complete activities. The project team failed to implement a good change management process to support learners. Instead of providing job aids to support learners in new technologies (which was the original strategy), program facilitators began to teach learners how to navigate their tools on the welcome calls. For participants in very high-volume areas (supervisors), a company was brought on to teach learners how to navigate WebEx before attending their 20/20 program, which allowed learners to build confidence before attending their programs. The project team began to provide tools that participants could use to better manage their time and get the most out of their learning partnerships. As the third program, DRIVE, rolled out, all lessons learned from FOCUS and INSIGHT were employed to improve the DRIVE experience up front.

Another area of improvement identified was the initial length of facilitated webinars, which was creating participant fatigue. Too much information was being pushed at learners without the time needed to synthesize and apply learning. The team designed shorter, bite-size webinars with more interaction at the beginning and throughout for a more effective experience.

Leader support is required for participants to be able to apply lessons back at work. Leaders often need to clear the path, limit some assignments or offer coaching on how to

apply concepts and this requires time and support. The project team learned early in the process to engage the leader's leader up front to get their commitment to be a part of the process. The increased focus was on having leaders attend welcome calls with their participants to set expectations, receive useful tools for the leader's leader and ensure both participants and leaders understood their roles in the process.

As challenging as the new technology was for participants, the L&OD team had adoption challenges as well. The L&OD team had to learn how to use the tools and to teach participants how to use them. Through this process some best practices emerged: always have a producer for webinars, and when using external vendors always have an internal resource available for technology failure. When technology fails, use established back-up processes to ensure the class runs or reschedule as appropriate.

The project team employed Metrics that Matter as the program survey tool. Surveys were sent to program participants after each discrete element of the 20/20 program and the response rate was low. Participants were being over-surveyed and were unclear about which program element they were being surveyed on. The project team responded by changing the number of surveys sent and improving the process. Surveys are only sent for major milestones in the program and feedback is now received at a higher return rate.

### **What is Next/Future Outlook?**

The L&OD team has partnered with the learning operations team to create an opportunity for functional trainers that have been identified as high-potential employees to deliver classroom content during the in-person session.

Exciting future plans for the 20/20 Vision Leadership series include the implementation of social learning groups for alumni that builds on the content from the programs and engaging alumni as guest speakers and/or leaders as teachers, as well as leveraging a forum for alumni to communicate and share best practices.

The development of peer partner guides to continue to build and apply skills, experiences and lessons learned post program will provide ongoing support in this critical area.

Additionally, maintenance of the programs after incumbent leaders complete (2019 and beyond) is necessary to ensure that the content continues to deliver relevant material to the leader audience.



## About Brandon Hall Group

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Brandon Hall Group is a HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management. With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 20 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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