

## Kia Preps Sales Teams For Launch of New Hybrid

Kia Motors America  
Best Use of Blended Learning  
October 2017



### Company Background



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Irvine, California, USA
Year Founded	1992
Revenue	\$47 Billion
Employees	1,652
Global Scale	Worldwide with offices, plants, design centers, and R&D facilities in 172 countries.
Customers/Output, etc.	Kia offers a wide variety of vehicles.
Industry	Automotive
Stock Symbol	KRX
Website	<a href="http://www.kia.com">www.kia.com</a>

### Budget and Timeframe

Budget and Timeframe	
Overall budget	\$1.4M
Number of employees involved with the implementation?	30

Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	4
Number of contractors involved with implementation	27 Ardent learning contractors
Timeframe to implement	7 Months
Start date of the program	September 26, 2017

## Business Conditions & Business Needs

---

Kia's Niro was a new crossover-hybrid vehicle with a collection of new technologies and features. This vehicle created the need to train dealership sales and service personnel to describe the new features, interact with a new type of Kia customer, and explain the Niro advantages over competitive vehicles. Kia dealership personnel needed to overcome customer objections to hybrid vehicles, particularly in certain regions of the United States. If dealership personnel could explain Niro's hybrid technology, convey its wins over competitors, and employ strategies to counter competitors' strengths, the vehicle would give Kia a groundbreaking opportunity to attract new customers and ultimately increase profitability for Kia Motors America.

## Overview

---

To capture attention and raise enthusiasm for this new vehicle, a company-wide blended learning solution began with a "buzz" video and a compelling Niro facts sheet delivered two months prior to in-dealership training.

One month prior to in-dealership training, a required web-based training course was launched to prepare Kia dealership personnel to attend the live Kia Niro training. This knowledge-building, web-based course allowed for hands-on, skill-building for the live sessions and served as a 100% solution to train dealership personnel the Niro Tour didn't reach.

The 3.5-hour in-dealership session focused on skill-building where the web-based course left off. The live training included hands-on practice activities to ensure participants could meet course objectives:

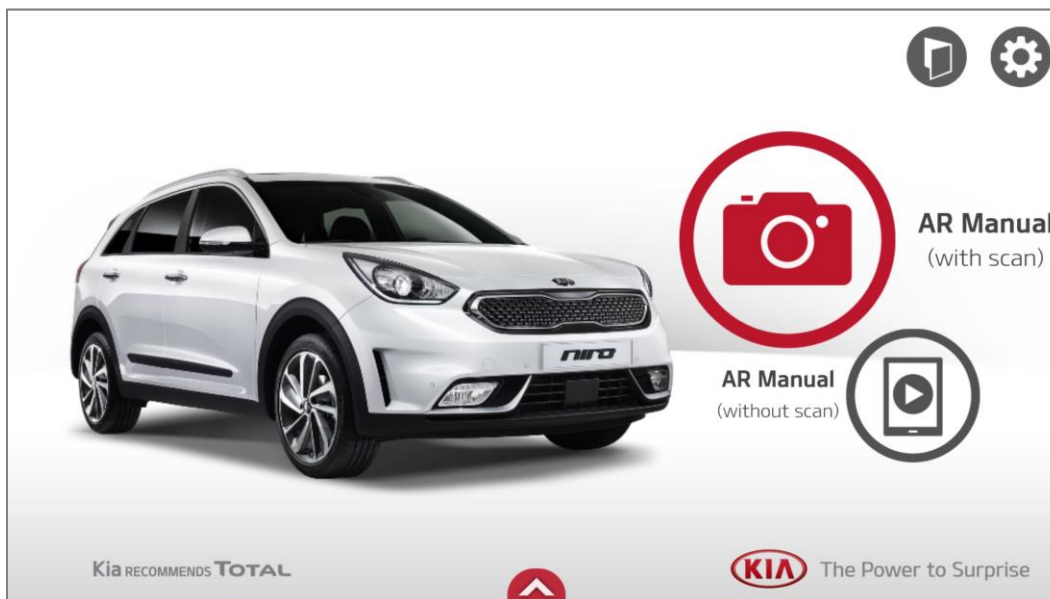
- Fluently describe the new technologies and features.
- Interact with a new type of customer shopping for a crossover-hybrid vehicle.

- Describe Niro's advantages and benefits over competitive vehicles.

## Technology-based Learning in Live Training

An augmented-reality app demonstrated features such as advanced safety elements that are difficult to explain or show to customers. Participants tapped various areas on a vehicle image to access video demonstrations. After training, the app was used as an ongoing sustainment tool to help dealership personnel illustrate and explain the features to customers. Participants could choose to scan areas inside or outside the vehicle to pull up facts and information about the Niro. In addition, the app included an option to tap hotspots on the screen for use without scanning if a vehicle was not present.

Figure 1: Augmented Reality App



Source: Kia Motors America 2017

The second technology-based learning used in the training was a Virtual Reality (VR) Competitive Comparison activity using 3D Viewers. Participants used viewers with an iPad to see how the Kia Niro stacks up against its three main competitors: Toyota Prius, Ford C-Max, and Honda HR-V. Feeling as if they were in the competitive vehicles, participants could explore the cars from multiple vantage points as they selected hotspots to discover features that made the Niro outstanding. This activity allowed for realistic competitive comparisons without the time and expense of bringing the vehicles to Kia dealerships.

Figure 2: Virtual Reality Competitive Comparison



Source: Kia Motors America 2017

As a final component of the in-dealership training, participants took a ride in the Niro following a pre-determined, test-drive route. During the ride, they answered questions about key Niro features, benefits, and competitive advantages and could make notes to share with customers.

Key Niro features highlighted in the test drive included its stylish, roomy crossover proportions, its un-hybrid-like driving experience with quick acceleration and smooth delivery in maneuvers, quiet ride with less noise, vibration, and harshness than other hybrids, unique engineering innovations, and advanced technology not found in competitor vehicles.

The in-dealership training's blended solution:

- Met the need to impart knowledge and build customer-facing skills related to the Niro.
- Ensured that dealership personnel could fluently describe the vehicle and its new features and clearly explain its advantages.
- Met and exceeded sales goals by producing more profit and sales of this vehicle to enhance the Kia brand.

From launch through April 19, 2017, Kia sold 6,391 retail units of the Kia Niro in the U.S. – significantly higher than the company's goal.

Figure 3: Test Ride Participant Notes for Customers

**TEST RIDE**

MODULE 6  
Let's Go for a Ride!

---

Experiencing Niro

As a passenger, make notes about your test-ride experience so you can share with your customers!

Acceleration Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Braking: \_\_\_\_\_

Transition From ECO to Sport Mode: \_\_\_\_\_

Maneuvering and Turning: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Kia Motors America 2017

## Design of the Program

### Business Indicators

Attracting new customers and meeting or exceeding goals for Niro sales were translated into behavioral expectations in the form of competencies, skills, and tasks. By defining the gaps between ideal and actual, a platform for change, curriculum development, and performance sustainment was created.

To work through this effort, Ardent Learning's instructional design team collaborated with the Kia product planning manager (SME) and regional representatives to identify learning

objectives based on focus groups conducted with Kia dealership personnel and potential consumers in each region.

By combining input from those focus groups with product guides, dealership visits, and access to a pre-launch vehicle, the project team was able to identify baseline knowledge and areas where participants needed more help with the new vehicle knowledge, regional differences, and sales and customer-service skill building. The project team also identified feedback from previous Kia vehicle launches to enhance the activities used in this design.

The design phase described the main concepts to be presented throughout the blended program, intended instructional strategies used to present concepts and meet learning objectives, and activities and/or scenarios that would provide a framework for each learning objective/concept.

To ensure all key elements were included, the following were used:

- List of topics.
- Terminal and enabling learning objectives for topics, using “performance verbs.”
- Support materials.
- Initial agenda.
- Purpose and delivery methods for topics, including:
  - Promotion of learner interactivity.
  - Opportunities for learner practice.
- Scenario matrix, with examples appropriate to different regions of the U.S.
- Success evaluation, i.e., evaluating across Kirkpatrick’s four levels.

## **Delivery of the Program**

---

In November 2016:

- The “buzz” video and compelling-facts guide were launched on Kia University’s Learning Management System (LMS).
- A series of eBlast communications were sent to inform Kia dealership and regional personnel that the web-based training and launch training were coming.

In December 2016:



- The series of eBlast communications continued with more specific information about in-dealership training content and timing.
- The 45-minute, web-based course and post-test were launched on Kia University's LMS. This eLearning was a requirement for all dealership personnel as pre-work (knowledge building) for the 85% of dealerships that would be receiving in-dealership training and as the 100% solution for those dealership personnel who would not receive the live training.
- A train-the-trainer was conducted at KMA corporate headquarters to prepare 18 training facilitators to deliver the in-dealership sessions.
- Four concurrent, in-dealership pilot sessions were conducted to test materials, activities, technology, and timing.

From January to March 2017:

- To train approximately 7,000 Kia Dealership Service and Sales Consultants in approximately eight weeks, 18 facilitators were hired to drive the 2017 Kia Niro to 700 dealership locations. Some dealerships were small enough to be trained in a half-day session.

From March 2017, ongoing:

- Dealership personnel have access to the compelling facts and web-based training as references, along with the Augmented Reality app that can be downloaded on their own or dealership devices during the live training.
- Randomly sampled dealership personnel are assessed by Kia corporate to ensure they could fluently describe the Niro's features, benefits, and competitive advantages and apply the skills they learned. Those participants not able to "pass" the in-person assessment must retake the web-based training and refer to in-dealership materials specific to topics they missed.
- All tour materials were reworked to fit Kia's ongoing in-dealerships' quarterly training. Participants who did not pass the post-assessment were required to retake the Niro training.

## **Change Management Efforts**

---

A collaborative relationship including role and responsibility definitions was developed among the entire project team during kickoff. Obstacles were handled as they surfaced.

The process for addressing change involved weekly status meetings to keep team members informed and to provide direction if and when things changed. Positive reinforcement was provided for behaviors aligned with the change.

The change management process was:

- **Before.** Why is this changing? What does success look like? What will it mean for the team to implement this change?
- **During the change.** What needs to be done? When and how will the team do it? How does the team get the info or help that they need?
- **After the change.** Is this being done correctly? Is it working? How is feedback provided to keep things on track?

The process was used to handle the following obstacles:

- Vehicles were not available when initially planned. When the project was created in September, the new Niro vehicles were supposed to be available in dealerships by December 2016, and the training tour was to start the first week of January. In early December, management learned that vehicles would not be available until mid-January. Management revised the schedules, kept facilitators informed about the change, and updated communications to dealerships so they were aware and prepared.
- Just before the train-the-trainer sessions, one of Kia's 18 facilitators had a conflict and could not do the tour. A back-up facilitator stepped in, learned the materials, and replaced the original facilitator. In addition, due to the delayed tour start, there were facilitators who had prior commitments on some of the rescheduled dates. To conduct the tour in the agreed-upon number of days, two additional "gap" facilitators were hired and trained to fill in.
- Last-minute product changes resulted in necessary changes to materials just before the trainers' session and pilot in late December. These changes were identified quickly and materials were updated and reprinted where possible. Changes that couldn't be updated in the time allotted were explained by facilitators to participants.

## Measurable Benefits

---

An evaluation strategy was devised following the Kirkpatrick model.



### **Level 1: Satisfaction**

At the conclusion of every session, participant feedback was captured using Survey Monkey. Weekly reports showed what participants thought about the program (reactions to and satisfaction with the training and support materials) and verbatim notes by participants on content, flow, structure, and facilitator.

Overwhelmingly positive results were received throughout the tour, and participants commented on how quick the session seemed even though it was 3.5 hours in length. The reaction was due in part to the interactivity built into the session.

### **Level 2: Knowledge**

For this project, the multiple-choice, post-test was administered online using either facilitator-provided iPads or participant devices. Tests were fed into an online database, grades were extracted and scores published in Kia's LMS. Participants were allowed to take the post-test only one time. A grade of 80% passed the post-test.

### **Levels 3 and 4**

Behavior change was measured through application activities in class and ongoing observations, and business results were measured as a function of new vehicles sold. Year-to-Date, 6,391 retail units were sold in the U.S. This number is higher, by an overwhelming margin, than was anticipated by Kia.

### **Overall**

---

Key findings and lessons learned will be applied to future launch plans for Kia products. As a result, projects are in place to replicate the many Niro successes in future training designs by including similar elements:

- Engaging, pre-work eLearning, a “buzz” video, and compelling facts.
- Extremely interactive workshop activities and materials, including:
  - Competitive group activities.
  - User-friendly, participant materials that include:
    - High-level, easy-to-digest information.
    - Clear instructions for where to find more detailed information.
- A thorough train-the-trainer session.
- On-point project management.

Lessons learned from the Niro Launch Training also will be applied to elevate future launches:

- Pre-training to help Kia's field personnel support dealerships.
- Interactive participant guides delivered on iPads to allow for more media-rich materials.
- More comprehensive, competitive-comparison information in participant materials through interactive participant guides.
- Sustainment modules aligned with level 3 evaluation findings, i.e., additional training beyond pre-work web-based training and launch materials.



## About Brandon Hall Group

---

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.

### Inspiring a Better Workplace Experience

Our mission: Empower excellence in organizations around the world through our research and tools every day. At the core of our offerings is a Membership Program that combines research, benchmarking and unlimited access to data and analysts. The Membership Program offers insights and best practices to enable executives and practitioners to make the right decisions about people, processes, and systems, coalesced with analyst advisory services which aim to put the research into action in a way that is practical and efficient.

### Membership Offers Tailored Support

Our membership delivers much more than research. Membership provides you direct access to our seasoned team of thought leaders dedicated to your success, backed by a rich member community, and proactive support from our client services team.

### RESEARCH ACCESS & EVENTS

- Reports
- Case Studies, Frameworks & Tools
- DataNow® & TotalTech®
- Webinars and Research Spotlights
- Annual HCM Conference

### ADVISORY SUPPORT

- Ask the Expert
- 1 on 1 Consultations
- Research Briefings
- Benchmarking

## CLIENT SUCCESS PLAN

- Your Priorities
- Executive Sponsor
- Client Associate
- Monthly Meetings

## Strategic Consulting Offers Expert Solution Development

Our consulting draws on constantly updated research and hundreds of case studies from around the globe. We provide services that simplify and target efforts to produce business results.

## BENCHMARKING

- Competitive/Comparative
- Maturity Model
- Custom Research

## STRATEGY

- Business Case
- Planning
- Organization & Governance

## TECHNOLOGY SELECTION

- Vendor Selection
- Architecture Design
- Systems Evaluation

## DEVELOPMENT & INTEGRATION

- Program Design
- Assessment
- Survey
- Process Integration

For more information, contact us at [success@brandonhall.com](mailto:success@brandonhall.com).