



Pitney Bowes' Experiential Learning Develops Women Leaders

Pitney Bowes Software India
Best Advance in Women in Leadership Development
November 2017



Company Background



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Stamford, Conn., U.S.
Year Founded	2007
Revenue	\$3.6 billion, 2015
Employees	750
Global Scale	US, EMEA, Canada, Australia, APAC
Customers/Output, etc.	GIC – R&D Unit for Pitney Bowes Inc.
Industry	Information Technology
Stock Symbol	PBI
Website	http://www.pitneybowes.com

Budget and Timeframe

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Overall budget	10lacs
Number of employees involved with the implementation?	3
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Experts involved?	2
Timeframe to implement	2 months
Start date of the program	August 2016

Business Conditions & Business Needs

With diversity numbers troubling the IT industry, such companies as Google and Facebook have been questioned regularly on their diversity initiatives and contributions in narrowing the gap.

In a move to lead industry leading practices, Pitney Bowes has put diversity and inclusion at the heart of all talent initiatives even though it has a relatively high number of women leaders.

At Pitney Bowes, 42% of women employees hold leadership roles, and now blended learning has been introduced for high-potential women to effectively lead themselves, others, and the business. The new leadership program, called Aspire to Inspire Women Leaders Program, launched in Pitney Bowes Software India in August 2016.

Overview

Aspire to Inspire Women Leaders Program, developed in partnership with KNOLSKAPE, offers high-potential women experiential training that blends classroom activities with case studies, action projects, bite-sized eLearning modules, and simulations covering various leadership competencies over a six-month period.

Participants are selected by stakeholders, including senior leaders who meet with them to discuss the challenges specific to Pitney Bowes and the industry. The training program covers customized content and uses a series of assessments, including a 360-degree survey questionnaire and action learning projects.

What makes this training intervention engaging, impactful, and unique is the use of customized, relevant simulations that bring out the subconscious, day-to-day practices of participants. They get instant feedback on what went wrong and what worked great.

The program equips high-potential women for the new, ever-changing complex of responsibilities in people management, stakeholder management, and business acumen. All three of these are the core organizational competencies Pitney seeks in all its leaders.

The goal is to encourage women to take management positions and lead from the front by leveraging their strengths. So far, the program has been successful with more than 30% of Hi-Po women being promoted to take management positions and lead teams.

Effective diversity practices need to be led from the top, and Pitney Bowes believes in the spirit of diversity and what it can achieve for the organization. Other successful programs include diversity and inclusion in talent acquisition and employee engagement.

Design and Delivery of the Program

The Aspire to Inspire Women Leaders Program is a six-month journey designed to enhance the capabilities of women executives and equip them for the new, complex gamut of responsibilities in people management, stakeholder management, and business acumen.

The competency themes are:

1. Leading self.
2. Leading others.
3. Leading business.

The journey was divided into three modules that include 360-feedback from various stakeholders, scenario- and case-based assessments, simulation-led, two-day workshops, and action-learning projects.

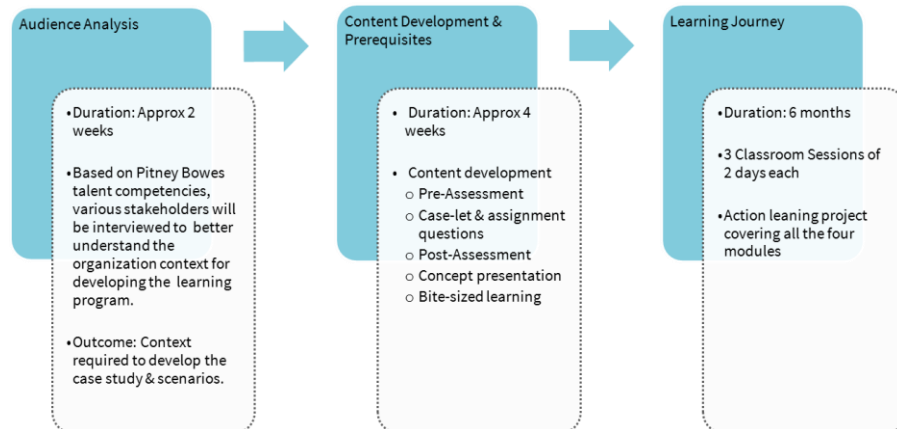
Bite-sized content pushed through a mobile app helps ensure long-term learning retention and reinforcement.

Aspire to Inspire WLP

- **Pre-work.** Stakeholder analysis for setting context and developing relevant cases and scenarios. 360-degree feedback to capture the behavior of participants from stakeholder's perspective before the program.
- **Outcome.** Customized content for an individualized learning journey.
- **Learning journey.** Leading self, leading others, leading business. Classroom learning with facilitator-led sessions on the concepts. Used such elements as case-lets, simulations, and on-the-job experiences. Two learning bites per week available via the mobile app to engage learners during the journey on different learning concepts.
- **Outcome.** Provided participants with the tools and techniques to apply the concepts in the workplace.
- **Postwork.**

- **Cognitive Level.** Questionnaires were designed to test the knowledge level of learners after every module.
- **Application Level.** Case analysis for applying concepts on the cases.
- **Synthesis Level.** Action-learning project. 360-degree feedback captured the change in behavioral impact of participants in the workplace.
- **Outcome.** Helped organization achieve the overall effectiveness of the program.

Figure 1: **Aspire to Inspire Approach**



Source: Pitney Bowes 2017

Aspire to Inspire WLP – Module Flow

- **Pre-workshop.** Pre-Read. Pre-Assessment.
- **Classroom workshops.** Facilitator-led workshop includes concept-based activities, handouts.
- **Post-workshop.** Case assessment. Post assessment.
- **Mobile app.** Provides weekly bite-sized information.
- **Action learning project.**

Business Challenges for Action Learning

For their projects, learners chose a business challenge aligned to the needs of the organization. Learners work on the projects and submit a report on the results.

Project flows are determined individually by women leaders in this order:

- M1 - Assignment of the challenge.
- M2- SME connect call.
- M3 – SME connect call.
- M4 - Manager review.
- M5 - Manager review.
- M6 - Submit report.
- At the end of six-months, learners submit their projects to KNOLSKAPE for evaluation.

Learning Simulations and Platforms

- **ChangeQuest simulation.** A dynamic, true-to-life simulation that helps learners play the role of a change agent in a virtual organization. The objective is to secure the support of various stakeholders in the organization to bring in a transformational change.

Figure 2: ChangeQuest Simulation

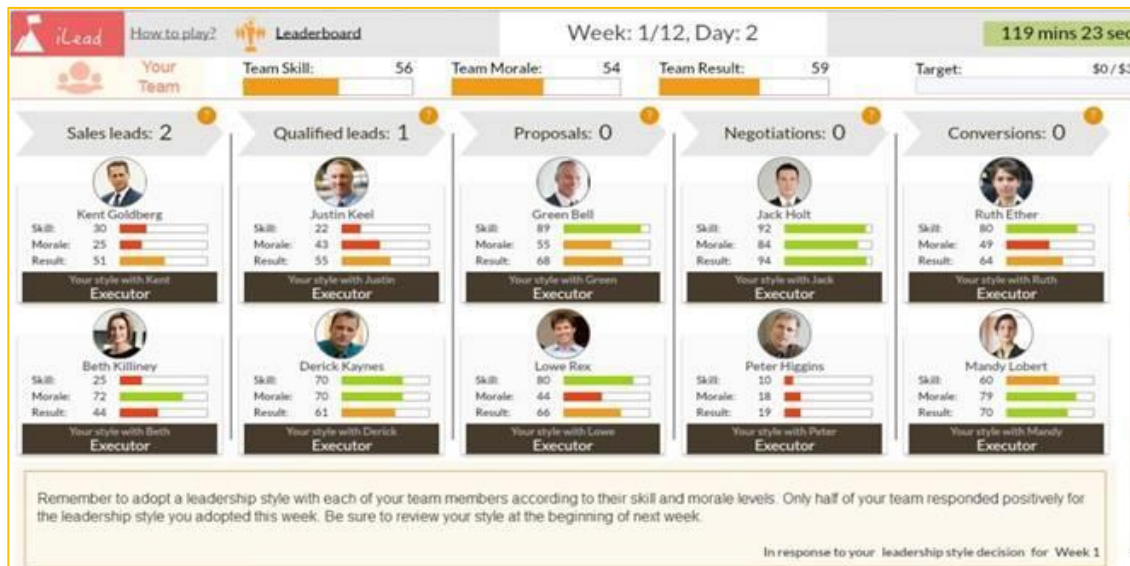


Source: Pitney Bowes 2017

- **iLead simulation.** Places participants in the shoes of a leader who has a 10-member team. The simulation presents challenges wherein participants have to constantly keep the team motivated and up-skilled to achieve the target. To

succeed, participants have to adopt the right leadership styles suited for the situation.

Figure 3: iLead Simulation



Source: Pitney Bowes 2017

- **Trust simulation.** Develops scenarios to influence and build trust with various stakeholders in client organization. Focuses on building deep understanding about stakeholders, knowing what drives them, and building long-term relationships by managing conflicts and using empathy and trust-equation concepts.

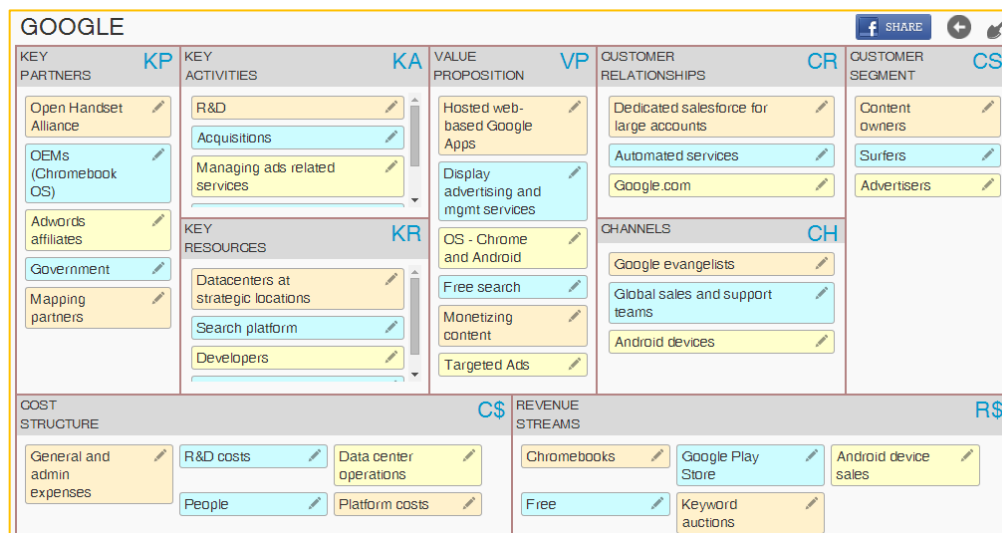
Figure 4: Trust Simulation



Source: Pitney Bowes 2017

- Business model tool.** A strategic management tool that allows participants to describe, design, challenge, invent, and pivot business models. This process helps associates comprehend organizational strategy/vision and develop business acumen.

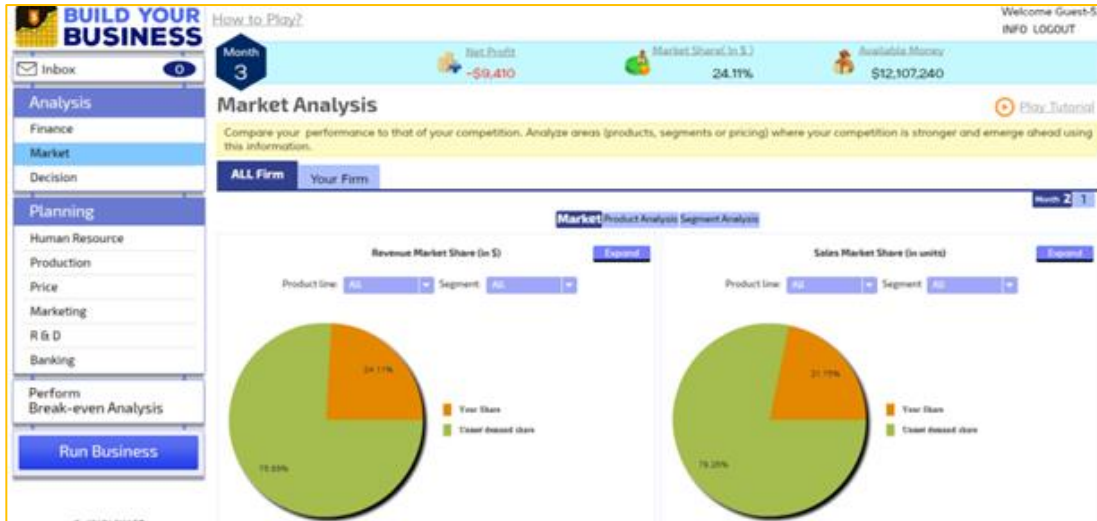
Figure 5: Business Model Tool



Source: Pitney Bowes 2017

- Build your business simulation.** An exciting business acumen simulation where the learners step into the shoes of a CEO and make decisions spanning HR, finance, marketing, and R&D with an objective of maximizing net profits. The simulation tests the learners on concepts around P&L management, operational decision-making and strategic execution.

Figure 6: Build Your Business Simulation



Source: Pitney Bowes 2017

Figure 7: Gamified AktivLearn



Source: Pitney Bowes 2017

Figure 8: Gamified, Social Platform to Create Engagement



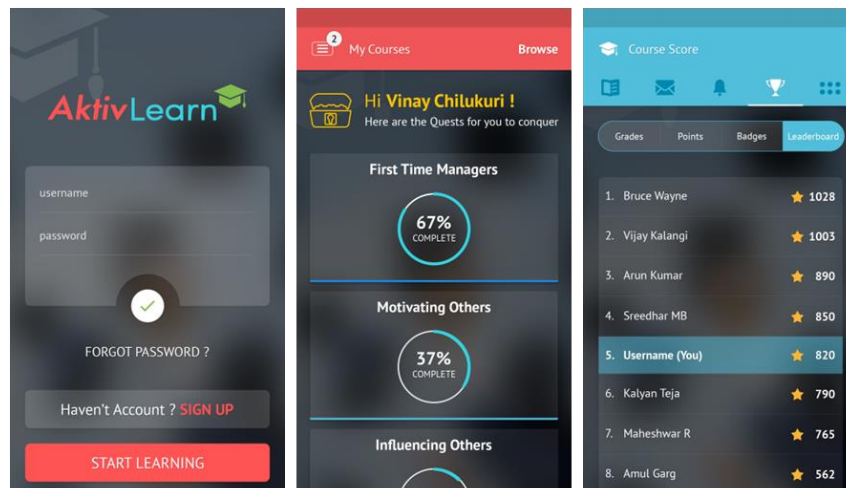
Source: Pitney Bowes 2017

Gamified Aktivlearn Mobile App

A gamified platform to provide continuous learning during the developmental journeys.

- Bite-sized learning.
- Location Agnostic to keep learners updated about the new trends and train them for their job.
- Keeping learning in sync with smart content, activities and reminders!
- Automate performance tracking and learner management.
- Changing the learning culture to a continuous mode.

Figure 9: Mobile App



Source: Pitney Bowes 2017

Adoption of the Program

Every initiative needs a focused approach for launch, and Aspire to Inspire was no different. Pitney Bowes leaders value diversity and welcome new avenues to encourage women employees to be well prepared to meet every opportunity. Hence, when leaders understood the extensive approach in designing the program involved managers and participants, they were convinced on the ROI and relevance of the intervention.

However, real challenge rose when questions were raised by male colleagues who wanted to know why the program was run specifically for women employees and why women are constantly offered benefits in the name of diversity. For the training team members, the dialogue was painful to have, but they address the issue by saying that diversity and inclusion only can be achieved when both genders understand and appreciate the immediate needs of the organization.

The discussions with male colleagues highlighted the need for gender sensitization. A series of surveys showed unconscious bias as one of the major triggers for stereotyping. Thus, the training team launched a series of workshops and webinars to address such issues with male employees and educate them on the current situations and how women unconsciously are subject to immense stereotyping and bias regardless of their potential to succeed in the workplace.

- A theatrical play about “women” expectations sought to strengthen self-belief and women’s power in a patriarchal society. It was followed by a live audience poll with specific questions to uncover challenges. The answers were displayed live to managers, followed by a panel discussion on gender expectations. The play and panel discussion was followed three months later by a learning lab where managers reflected on their learning and shared best practices they had put into action.
- Pitney Bowes Academy, in partnership with Catalyst, shared engaging webinars focused on inclusive leadership with emphasis on how to maximize work-life for self and organizational success. Small portions of the webinar were fed to users for higher retention and learning. One of the webinars had four phases, including discussions and anecdotes on challenges faced by working women, how leaders can set examples in creating a more inclusive work culture, and barriers and solutions to eliminating gender biases in the workplace.

- In collaboration with the D&I leaders from the Industries, Pitney Bowes conducted various roundtables during the past year. The roundtables opened on issues that needed attention and support.
- The learning team conducted D&I internal council meetings to come up with action plans on spreading awareness about D&I initiatives. D&I presentations were made to help people become more aware of the challenges in the absence of diversity and inclusion. In addition, Global councils took responsibility for conducting D&I workshops internally.

The structured approach towards educating and creating awareness about the current situation relating to gender has helped immensely in adoption of the learning intervention and encouragement by managers to pursue the program.

Measurable Benefits

Multiple discussions were held with leaders/participants and managers with the program's partner, KNOLSKAPE, to identify and prioritize key areas that needed attention.

Key metrics used to capture the ROI/impact of the training intervention included:

- 360-degree questionnaires pre-and-post training. Stakeholders on this questionnaire included peers, superiors, subordinates, and self-reviews on a range of behavioral and technical competencies. Substantial change was seen in the overall behavioral and technical results of the questionnaire post the intervention.
- Pre-and-post assessment for each module used questions to identify and capture the change in cognitive level of the learners. Every learner's post-assessment scores soared by at least 30% after module completion and relevant training.
- Each learner had to create an Individual Development Plan focused on areas of development through the learning journey and share it with the facilitator and HR on key actionable items. Participant completion rate was 100%.
- For the action learning project, each participant individually selected a pertinent business challenge and worked alongside his or her manager to put into action the learning. The core competencies displayed were then evaluated by KNOLSKAPE; the success rate was 96% success from the projects.



- The overall engagement scores among these women managers has improved dramatically. At least 45% of participants saw a positive increase in their overall engagement scores from their teams as compared to the previous year.
- Feedback also has been captured immediately after classroom sessions and intermittently during the program. The overall rating for the program has been an all-time high of 9/10.

“This has clearly been one of the best learning initiatives I have been a part of. The unique blend of different learning techniques made this program extremely engaging and enriching.” – Riya Gupta, participant and woman leader at Pitney Bowes.

Overall

Customizing a talent initiative for high-potential women leaders has been an enriching experience. Participants and the organization particularly appreciated the unique blend of cutting-edge learning techniques utilized in the training.

The learning team realized and experienced first-hand how learning can be fun and engaging. The team also learned not to treat various elements of employee engagement in silos but to connect the dots and ensure that a consistent message is reinforced through every channel.

For instance, modules were designed to align the each and every learning technique to showcase the value and importance of Pitney Bowes’ core competencies. If even one element pointed to the contrary, the entire learning process and transformation would have failed.

In the future, the team plans to launch this training to a broader audience, upskilling women in technology for a breadth of roles. In addition, the team is partnering with KNOLSKAPE to build customized training for high-performers, both male and female, to further engage them and challenge their intellect.



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