

The Coca-Cola Company's Multicultural EDGE Program Changes the Meaning of Leadership

The Coca-Cola Company and Abilitie
 Best Inclusion and Diversity Strategy
 November 2019



Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	The Coca-Cola Company is a total beverage company, offering more than 500 brands.
Headquarters	Atlanta, GA
Year Founded	1882
Revenue	\$35 billion
Employees	61,800
Global Scale	200-plus countries and territories
Industry	Beverage
Stock Symbol	KO
Website	www.coca-colacompany.com

Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	Abilitie is an accomplished leader in management and executive education. Its road-tested solutions, certified, global facilitators and seasoned implementation teams deliver value to leading organizations in more than 30 countries.
Headquarters	Austin, TX
Year Founded	2015
Revenue	\$3.7 million
Employees	15
Global Scale	20-plus countries
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	Abilitie provides leadership development simulations and programs for Fortune 500 companies across the globe.
Industry	Professional Development
Website	www.abilitie.com

Budget and Timeframe

Number of contractors involved with implementation	Two
Timeframe to implement	Five days
State date of the program	Nov. 4, 2018

Business Conditions and Business Needs

The Multi-Cultural Edge program was intentionally developed for multicultural associates at Coca-Cola to build leadership acumen, accelerate the leadership pipeline and to give visibility and opportunities to employees who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to gain visibility with the executive team. At the time of program development, Coca-Cola was undergoing a culture change and program designers wanted to change the common understanding of what “leadership” meant at the company while emphasizing the importance of and instilling growth behaviors across the organization.

Overview

The Multi-Cultural Edge Program at Coca-Cola was specifically targeted toward Coca-Cola's multicultural employees. The goal was to encourage participation on a global level. Additional outcomes program designers sought to achieve included seeing an increased awareness of what leadership meant among employees at Coca-Cola, shedding light on the immediate impact leadership decisions had on the organization, establishing a process of 1:1 coaching and instilling the following competencies in participants:

- Trust
- Influence
- Leadership acumen with an emphasis on inclusive leadership
- Cultural competency
- Current business insight
- Networking between peers
- Access to Executives through panel discussion and presentation

With thoughtful and intentional program design that aligned competencies to organizational goals and the help of several external solution vendors that appealed to multi-modal learning styles, program leaders found their expectations were far exceeded by the outcomes and the impact of the program that resonated throughout the organization.

Design and Delivery

The EDGE Program was designed to be a 5½-day experience and incorporated Abilitie's Executive Challenge simulation, a Mandela-archetype exploration and a presentation to a panel of Coca-Cola Executives.

The Executive Challenge simulation is a robust experience and allowed participants to tap into key skills, learn company acumen and role-play. In Executive Challenge, participants

are challenged to think strategically and solve operational problems under real-world pressures and constraints as they assume the leadership of a start-up company and must compete with their peers in a dynamic marketplace. As they fight for revenue and market share, participants' success or defeat depends on effective cross-departmental communication, influencing peers, understanding the short-term and long-term implications of decisions made across the enterprise, and connecting business strategy with effective execution. Executive Challenge brings participants to a bird's-eye view and engages them in enterprise-level strategic thinking in a dynamic, competitive simulated environment that serves as a safe space to make mistakes and learn from them quickly.

Abilitie's expert facilitators customize discussions to what is organically occurring in the room, targeting the key competencies of the EDGE Program. Participants self-reflect and build awareness of their personal behaviors, ultimately driving a solid understanding of their potential futures as leaders at TCCC.

In addition to the internal program designers, the staff included Mandela-archetype experts and an expert facilitator who led debriefs throughout the simulation. The facilitated discussion allowed participants to identify and reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement that were highlighted during simulation gameplay; in turn, helping them take the skills and competencies learned out of the classroom environment and make conscious changes in their daily roles at TCCC. An additional key focus of the program design was to increase participants' comfort with influence, which was highlighted one final time through the capstone presentation to the Executive team.

Integration

Every single people-leader at Coca-Cola went through the EDGE program. Additional multicultural employees were selected to participate simultaneously. The organization had recently re-defined its leadership values and wanted to shift the culture of the organization to one of "Growth Mindset." These leadership values included:

- **Curiosity** — Drive collaboration and continuous improvement
- **V 1.0, 2.0, 3.0** — Move fast and take smart risks
- **Empowerment** — Own the outcome
- **Inclusivity** — Reward agility, celebrate success, exemplify trust and integrity

Additionally, desired outcomes that the program was designed around included:

- Appreciation of what it means to be a leader in the organization
- Insight into leadership impact through assessments and 1:1 coaching.
- Development of specific leadership skills — Influencing, Building Trust, Business Acumen, Cultural Competency and Inclusive Leadership.

- Increased understanding of how the business works.
- Establishing a peer network that can be leveraged well into the future.
- Increased exposure as an emerging leader to key leadership in the Company.

Measurable Benefits

The L&D team at Coca-Cola observed several benefits in participants who went through the EDGE program. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their “personal brands,” which became apparent in the way they began to show up during meetings, presentations and simple peer-to-peer conversations. Program designers observed many participants experience “aha” moments when they realized their own personal value each of them brought to the proverbial table, allowing them to be more confident in their everyday decisions — and as a result, less apologetic and more confident when in conversation with a leader. As colleagues and peers of participants observed these noticeable changes, a sense of excitement about the EDGE program filtered throughout the organization and many employees are now requesting to go through the program themselves. Post-session groups formed internally for past cohort participants to keep their new skills and knowledge alive and fresh in their minds and to continue discussions that were started during the allotted times for debrief and reflections. There is also more comfort throughout the company with diverse thinking — and healthy tensions are welcomed.

Overall

In a debrief session at the conclusion of EDGE, participants continually expressed appreciation for the opportunity to truly experience the real impact of collaborating on a multi-faceted, global team. In creating a touchpoint for diverse people leaders to share their experiences, the EDGE program highlights the career possibilities and avenues for personal and company success that may have been previously unexplored. Leaders examined how they “show up” in their work every day and how different leadership can look across the company.

The formation of EDGE centers on teaching diverse leaders to leverage their unique backgrounds and know-how to drive their career ambitions and the Coca-Cola company to new heights as dynamic, driven, conscious leaders. In all of the sessions, field work, and praxis, the biggest key takeaway was that visibility and connectivity make the difference for TCCC's burgeoning leaders.

The Executive Challenge simulation provided a safe space for participants to see their strengths and weaknesses in leadership execution and collaboration. This presents an opportunity to fail fast and receive immediate feedback in a way normal day-to-day

environment may not allow — providing a judgment-free space in which to practice leadership.

The future of Multicultural EDGE revolves around scalability and supporting more and more diverse leaders in their careers to move TCCC forward in innovation and presence of highly skilled talent. EDGE hopes to continue the innovation of bringing global and HQ-based talent year over year and position the cohorts for pivotal roles within the company.

About Brandon Hall Group

Brandon Hall Group is an 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 25 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.