

How A Custom Event Raised the Bar For Retail Management

A CLIENT STORY
RETAILER



BUSINESS SITUATION

How does a leading retail organization with more than 630 superstores and 260 mall stores throughout the United States confront a daunting leadership challenge at the regional and district levels? Facing changes in consumer expectations and a difficult labor market, this highly respected retailer needed its managers to accept a higher level of responsibility for making better hiring decisions, phasing out less effective employees, and developing talent from within the stores. It needed to “raise the bar” on talent management, engaging managers to take a higher level of leadership accountability for effective recruitment, retention and development. The company turned to Tampa, Florida-based Paradigm Learning.

ACTION

Paradigm designed and developed customized materials to complement its leadership simulation, Impact5: The Business of Leadership Game™. Working with client subject matter experts, Paradigm built case

study scenarios that allowed managers in small teams to deal with real talent situations facing them on the job. Teams were forced to accept accountability, assess talent issues, make decisions, and analyze these decisions in terms of organizational impact... on the company’s bottom line, its customers and its employees. The situations were real and the decisions were difficult. But even before they were plunged into these customized challenges, more than 90 district managers along with their regional manager “coaches” participated in Impact5 as managers of the fictitious C-Tech company. In teams of three, they faced the challenge of getting results: They struggled with personnel issues; they made decisions about interdepartmental relationships; they balanced the tactical with the strategic; they got blind-sided; they regrouped; they analyzed; they took action. And, most importantly, they saw the impact of their actions — and those of other organizational leaders — on the bottom line. The simulation highlighted the critical need for managers to take broader responsibility for company success, including taking ownership

and accountability for talent development. As the simulation ended, participants were ready to tackle their own talent issues in the customized session.

RESULTS

Participants overwhelmingly reported enjoying the pilot program (high-fiving among district managers was not uncommon during the game), found value in the accountability focus and customized exercises, and strongly recommended its use for training managers at all levels, including individual store managers. Ninety percent stated they felt “better equipped to fulfill my leadership role within my organization.” Ninety-six percent said they “plan to apply the accountabilities learned back on the job.” The fast pace, the interaction with other managers, the real-life scenarios, and the ability to make decisions and see results were among the highlights of the learning experience for the managers. The organization plans to roll out the training to store managers company-wide, with exercises customized to the specific challenges of leaders on the front line.