

IA helps AG Edwards' leaders meet the Chairman's Challenge



SITUATION

AG Edwards was dealing with a siloed environment, where leaders lacked the collaborative tools necessary for working successfully across boundaries. In addition, it lacked a company-wide balanced scorecard that could give a snapshot of the company's progress toward its

goals. Instead, senior leaders were reviewing mountains of one-off reports with a variety of metrics, and struggling to integrate the data and determine what actions to take to meet the organization's objectives.

Michael Zuccarello, now Senior Vice President, Director of Learning and Development for Wachovia Securities, says, "I needed a partner, not just a vendor, to help us tackle this initiative. It was high-profile, and, if

designed and executed well, would have a lasting impact on the organization as well. Interaction Associates had the expertise and experience I was looking for."

HOW IA HELPED

To address these issues, IA designed, developed, and supported implementation of an action learning-based high-potential leadership development program. The program, called The Chairman's Challenge, provided 22 senior level A.G. Edwards leaders with a learning experience balancing new skills acquisition in leadership, change tools, and collaboration skills, with team-based action learning experiences.


The challenge was to (in the company's own words):

1. Recommend a set of key metrics the firm should use to measure how well we're executing on our corporate objectives to:
 - Create sustainable REVENUE growth;
 - Maximize EFFICIENCY and effectiveness in all areas of our business;
 - Dedicate ourselves to SERVICE excellence; and
 - Develop PEOPLE as our greatest asset.
2. Test the validity of the metrics by using them to formulate recommendations to the Executive Committee about growth opportunities, threats to growth, and how we can better execute on our growth strategy.

In other words, instead of being tasked with a nice-to-have, but less-than-fundamental outcome, the

fast facts

- **A 120-year-old premiere brokerage firm**
- **Merger with Wachovia Securities, 2007**
- **7,000 financial consultants in 700 worldwide offices**
- **100 Best Companies to Work For, 2006**

 **Interaction Associates** is a 40-year-old performance improvement company with a focus on leadership, teamwork, and process consulting. We equip Fortune 100 companies and government agencies with practical skills, tools and mindset to think strategically and work collaboratively to solve problems and create opportunities. We develop leaders at all levels as well as those who manage organizational change. Our skilled consultants have been helping companies overcome their toughest challenges since 1969.

case study

cross-functional, networked teams were chartered to develop a balanced scorecard for the enterprise and test its validity via recommendations to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee was, in some ways, trusting part of its legacy for AG Edwards to these teams.

The groundwork for skills acquisition was laid in three learning events separated by action learning periods (see figure). IA provided on-going coaching to the action learning teams between the learning events.



The program also provided senior leaders who had spent much of their careers within individual functional silos with an experience of working across silos and developing internal relationship networks.

Team leadership and other roles were rotated to ensure all participants experienced a variety of challenging experiences.

BRANCH MANAGER DEVELOPMENT

On a simultaneous track, IA collaborated with the A.G. Edwards learning team to design, develop and implement a leadership program supporting branch managers. The learning objectives included sharing a vision for the branch, planning changes for their group, being explicit about decision making and involvement, and facilitating agreements at the branch level. After a period of individual work with the support of IA and A.G. Edwards coaches, the branch managers will expand their leadership skills to coach their teams to improved performance. “Branches whose managers have participated in this program have average revenues 5% higher than other AG Edwards branches,” Zuccarello noted.

RESULTS

As a result of the initiative, AG Edwards finds itself an organization that is keenly focused on strategy and able to execute better than ever. Its new balanced scorecard provides senior executives with a snapshot of progress each quarter. In addition, the initiative:

- Changed the focus of quarterly officers meetings to reinforce a shared purpose
- Led to the creation of an Office of Strategy Management
- Led to the implementation of a Client and Branch Service Initiative
- Inspired the Executive Committee to conduct strategy planning meetings to vet the recommendations from the Challenge.

“When we started thinking about developing our senior leaders, we asked ourselves the question ‘What would it mean if we had two dozen senior leaders who shared the same perspective as the Executive Committee?’ Our work with IA helped us realize benefits beyond those we had anticipated, even by that high standard,” said Zuccarello.

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Michael Zuccarello, Sr. VP, Director of Training & Development, Wachovia Securities