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Client Story

The Evolution of Leadership Development at Ericsson

“We are strongly committed to developing our leaders. When the pandemic brought in-person training to a halt, we knew we couldn’t put learning on hold. We made the courageous decision to meet our learners where they were, even if that meant in their living rooms or kitchens. We shifted completely from classroom to purely virtual training,” says Michelle Colbert, head of leadership development at Ericsson. “Blended learning was already a part of our curriculum, but the classroom sessions were the heart of the program. Our leaders thrived on personal connections, networking, and learning from each other.”

Starting with their flagship leadership development program, Leaders Core Curriculum, Colbert worked with preferred vendors including Blanchard® to reinvent the learning experience. They saw it not as a conversion but as an evolution—an upgrade of content delivered on the latest learning platforms to create an experience that would engage learners and improve the learning process. As content was being reframed into micro learning formats, facilitators were being upskilled to deliver virtual sessions using Adobe Connect.



Michelle Colbert

“Our faculty had perfected their skills for delivering face-to-face, but virtual delivery is very different. We wanted to make sure they had the skills to keep learners connected and engaged,” says Colbert. “The pivot to redesign all of the programs and processes to a virtual environment involved six internal teams, five external providers, three new technology platforms, 35 faculty members, ten learning modalities, and creating 100 new learning assets. Even with all the thought and work put into this evolution, we still wondered if the learners would embrace this new way of learning. If we built it, would they come?”

Colbert realized anyone learning in a remote environment can feel alone, so the company kept social learning at the center of the experience. Accountability was also a critical component to the program. “At Ericsson, we believe everyone is the CEO of their own career—and we are expected to be lifelong learners. We made it clear this was going to be a new way to learn, and it required self-direction. We were explicit about what we expected as people went through the 15-week learning journey. They would be learning content on their own, putting new skills into practice and experimenting with their teams, and then coming together to share successes and learn from one another. The cohort was really the glue to enhance learning. It wasn’t up to the facilitator to lead everything; the learners supported each other.”

To reinforce that concept, they created Learning Amig@s where learners were paired together to support each other. “The purpose was to provide each learner with another person they could use as a sounding board to share new ideas, ask for advice, and hold each other accountable. It was a way for people to build the connections they had previously created in classroom sessions. The cohort was a way to build their network,” says Colbert.

Learning Journey Content

The Leaders Core Curriculum program offers several learning models from Blanchard.



SLII® teaches leaders how to provide the right amount of support and direction to each team member as they navigate certain tasks. It focuses on helping leaders have productive conversations that empower direct reports to achieve their goals. The Building Trust module teaches how to build trust with team members and colleagues and how to repair it when broken. It focuses on specific behaviors that can increase engagement, creativity, and commitment.

In the Conversational Capacity® module, participants learn how to engage in constructive, learning-focused dialogue when challenging topics or conflicts arise. Using skills from this program helps leaders make informed decisions and find the best solutions, even under high pressure. They can turn difficult exchanges into learning opportunities that drive innovation. In the Leadership Point of View™ exercise participants get clear on their values and beliefs about leadership in order to be intentional and authentic. They write their leadership story and share it with direct reports to create an open, trusting relationship with their people. Skills from these four modules provide a strong foundation for leaders to create a motivating work environment for their teams.

Results and Next Steps

Just a year into the learning journey, Colbert is happy with the results. “We have trained approximately 3,100 leaders—a 15 percent increase in participation – and the program completion rate is 93 percent. Participants rated the content at an 89 percent satisfaction rate, which is equal to previous classroom delivery rates. And the trainer satisfaction rate is 94 percent, which is 4 percent higher than classroom delivery. But the most fulfilling measurement we see is leaders endorsing the experience on their LinkedIn profiles. Seeing those completion badges on LinkedIn is a proud moment for our leaders and builds excitement for other leaders to enroll in the program. It is great exposure, both internally and externally,” says Colbert.

What’s next for Ericsson leadership development? “We will not be reverting back to the traditional classroom approach. We’ll take a look at what worked well in a virtual environment and design that into a blended approach. It will be necessary to rethink how and why we bring people together in a face-to-face setting. It’s all about providing the best experience for our leaders and continuing to meet them where they are. So we will continue to adapt to meet those changing needs.” concludes Colbert.



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