



“I know we are making a positive difference not only in the lives of these leaders, but also in the lives of their team members. We’re not just delivering training classes, we are changing the way people lead...”

## Client Story

# Creating Leadership Development to Support the Strategic Plan at BIC

French-owned BIC launched the ambitious Horizon Strategic Plan to embrace consumer needs at a vigorous level to deliver growth and profit for the long term. They knew their people would be the critical force behind achieving this goal and they wanted every person to understand their role in the changing environment.

“As with any growth strategy, organizational changes happen pretty quickly,” says Kristie Raines, vice president, people and culture. “We centralized some functions such as supply chain and created new Centers of Excellence such as Revenue Growth Management and Ecommerce, and almost overnight became a heavily matrixed organization. Empowering people is in our fabric, and that will not change—but we needed to ensure that with the new structure everyone understood their roles and still felt inspired to bring new ideas and help us solve problems as we navigated the new structure.”

In addition to Raines’s responsibilities for global talent acquisition, engagement, and DEI, the CEO and CHRO appointed her to lead learning and development at BIC—with a mandate to reimagine the way learning is delivered and to build the skills critical to achieving the Horizon plan.



Kristie Raines



Kelly Ramirez

“It was a dream because we started from scratch,” said Raines. “We had the opportunity to step back and reimagine learning at BIC. To start the process, we knew we wanted to establish a strong leadership framework. So we began by defining the competencies, and behaviors that demonstrate those competencies, as the foundation of what is expected of all team members. We then focused our delivery on creating simple, engaging, and personalized experiences for individuals and teams.

“Today, our learning ecosystem includes Signature Series, which is focused on leadership development including coaching and mentoring; a digital learning offering that is focused on personalized individual skill development available all the time and in the flow of work; and a team empowerment offering where we create customized solutions for performance and growth of the business, teams, and individuals through the lens of Horizon.

“We searched for a company to help deliver the learning content to build leader skills and behaviors and selected Blanchard as our partner,” continued Raines. “With the mantras that SLII® is the right way to teach leaders how to lead differently and better, and that 360 assessments are meant for development, not performance, we started our journey.”

Kelly Ramirez, director, people and culture, had facilitated SLII® training prior to joining BIC, so she knew SLII® would serve as the foundation of their leadership training. She worked closely with Blanchard to create two learning journeys—*Illuminate* for people leaders and *Ignite* for leaders of leaders.

“I was excited to learn that Blanchard had other programs besides SLII® that would provide excellent skills for our leaders,” says Ramirez. “For the *Illuminate* journey, in addition to SLII® we have modules focused on giving feedback and having difficult conversations. The *Ignite* journey also focuses on SLII® and teaches servant leadership, coaching skills, creating team success, and managing change.”



Both journeys are six-module experiences that include digital activities to introduce the concepts, a live online session led by a Blanchard facilitator to provide deeper understanding of the topic, and additional live sessions where participants not only share how they are applying the learning but also participate in peer coaching. Participants have access to Blanchard Exchange for digital activities and additional materials such as videos, worksheets, and articles.

*Illuminate* is a 14-week journey. In the first module, participants take the Leader Action Profile II assessment to get information about their leadership style. The next four modules focus on Blanchard’s Building Trust, SLII®, Giving & Receiving Feedback, and Conversational Capacity® programs. In the capstone module, participants make presentations about what they have learned and how they have applied that learning on the job.

*Ignite* is a 16-week journey. In its first module, participants take a 360-degree assessment that is mapped to each of the BIC competencies and learn about the philosophy of servant leadership. The remaining modules present Blanchard’s SLII®, Coaching Essentials®, Creating Team Success, and Leading People Through Change® programs. *Ignite* also ends with the capstone module where participants share learnings and plans for using their new skills.

Ramirez is most excited about the ecosystem BIC put in place to support the learner. “We wanted to create something where the frameworks we were teaching people would be embedded into our day-to-day business,” she says. “Our partners at Blanchard shared research about how learning is more powerful when the managers of the learners are involved, so we developed a roadmap for successful learning for those managers as well as our HR business partners. We call them learner support groups. We take them through a quick overview of the content their people will be going through. They also have a pathway in the Blanchard Exchange platform that mirrors the learning journey, and they have access to all the same materials as their learners. At each stage of the journey, we provide them with prompts to check in with the learners.”

The learner support groups are given specific directions for supporting learners at every stage in the journey. For example, as the learner goes through each module, the manager or HR business partner is given a date to check in with the learner and is provided with questions they should be asking. They are also asked to make sure that the two to three hours a week needed for training are protected time for the learner.

“We ask the support groups to focus on four areas,” says Ramirez. “The first is to support and give space by helping them carve out the two to three hours a week the learner will need for learning. If there is a meeting scheduled during one of the live sessions, we ask the manager of the learner to change the meeting so the learner can participate fully in the training. We also ask the manager to show an interest by asking what the participants are learning, to be a role model by learning the content in the Blanchard Exchange platform and applying what they learn, and to recognize and reward people by catching them doing things right when they demonstrate their new leader behaviors.”

Ramirez set out to create a common language of leadership, and she is seeing it happen. “As more people go through the learning journeys, I hear them using the language when they talk about development levels. And managers are modeling the behaviors in myriad ways. In the capstone sessions I hear people saying things like ‘With this training I realized the importance of listening,’ ‘Every single week I learned something I could apply practically,’ or ‘Seeing the immediate impact when you work with your team is powerful.’ I know we are making a positive difference not only in the lives of these leaders, but also in the lives of their team members. We’re not just delivering training classes, we are changing the way people lead—and this is now embedded in the way we conduct business. The Horizon Strategy is coming to life at BIC through the enhanced quality of our leaders and their teams.”

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