

Boral Industries Inc.

With Benchmarks® and SKILLSCOPE®, an 'old economy' company finds the right tools for change

When Boral Industries Inc. began considering how to implement a career- and succession-planning program, it put a lot of emphasis on choosing the right assessment and development tools. The company, which owns America's largest brick manufacturer, was aiming for a fairly dramatic culture shift, and it recognized the impact that even subtle changes in leadership could have on the bottom line.

"We're the very definition of the old economy, a company of bottom-liners," said David Sullivan, director of compensation and benefits at the Georgia-based business. "We knew there would be some initial skepticism in our ranks, and we wanted to get it right the first time."

Boral kicked off its program by putting the top 50 people in the company through Benchmarks; then it turned to SKILLSCOPE for the next group of 50 to keep the momentum going. "This time we wanted to use a tool that was more geared to management skills," Sullivan said, "and of course SKILLSCOPE is tailor-made for that. It crystallized and clarified in our minds the skills we were trying to enhance in the corporation but really hadn't been able to articulate so specifically before."

The program has been made all the stronger through the involvement of top managers. Acting as mentors, they work with individuals to turn the SKILLSCOPE results into month-by-month developmental plans. The coaching involves no boss/direct report relationships and all information exchanged is kept strictly private. This has always been a key tenet of CCL's developmental tools, and Boral saw it as essential. "We wanted to make sure that people are able to speak frankly," said Sullivan. "We even went cross-functional so that



Objectives

- » Assess the existing level of managerial effectiveness and create action plans for change
- » Train human resource and line managers to facilitate feedback and development discussions using SKILLSCOPE

Outcomes

- » Concrete changes were almost immediately observable in the way people did their jobs and met organizational objectives
- » The cross-functional coaching has helped employees gain a better understanding of other functions in the company
- » There was a new openness about asking for help, resulting in more training, which is making employees better equipped to serve customers

a regional plant manager might be a mentor to a mid-level sales person." This cross-functionality had a side benefit, with people gaining a better understanding of other functions in the company.

Boral's implementation got underway in January 2002, and concrete changes were almost immediately observable in the way people did their jobs and met organizational objectives. There was a new openness about asking for help. Front-line people in the sales process felt comfortable in revealing they didn't fully understand how to use the company's new customer-relationship software. As a result, more training is to be provided. "Literally as a result of SKILLSCOPE," Sullivan said, "we will be able to serve our customers better."

"If we can make it possible for each of our people to make one decision better, over the course of a year that can literally mean tens of thousands of dollars to the company," said Sullivan. "It takes a little courage to go about changing an 'old economy' culture, but it's working out so positively. What's nice about SKILLSCOPE is that it's really the implementation of a continuous learning process."



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