

# Smurfit Kappa Quickly Pivots to Virtual Leadership Training and Enhances Skills of Next-Gen Leaders

## CASE STUDY



### CLIENT CHALLENGE

Innovation has been a culture-shaping quality for Smurfit Kappa for nearly 90 years, and nowhere is innovation's influence more strongly showcased than in the development of future leaders within the organization. Since 2018, Smurfit Kappa has been partnering with the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) to deliver programs devoted exclusively to the latest leadership priorities, practices, and challenges.

Every year, Smurfit Kappa invests in a summit that provides an opportunity for new leaders from across the organization to gain knowledge, insights, and vision from speakers, and share experiences with their peers and network. The summit was scheduled for the end of 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic marked the beginning of radical changes for in-person events the likes of which had never been seen before.

As organizations worldwide cancelled events, and millions of people prepared for self-quarantine, Smurfit Kappa recognized the need to pivot quickly. The company was confronted with a dual challenge:

- » Provide their leaders with a program featuring the real-world insights, socially interactive environment, and relationship-building opportunities of the in-person summit.
- » Protect the health and safety of participants and other contributors to the program's success.

CCL was prepared to meet both challenges and exceed the expectations of Smurfit Kappa's next-gen leaders with virtual training. The customized approach would merge technology innovation and research-backed content with the well-being and comfort levels that are core to a thriving learning environment.

**CLIENT:** Smurfit Kappa, Europe's leading corrugated packaging company and one of the world's leading paper-based packaging companies

**LOCATION:** Headquartered in Dublin, Ireland and operating in 35 countries

**SIZE:** 46,000 employees



*Working again with CCL was a natural progression when pivoting from predominantly face-to-face to digital leadership training during the COVID-19 pandemic. CCL team members consistently bring their leadership expertise and passion for their clients' success to everything they do, and those qualities are needed more today than ever before."*

*- Christian Eder, Head of Learning and Development, Smurfit Kappa*

## SOLUTION

CCL's established roster of digital leadership solutions, combined with a flexible, technology-driven and responsive team and infrastructure, allowed for a seamless transition to a training experience that accommodated Smurfit Kappa during a time of incredible change.

The solution was the Frontline Leader Impact (FLI) program – a virtual, research-based, and highly interactive leadership-development experience designed for emerging high-potential leaders. The program is an intuitive and collaborative online learning platform with flexibility and features uniquely suited for reshaped workstyles.

A group of Smurfit Kappa's new and recently promoted frontline managers from across the Americas participated in the self-paced 6-week, 18-hour program. The program's transformative impact is built on the development of 6 critical leadership skills:

- » Self-Awareness
- » Learning Agility
- » Communication
- » Political Savvy
- » Influencing Outcomes
- » Motivating Others

Guidance and coaching from leadership experts, robust feedback and self-assessment opportunities, weekly team activities, and lively discussion threads completed the picture of participants' strengths and improvement areas – and brought program benefits full-circle.

## RESULTS

The FLI program's immersive experience maximized learning opportunities for Smurfit Kappa's emerging leaders during an uncertain time when face-to-face training wasn't an option, but strong leadership skills were more critical than ever. Key benefits that Smurfit Kappa achieved from the FLI program include:

- » Development of skills ranging from inclusive leadership and talent management to active listening and team engagement
- » Elevated mindsets that sparked rethinking of leadership assumptions, and changed behavior where needed
- » Networking opportunities and one-on-one relationships with senior leaders
- » Broadened understanding of the company's business units and models, including the ongoing commitment to an environmentally regenerative circular economy

Accelerating leadership development amid the pandemic was a top priority for both Smurfit Kappa and CCL, with immediate and long-term benefits resulting from the ability to transition quickly to a virtual format. Not only are Smurfit Kappa leaders better prepared to lead in a world being revolutionized by change, but they're also more competitively primed and positioned for a return to normalcy post-pandemic.

### IMPACT DATA

Participants noted the following improvements when evaluating themselves on a 1-5 point scale **before** and **after** the program:

- 1.8 → 4.5** Use Direction-Alignment-Commitment framework
- 2.7 → 4.5** Formulate & deliver feedback effectively
- 2.8 → 4.3** Manage conflict & resistance

**92% of participants** agreed FLI was more engaging than other online courses they'd participated in. When asked how likely they would be to recommend the course, participants gave an **average score of 9.5/10**.

### PARTICIPANTS SAY

*"It was a life-changing experience. From the amazing content to the strong forum discussions and engaging competition, this journey has changed the way I view leadership forever."*

*"What an inspiring course! I am very grateful for all the learning and am sure it will stay with me forever – I will keep evolving!"*

### PARTNER WITH US

CCL is here to help you prepare your leaders to excel in challenging times and grow your organization into the future. Give your leaders the tools needed for success with virtual leadership development that meets them where they are.

Learn more: [ccl.org/FLI](https://ccl.org/FLI)

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)<sup>®</sup> is a top-ranked, global, nonprofit provider of leadership development. Over the past 50 years, we've worked with organizations of all sizes from around the world, including more than 2/3 of the Fortune 1000. Our cutting-edge solutions are steeped in extensive research and our work with hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels.

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