

## The company

France's leading chemical producer, Arkema, is aiming to become a global leader in specialty chemicals. The company currently has 19,000 employees based in 50 countries, with 137 industrial plants and 13 research centers. Arkema produces state-of-the-art specialty chemicals that provide customers with practical solutions to such challenges as climate change, access to drinking water, the future of energy, fossil fuel preservation, and the need for lighter materials.



## The business challenge and solution

Arkema was formed in 2005, when French oil company Total reorganized its chemicals branch. Thanks to innovation, targeted acquisitions, and investments in emerging countries, Arkema is now a recognized world player in the field of specialty chemicals. But, the very acquisitions and mergers that helped Arkema grow into the leader it is today also created a significant challenge for the organization: creating a single corporate culture and identity that resonated with people all over the world.

Paul Leonard, vice president of health, safety, and environment, took on the challenge of helping Arkema develop a common culture and approach to safety that would transcend all continents, cultures, and language barriers. He knew Arkema could only achieve a position as one of the best-performing companies in the chemical industry in terms of safety if the entire workforce supported this mission. Everyone, regardless of his or her previous organizational affiliation, culture, or native language, needed to work toward one shared goal.

Based on previous experience partnering with Root, Leonard believed in the power that visuals and metaphors have in unifying people. Compelling visuals, combined with a discovery-based learning methodology, could shift ownership of safety from leaders and managers to everyone in the organization. So he invited Root to present to the executive team. After learning how Root's engaging and out-of-the box approach could create the common language needed to unite employees based all over the world, engaging them in Arkema's mission to be an industry leader in safety, Arkema enlisted Root to create a *Strategic Learning Map*® module. At that time, Raphaele Grivel, training coordinator from the corporate human resources group, became an integral member of the project's steering team, working with Leonard to make this idea a reality.

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Arkema employees participated in two-hour training sessions, broken into mixed-level groups of eight to 10 people. With a focus on interaction, the facilitators helped participants initiate dialogues and learn from one another while discussing the company’s priority of creating a safety-focused culture. The *Strategic Learning Map* session also educated people on Arkema’s evolution, identified the tools and best practices that were available, and illuminated the behaviors that would help (or hinder) the organization’s progress toward becoming one of the best – and safest – in the industry.

### Results

The **Arkema Safety Academy: Our Safety Culture** *Strategic Learning Map* module has been successfully deployed in North America, Europe, and Asia – reaching thousands of people in 10 languages and 40 countries. The organization is ahead of schedule, and due to high interest and demand for the *Strategic Learning Map* module, an additional 280 employees – for a grand total of 350 – have been taught how to lead their peers through the discussion.

In the future, the Arkema leadership team hopes to be able to use the *Strategic Learning Map* module as a core onboarding tool – with the goal of training the 5,000 new employees who joined the company via the Bostik acquisition in early 2015.

“Commentary from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. In fact, one of the best proof points to the *Strategic Learning Map* module is that we haven’t had one piece of negative feedback,” Leonard said. “When people participate in a *Strategic Learning Map* session for the first time, they don’t know what to expect – they imagine this training will consist of yet another slide presentation. But they soon realize this is different. It’s completely interactive, visual, and thought-provoking. Without a doubt, the learning impact is much better because of this unique and engaging format.”

Participating in the live, peer-led sessions has created a new sense of trust among Arkema colleagues. It gave people the chance to learn about each other – to discover each other’s strengths. “Now our people know all of the tools we have in our Arkema ‘toolbox’ and realize they can count on each other for knowledge, insight, and ideas. The *Strategic Learning Map* process has truly created a new, unified culture for the company,” Leonard added.

The power of the *Strategic Learning Map* module has continued outside of the trainings. The visual itself, which is displayed in many offices, is a constant reminder that everyone is part of the same story. It has united employees regardless of their office location or native language, creating a unified organization full of people committed to achieving the same business goal.

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#### About Root

Root is a strategy execution company that helps organizations engage people as a catalyst for change using a proven framework that consistently achieves clarity, ownership, and results.

