

Blended Learning Solves Two Problems at Chiquita

The business need

Chiquita is inarguably one of the world's most recognized brands, with its products sold in grocery stores in more than 60 countries.

Chiquita leadership determined that it was time to evolve from a “banana company” to a “fresh consumer products company.” In redefining the company and shifting the strategy, there was a clear need to elevate the level of talent and leadership capabilities in Chiquita's 26,000 employees in 27 countries.

Concurrent with this need to communicate a new strategy, Chiquita was introducing a new performance management process, Perform to Grow. Director of Talent Management Jennifer Creed said, “We needed an efficient, clear way to create organizational alignment around the strategy and connect these strategic shifts with the shifts that individuals needed to make in their performance.”

The solution

In crafting a solution, Chiquita wanted to use a blended learning approach to reach its global audience because of the need for flexibility and scalability, and to encompass the variety of learning experiences they wanted to provide. Chiquita partnered with Root Learning and Advantage Performance Group to create two custom paper-based *Strategic Learning Map*® modules, with accompanying electronic learning modules to be used with geographically dispersed units. The first module visually represented the company's strategy so employees could see the business opportunities that needed to be developed for Chiquita to reach its goals. The second module focused on the new performance management system and emphasized how employees can contribute to achieving the aims of the strategy.

In addition to allowing employees to practice the tools and steps within Perform to Grow, the online component of the solution featured an interactive tool kit. This was Chiquita's first foray into the world of electronic learning. Because of Chiquita's global employee base – with branches in Central America, Asia, and Eastern Europe – the modules were offered on CD-ROMs, so the need for fast Internet connections was eliminated.

Implementation

To implement the new learning solutions, Chiquita started with 120 salespeople at its national sales meeting and used a “cascade” method to communicate both the strategy of the business and Perform to Grow process worldwide. Used in conjunction with the paper-based modules, the e-learning modules reinforced the key learnings, supported practice, and gave managers and individuals the chance to practice in a safe environment before performing.



“We've gotten fantastic feedback.”

— Jennifer Creed,
Director of Talent
Management





Results

Creed reports that feedback on the project was “fantastic.” Among the results of a participant survey:

The Journey to a Fresh Future strategy session respondents reported that their understanding was “better or much better” after experiencing the modules:

- On trends affecting Chiquita, 87 percent.
- Of opportunities for Chiquita to grow as a result of these trends, 89 percent.
- On how Chiquita will execute the new strategy, 87 percent.

In addition, 84 percent reported an improved understanding of “how my work contributes to Chiquita’s success.”

A resounding 91 percent of the Perform to Grow performance management survey respondents said that the sessions helped them understand the changes in the system. Also, respondents reported that their understanding was “better or much better”:

- On the impact of performance conversations, 81 percent.
- On the importance of defining clear expectations for performance with managers, 82 percent.

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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.

