

Ericsson: Accelerating Business Savvy for Project Engagement

The company

Ericsson is a world leader in the rapidly changing environment of communications technology – providing equipment, software and services to enable transformation through mobility. Through its 4G LTE mobile technology, Ericsson has gained market share while being recognized as a company that thrives at the edge of technical innovation. Today, 40% of global mobile traffic runs through Ericsson networks and Ericsson holds more than 37,000 granted patents in the telecom ecosystem.



The opportunity

Over the past 15 years, the telecom business has evolved into the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry – where telecom and IT meet. The ICT industry was getting more competitive as mergers and consolidations became prevalent and new technologies required successful companies to evolve. With Ericsson's primary business in the saturated telecom industry, sales growth rates had leveled off. Ericsson had to become better at value-based selling, leverage their global assets and scale to solve even more complex business problems. This required a strategy to influence sales from outside the traditional sales organization – to make a clear shift from the dependence on hardware solutions to more software- and service-based solutions.

Ericsson North America has over 500 project managers delivering solutions in their customers' networks. This workforce delivered millions of dollars' worth of solutions in the prior year, and included the primary candidates for improving financials. They were the real owners of Ericsson's service delivery margins and revenue potential. This audience is technical, and most have worked closely at customer sites with the customer's project managers, their engineers, and technicians. To deliver the financial results necessary, Ericsson knew the project managers would need to:

1. Enhance their business acumen to effectively determine the impact of project delivery decisions on company financials (margin, revenue, cash flow)
2. Further develop consultative skills
3. Optimize the customer experience

Ericsson needed to immediately accelerate the business savvy of these Services Professionals, which included a change in approach, behavior, and performance for this target audience. However, there was no existing learning program that covered all of these needs with one solution.

This required a strategy to influence sales from outside the traditional sales organization – to make a clear shift from the dependence on hardware solutions to more software- and service-based solutions.





The solution

Once the strategic business need was identified, Ericsson's Learning & Development team began establishing learning objectives. The team interviewed vice presidents to better understand the gaps identified by the CEO, and also to collect input regarding learning objectives. Executives from service delivery and customer key accounts provided insights into the needs and how adding the competencies would impact business results. The team also solicited input from the learning solution's target audience – project managers and their leaders – in regard to challenges inherent to their projects, both internal to Ericsson and external to customer engagements.

Next, Root was identified as the ideal partner, based on their ability to create compelling experiential trainings that focused on gaining buy-in and engagement from participants, and encouraged shifts in behaviors versus teaching a skill set. Root first dedicated time to learn and understand Ericsson's business, culture and the opportunity at hand, and then began clarifying objectives for the initiative to ensure the right learning experience would be created.

The Root team then met with approximately 20 Ericsson project managers, including master-level facilitators, graphic artists and a game designer. As Ericsson project managers spoke about their roles, a Root artist translated their words into visuals on a large white board and a Root facilitator led the conversation to drive clarity and shared meaning around the program.

From this insight, the program began to truly take shape and together Root and Ericsson created *Accelerating Business Savvy for Project Engagements*, a two-and-a-half day experience that required input from sales, strategy, project management, project finance and the learning organization. The program included realistic practice, visual Root *Learning Maps*®, simulations and game play with scenario-based decision making and consequences.

Once the program was ready, Ericsson's Learning & Development team carefully identified eight project managers to participate in an alpha course. These project managers were selected to challenge the materials, and to share honest feedback on the program structure and content. It was a success! Everyone involved – the eight project managers, Ericsson and Root – realized the program's potential to enhance the project manager's business acumen as it relates to the entire scope of Ericsson's business. Based on input from the eight project managers, Ericsson and Root made program modifications – adding new content and incorporating additional scenarios.

At this point, a beta class was conducted and validated that the multi-day course was ready for deployment to the organization's 521 project managers.

Project managers began their experience with a Root *Learning Map*® module designed to foster discussions on current challenges and the reason “why” a change in behavior is needed. The second day focused on how project managers can create an impact on the business by becoming the business manager first and the project manager second. This is when game simulation and role-play began. The final day focused on securing plans to change behavior. At this time, participants took part in an exercise designed to illustrate how becoming a business savvy project manager would drive career success.

“Our joint focus on adhering to various stages, which included planning, alpha testing and beta testing, allowed for a top-class solution to be created.”

— Kuntal Mcelroy,
Head of Learning
& Development,
Ericsson North America

“Root wasn't just a hired vendor. We worked together to create a strategic partnership. Everyone was committed to creating the strongest program possible. Our joint focus on adhering to various stages, which included planning, alpha testing and beta testing, allowed for a top-class solution to be created.” – Kuntal Mcelroy, Head of Learning & Development, Ericsson North America

The results

The hard work put in by Ericsson's Learning & Development team to accelerate the business savvy of its 521 project managers was worth it. **The course resulted in an astounding behavior change consistency across 90% of the students demonstrating the desired behaviors and increased revenues enabling an ROI for the solution of 807%.**

Beyond the numbers, the feedback and excitement expressed by project managers further validated the impact of this interactive, creative learning experience. Participants appreciated the visual, interactive and conversation-driven format that avoided PowerPoint presentations and, instead, created opportunities for colleagues to learn and discover new business tools together.

— Participant comments included:

- “This is the best training I've had in 17 years.”
- “I've seen this strategy before, but I've never been a part of the discussion ... I've never had the opportunity to experience what it actually means to me or the business.”

- Following the program, participants began to identify themselves not as project managers, but as business leaders.
- A survey was distributed 90 days after the program and the exceptional level of participation demonstrated project managers' ongoing appreciation and commitment to the training – even after a three-month time period had elapsed.
- The survey confirmed that project managers were sustaining their newly acquired knowledge and behaviors, and also confirmed they saw value in how these new behaviors were impacting customer relationships.

In order to maximize the return on investment for this initiative, the program was intentionally designed to be applicable to other parts of the business and applied globally. Next, the team is planning to rollout the program in Latin American during the first half of 2017.

Recognition and awards

The results of the program show the internal benefits that Ericsson has received since accelerating the business savvy of their project managers. The Learning and Development industry has also taken notice and Ericsson has been awarded with a series of accolades including:

- A Silver Brandon Hall Award for Best Unique or Innovative Learning and Development Program (for Ericsson's unique approach to accelerate business savvy)
- A Gold Brandon Hall Award for Best Use of Games and Simulations for Learning (for Ericsson's use of games & simulations to accelerate business savvy)
- CLO Learning in Practice Division 1 Business Partnership Silver

Ericsson's Learning & Development team is challenged to keep this offering valid in a fast-changing environment so the organization can continue to realize the benefits of the program.

Root Inc.

5470 Main Street
Sylvania, OH 43560
+1 800 852 1315
info@rootinc.com
rootinc.com

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.

