

Engaging People in a Down Economy

When people think of current economic challenges, one of the first industries to be mentioned is homebuilding. When that's your business, keeping employees engaged and confident is a major focus.

The people at Pulte Homes are proud of their 58-year history, the half-million new homes and communities they've built across the country, and the awards and recognition they have earned over the years. In its recent past, Pulte moved from not even being a blip on Wall Street's radar screen to being a Fortune 200 company.

The business need

But beginning in 2006, there was a drastic shift in the market, dropping housing starts from two million a year to less than 800,000. Pulte faced a decision: Should the focus be solely on the short term, as many competitors were doing, or should they take advantage of the situation by building a stronger, more disciplined organization that would thrive in any market? Pulte decided to do both. While shoring up the business in the short term was key, a significant focus moved to investing in employees and keeping them engaged. Because Pulte is a local business driven by local market knowledge, the value of employees couldn't be underestimated.

Having refined the business strategy, Pulte leadership needed a way to communicate it to their employees. More than just presenting it clearly, they had to explain why the new strategy was needed, how the business would change, and most important, what individuals needed to do. They wanted to create a sense of urgency for stabilizing the business in the short term while building a sense of hope that the company would thrive in the long term, even though they didn't have all the answers just yet.

The solution

Pulte Homes worked with Root to develop a Strategic *Learning Map*[®] module, Thriving in a Turbulent Marketplace. The module provided a conceptual overview of the market, including the competitive, economic, and consumer-driven realities impacting the industry and the business. Using a large visual metaphor and scripted dialogue, the discussion and exercises were designed to create an awareness of the strategic priorities, aligning employees on the case for change and role expectations for executing on the strategy.

Implementation

The module was rolled out to cross-functional groups within each division and facilitated by the respective division presidents. This format gave leaders the opportunity to interact directly with all the employees in their divisions and allowed them to have a deeper understanding of where their employees were strong, where they had opportunities to improve, and where there was confusion within the business.



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Results

The Strategic *Learning Map*® module was very well received. Participants reported that the sessions helped them understand the marketplace realities and the company’s strategic response. In addition, the process that the team went through to develop the module provided added value, as the experience enhanced the clarity and alignment of Pulte’s senior leadership team.

A second Strategic *Learning Map*® module, Our Team, Our Execution, Our Competitive Advantage, is in development. Its purpose is to discuss the company’s vision and the details of the new strategic plan. Together, the modules will create a direct line of sight for employees and enable them to connect their team and individual actions to the organization’s goals and objectives.

Pulte is proud that, in a time when uncertainty forces many companies to be paralyzed by fear, they decided to take the offensive – and they did so first and foremost by investing in their people.

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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.



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