

The company

Headquartered in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, United Concordia Dental is one of the largest dental insurers in the United States with more than 8 million members worldwide and 1,000 employees. United Concordia Companies, Inc. (UCCI) was established as a wholly owned subsidiary of Highmark in 1992. UCCI acquired, and today operates, 11 subsidiary companies licensed to transact health insurance and/or dental managed care in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. UCCI also maintains third-party administrator licenses and utilization review agent certifications in a number of states.

UNITED CONCORDIA DENTAL

The challenge

After the loss of some significant long-term customers, the leadership team at United Concordia Dental knew it must make a big change to stabilize its business. Tensions were high and they needed to take action – with meaningful goals and a clear roadmap. The decision was made to focus the organization’s efforts on two critical areas: maintaining its remaining customer base and recruiting new business.

To accomplish these goals, the leadership team created UCGrowth, a strategic initiative to examine and reorganize the company structure, evaluate its go-to-market strategy, and regain commitment from the organization to succeed. UCGrowth was run internally and spearheaded by company leaders who engaged their employees by cascading the message and the mission down through their direct reports. Actions undertaken included personnel changes, procedural changes, and strategic changes to maintain existing clients and appeal to new ones.

After a couple of years, UCD had recovered from its crisis and stabilized the business. The organization had persevered, and while excited to celebrate the strategic goals that had been achieved, the leadership team also recognized the sense of urgency among the employees had dissipated. United Concordia Dental’s leadership knew it needed to inject a new perspective and a different energy to overcome remaining obstacles and new ones on the horizon. With increased competition, changing economic forces, and technological advancements, UCD needed to continue its efforts to ensure lasting local ownership of change and make the massive transformation permanent. The company chose Root Inc. as its partner for the next part of the journey.

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Solution

United Concordia Dental was relatively clear on the message it wanted to convey, but needed the right delivery method so it was heard, understood, and would be executed by the entire workforce. This is a tall order for even the most creative organizations with the most talented leaders. The management team supporting the development and rollout was on an aggressive timeline and had to ensure the executive leadership team was fully engaged to deliver a 12-week turnaround from start to finish.

To become immersed in UCGrowth, Root began by conducting strategy sessions with the leadership team. Root discovered that the alignment meetings had successfully unified all key executives on where the business was headed and how it was going to get there – no small task for any group of leaders. So they were ahead of the game. Now, Root needed to help facilitate an accelerated rollout of the transformation to the rest of the organization’s 1,000 employees.

To make this happen, Root and United Concordia Dental worked together to create **Racing for Growth**, a Strategic *Learning Map*® module to help people visually connect their roles to the overall strategy. The Strategic *Learning Map*® module includes visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning to make the experience engaging and memorable, and to inspire people to take action.

Racing for Growth was designed to help people understand the forces and influences driving change at United Concordia Dental, the transformation, UCGrowth, and how the strategy would lead to success in the future, along with how each individual contributed to that future. More than just a compelling visual, the *Learning Map*® module was a means to begin interactive, open, and honest discussions among employees regarding how the industry had changed and how the company would need to adapt to secure success.

Once the visual and supporting interactive elements were finalized, United Concordia Dental leadership identified a group of employees to participate in a pilot program. The first run went overwhelmingly well, and with minor modifications, Root finalized the program for a mass rollout to the entire company. Thirty-five employees volunteered to be trained in a half-day “Train the Trainer” program that would ultimately arm them to guide their peers through the *Learning Map*® session.

With the support of Root, the UCD Strategy Realization Office presented the module to 150 leaders during a half-day event. The session not only introduced the visual, but also featured video vignettes of “before” and “after” interviews of those who had participated in the training session. Over the next six weeks, the *Learning Map*® module was rolled out to the entire organization, and today, every United Concordia Dental employee has gone through the experience.

“Root’s Strategic *Learning Map*® module helped us reach all of our employees in a really creative, interactive way that resonated and excited them about where the organization is and where it’s going.”

— Christopher Lunney,
Director of Strategy

Results

United Concordia’s UCGrowth initiative successfully helped the company retain its business and attract new customers. Transformation 2.0 engaged employees as never before to stick with the organization for the long term and recommit to achieving success in the future.

After taking part in the *Learning Map*® session, employees had a dramatic improvement in terms of how well they understood the market challenges, the company’s strategy, and their individual roles. Feedback was exceptional, including commentary like:

- “Every one of us has some value to the company and you need to know what you are doing every day for the success of the company.”
- “One of the big takeaways is seeing how the other areas of the company are all working together and how the whole vision of the company comes together. It’s not like silo thinking; you get to meet with all the other areas of the company.”
- “I think we will all come out of this with a common understanding of where we need to go in the future to meet United Concordia’s goals.”

“To remain competitive as a market leader, you sometimes need to reimagine your strategy, and that was the purpose of UCGrowth,” Lunney said. “But even with the best strategic vision in history, it’s critical that your people feel informed, engaged, and a part of the plan – that’s the only way to succeed. Root’s Strategic *Learning Map*® module helped us reach all of our employees in a really creative, interactive way that resonated and excited them about where the organization is and where it’s going.”

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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.

