



LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM HISTORY INSPIRE MODERN INNOVATION

How Experience to Lead helped a global medical technology company deliver experiential leadership development programs to its senior executives.

*Experience to Lead*SM

*Unique Experiences that Bring Leadership to Life*TM

EXPERIENCE TO LEAD IS PROUD TO WORK IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE CONFERENCE BOARD, INC.® ON THE GETTYSBURG, APOLLO, AND NORMANDY EXPERIENCES.

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THE GOAL: ALIGN THE ORGANIZATION FOR SUCCESS

When preparing to launch a new breakthrough product crucial to the success of one of its core business units, a major medical device manufacturer approached Experience to Lead for help to align the leadership team during this pivotal time. The Business Unit President knew that the new device could greatly improve safety and revolutionize how physicians perform certain routine medical procedures. He also knew that to bring this breakthrough technology to market, the entire division needed to rally together and focus. They needed to align the organization vertically and horizontally to achieve their ambitious initiative within a very aggressive time frame.

Desired outcomes were clear:

- Communicate strategic intent
- Create a shared vision
- Optimize results under pressure

POWERFUL LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

Senior leaders from the key functional areas (finance, HR, marketing, supply chain, and clinical affairs) participated in three Experience to Lead programs between 2017 and 2019. In each of the leadership experiences, the executives were immersed into compelling historical narratives. They focused on the decision-making processes used at crucial moments and then applied these lessons to their own leadership goals and challenges.

THE GETTYSBURG EXPERIENCE: CLARIFY AND COMMUNICATE STRATEGIC INTENT

During this powerful three-day program in October 2017, the team gained insight into make-or-break moments from the turning point of the Civil War — the Battle of Gettysburg.

With guidance from Experience to Lead facilitators and battlefield historians, participants walked the Gettysburg Battlefield to gain a vivid understanding of the strategic decisions made by Union and Confederate leaders.

The executives were especially inspired by the story of General John Buford whose tactical brilliance helped ensure victory for the Union army. Buford selected the time and the place of the battle thus securing the tactical high ground position for the Union forces.

The key to Buford's success was strategic alignment. He already knew the strategic intent of his superiors and therefore did not need to ask permission before making critical decisions about where to deploy his soldiers. He understood the Union's wider strategy and was able to autonomously make decisions in the moment that supported that strategy.

For the senior leadership team, Buford's story reinforced the importance of organizational alignment. When everyone is focused on the same goal, rapid decision making can happen.

"The concept that resonated for us was if every single member of our organization understands



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Larsen

“ You can feel the change in engagement, Everybody knows the big picture, and their role in achieving that wider goal. ”

– Business Unit President

RESULTS FROM THE GETTYSBURG EXPERIENCE

The team made key structural changes to their strategic planning process as a direct result of this experience.

Communication was streamlined to ensure that every employee is aligned with the team's overall mission. New processes were implemented across every level of the organization.

the strategic plan, we will be that much more nimble,” said the Business Unit President.

“We will be that much more effective because our team members will all be empowered by that knowledge and won't have to check back through four layers of management.”

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THE APOLLO EXPERIENCE: CREATE A SHARED VISION

After realizing so much value in the Gettysburg Experience, this senior leadership team returned to participate in the Apollo Experience in October 2018. They continued to hone their strategic alignment while focusing on a new objective: contextualizing the market need for their unique device. They needed to double down and focus on their shared goal of becoming first to market.

During the three-day program at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, the team of executives immersed themselves in some of the most crucial moments from the history of America's space program. They learned about the life-or-death decisions made by astronauts in flight, as well as the strategic decisions made by the men and women on the ground.

The organization's team was especially inspired by the NASA team's leadership during the Apollo 13 incident. When an oxygen tank exploded on the spacecraft, ground controllers in Houston went into crisis mode. They knew there wasn't much time before the ship's command module would lose the ability to provide oxygen, water, and electrical power for the crew.

The entire Houston ground control team rallied around one urgent mission: getting the astronauts safely back to Earth. They worked diligently to devise a plan. They decided that the flight crew would have to pull water, power, and other resources from the lunar module.

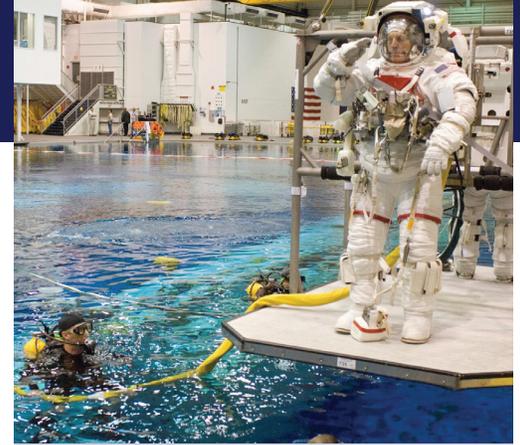
This drastic change of plans required writing and testing complex new procedures and communicating them to the astronauts in flight — on an incredibly short time frame.

The team was inspired by the focus and solidarity of the Houston ground control crew as they worked to bring the Apollo 13 astronauts safely home. Everyone had a shared vision and failure was not an option. The executives were focused on understanding how their organization could model the NASA crew's ability to prioritize and set aside anything that wasn't critical to the mission at hand. They wanted to foster this same sense of urgency and purpose on their team as they worked to deliver the product on schedule.

THE NORMANDY EXPERIENCE: OPTIMIZE RESULTS UNDER PRESSURE

When the team returned for the Normandy Experience in 2019, they were just a few months away from bringing their product to market. The pressure was on!

One challenge they faced during this crunch time was that the scale of launch had grown far beyond the scope of their usual projects. Typically, projects in this product division would involve a team of 20 to 30 people led by a project manager. However, this undertaking had expanded into an almost 200-person project team. There were multiple work streams happening at once, from launch planning to production planning, and they



“ *The Apollo Experience pushed us to prioritize what was absolutely important in our development pipeline,* ”

– Business Unit President

RESULTS FROM THE APOLLO EXPERIENCE

Takeaways from this experience helped the team to reprioritize, postpone certain projects, and consolidate resources to meet the demands of the product launch.

More time was spent analyzing and learning from failures in order to improve performance going forward —just as NASA improved their design and workflows following the Apollo 13 crisis.

weren't all synchronized under one central project manager.

The Normandy Experience was the perfect fit for the team during this crucial time. During the four-day program, participants walked the beaches and battlefields of Normandy and learned about the leadership decisions made by Eisenhower and other key figures during

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the D-Day landings. The team was especially focused on Eisenhower's ability to coordinate more than 150,000 soldiers across miles of fortified coastline. He did it partly by designating his top talent, such as Commander Colin Maud, as Beachmasters. They were able to consolidate the forces of multiple nations and military divisions and unite them around a single, unified desired outcome.

The context was different, of course, but the team realized that like Eisenhower, they needed an overall Beachmaster or "launch coordinator" — someone who could bring together all the different factions and work streams.

The team implemented this change immediately, before they even flew home from Normandy. While still participating in the Experience to Lead program, the divisional leader put his best project manager in charge of launch integration. She immediately began pulling together all of the project work streams as they raced toward their "D-Day" deadline.

Medical Technology Company:

This global medical device manufacturer provides healthcare professionals with a broad range of innovative and high-performance solutions to diagnose, treat and ultimately help people around the world live longer, healthier lives. This medical technology leader and its employees on six continents prides itself on solving the world's toughest healthcare challenges, expanding healthcare access and addressing the unmet medical needs of tens of millions of patients every year.

LASTING IMPACT

Since participating in the Experience to Lead programs, the team has had higher levels of engagement and alignment at every level.

"We've become a better team," said the Business Unit President. "The opportunity to have these important business conversations in an atypical environment inspires a different level of interaction. As a result, we're better at communicating with each other, and we are more aligned around our priorities."

He also reflected on the wider impact of his team's work with Experience to Lead. He says the programs enabled their medical device to reach the market sooner which had an immediate impact on patients and medical procedures worldwide.

"The thing that keeps us going in this organization is truly our central purpose: improving outcomes and quality of life for patients," he said. "We're able to do it better and faster because of what we learned through Experience to Lead."



“*Everyone is buzzing with lessons and we will not allow these leadership nuggets to slip away.*”

– Business Unit President

RESULTS FROM THE NORMANDY EXPERIENCE

The ambitious goal was achieved — the product was launched on time.

The Normandy Experience helped the team connect the dots to instill behaviors and processes to achieve even more ambitious company goals and propel the company to a new level.

Experience to Lead:

We believe every business deserves to have great leaders. To achieve this goal, we design and deliver unique experiences that bring leadership to life through immersive, experiential leadership development programs. By engaging in powerful leadership stories and dynamic facilitated discussions, your leaders become emotionally connected to the subject matter. In this way, the learning is applicable, personal, and impactful to your leaders, your team, and your organization.

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