

A detailed image of the Orion spacecraft in space, orbiting Earth. The spacecraft is white with black and yellow accents, and features the NASA logo and the name 'Orion' on its side. The Earth's blue and white atmosphere is visible in the background, along with a starry space background.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE NEW PIONEERS OF SPACE EXPLORATION

Experience to Lead partnered with Progressive Insurance to develop the Launch Point Experience, a customized leadership program for director-level high potentials.

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PROGRESSIVE[®]



THE GOAL: DEVELOPING HIGH POTENTIALS TO LEAD CHANGE

Progressive has participated in three Experience to Lead programs. In 2017 and again in 2019, GM-level senior executives from the company participated in our Apollo Experience, which focused on cultivating a shared vision, breaking down silos, and improving communication and organizational effectiveness.



Following the success of the Apollo Experiences for GM-level executives, Progressive asked us to design a customized Launch Point Experience for a new enterprise leadership development program. In 2018, Progressive launched their first Senior Leader Development Program for 20 director-level high potential leaders. The group included product managers, claims directors, and IT group managers — many of whom will become GM-level executives in the future.

The Launch Point Experience would build on the learnings of Progressive’s Senior Leader Development Program. This program experience would also reinforce key concepts from their internal development program, which focuses on developing leaders to excel in strategic planning, building strategic coalitions, and leading change.

THE LAUNCH POINT EXPERIENCE

Our Launch Point Experience served as a capstone to Progressive’s year-long internal development program, before participants were assigned action learning projects. We worked with Progressive to develop a customized program that reinforced and integrated existing competencies, while also delving more deeply into change leadership.

During the three-day Launch Point Experience, participants looked at the future of space flight as a metaphor for innovation and leading change while visiting the Kennedy Space

Center and commercial space companies in Cape Canaveral, FL. They gained rare access to facilities and heard from leaders in the aerospace industry, both from NASA and the commercial sector, who are revolutionizing the future of space travel.

THE FUTURE OF SPACEFLIGHT

We are living through a time of incredible change and innovation in space exploration. A robust commercial space sector has emerged over the past two decades, with companies expanding the possibilities of space travel. These companies are racing to innovate in areas including space tourism, scientific research, and crew and cargo transport.

As the sector becomes increasingly competitive, commercial companies are all trying to lower costs and improve the safety and reliability of access to space. At the same time, while competition is increasing, companies are also seeking opportunities to pool resources through collaboration. In this constantly evolving industry, leaders must be agile and adaptive as they pioneer new technologies and navigate new, complex markets.

NAVIGATING CHANGE: LEARNING FROM VISIONARY LEADERS

During their custom Launch Point Experience, Progressive’s team worked with experts and visited key sites from the past, present, and future of space flight. At each site, with guidance from our Experience to Lead facilitator and a senior Progressive business leader, participants discussed how they could apply leadership lessons from the rapidly changing aerospace industry to their own business.

THE NASA KSC OBSERVATION GANTRY: ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

One experience that especially resonated with participants was their time at the Kennedy Space Center with NASA’s first female launch director. As NASA’s Chief of Launch and Landing



when the Space Shuttle Program ended in 2011, she oversaw a period of immense organizational change at the agency. The launch director brought the Progressive team to the Observation Gantry, which overlooks the launch pad where Apollo 11 blasted off in 1969 on the first manned moon mission. Today, commercial space companies are leasing the same launch complex for their space missions.

As participants looked down at that historic launch site, the launch director shared what it was like leading her team through change as the NASA shuttle era ended. She talked about directing the launch of Atlantis, NASA's final shuttle mission. This was a time of profound change for her team. As a leader, she knew it was her job to guide them through this transition and facilitate moments for them to step back and reflect — all while working to ensure a successful final launch.

At the Observation Gantry, participants also heard from David Leestma, a retired NASA astronaut who flew three space missions. Leestma later became an executive at NASA, serving as Director of Flight Crew Operations, and later as a program manager. And participants heard from a recovery director at NASA who is currently working on Orion, the agency's new exploration spacecraft. The perspectives and stories they shared bridged the history and future of space travel.

COMMERCIAL SPACE: CHANGE AND INNOVATION

The Progressive team also visited one of the leading companies in the commercial space sector in the Cape Canaveral, FL area. The company is focused on the space tourism market, and is aiming to send a crewed mission into space in the very near future.

The Progressive cohort took an exclusive tour of their rarely seen manufacturing facilities. They heard from the director who discussed

how the company has fostered a climate of change and innovation. He talked about how they encourage 'two-way door' decisions, which allow people to take risks while knowing that there's an opportunity to go 'back through the door' and course correct when needed. This flexibility and tolerance for failure has allowed the company to grow and innovate at a rapid pace.

The commercial company visit offered a valuable contrast between today's profit-driven commercial space companies and NASA, a historically mission-driven organization with more financial constraints. Each model has advantages and challenges. Comparing them sparked valuable discussions among the leaders at Progressive about change and innovation within their own teams.

A HIGHLY CUSTOMIZED EXPERIENCE

Experience to Lead worked with Progressive for more than a year to develop a highly customized Launch Point Experience. We designed the program from the ground up according to their needs and objectives.

One of the company's key needs was to differentiate this program from our more historically-focused Apollo Experience — which we have already delivered twice to senior Progressive executives. With Launch Point, we worked with the Progressive team to design a program focused more on current and future innovations, tailored to the unique competencies and objectives of their high-potential cohort.

Progressive appreciated the opportunity to be closely involved in the development of the program. They made a site visit, had multiple meetings with Experience to Lead's design team, and participated in a client pilot program. At every stage, we used their feedback to inform the design and focus of their Launch Point Experience.

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THE LASTING IMPACT OF LAUNCH POINT

The Launch Point Experience had a tremendous impact on Progressive's leaders. One participant reflected that the future of spaceflight was an "incredibly fascinating area to focus on, with practical learnings and leadership lessons." And another described the program as an "interactive, well-paced, thoughtful, valuable, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The program offered a valuable external perspective on the topics of their Senior Leader Development Program. Participants applied concepts from NASA and the commercial space companies as they kicked off their action learning projects.

One takeaway that had a lasting impact on the company was our S-Curve Innovation Model, which we developed based on George Land's Growth Curve. During the program, we discussed the intricacies of innovation at each point in the model. This provided a common language for discussing innovation and the leadership styles most effective at different points.

"...These are the types of training the participants will remember for the rest of their careers."

Leaders at Progressive continue to use the S-Curve model as a tool to think about the company and their individual work on a continuum of innovation. Claims Director Mark Pleune said, "I've shared the S-curve innovation model with my manager and direct reports. This has been particularly beneficial when discussing an organization like the National Catastrophe Response Team (NCRT), which is undergoing transformation and under 're-invention' in the cycle. Historically, NCRT has relied heavily on in-person interactions. With factors like a leaner operating model in Claims, increasing volatility in weather, and

technology improvements, the traditional operating model requires adjustment. This tool helps articulate this need and 'paint the picture' for our leaders and people in the organization".

There are many takeaways that continue to resonate with the Progressive team. Launch Point was an "emotional, thought-provoking guide from history to the future. I walked away with many useful ideas and tools to apply to future work," said Phil Cottell, Director, CRM Process.

Geoff Souser is a senior executive with Progressive who previously attended Apollo and served in a 'leaders as teachers' role for Launch Point. "Doing programs like this makes a huge difference," he said. "These are the types of training the participants will remember for the rest of their careers." And product manager Lou Holmes called Launch Point "the most unique, forward-thinking leadership experience I've attended."

ABOUT

Progressive:

The Progressive Group of Insurance Companies makes it easy to understand, buy and use auto insurance. Progressive offers choices so consumers can reach us whenever, wherever and however it's most convenient - online, by phone, on a mobile device or in-person with a local agent. Progressive provides insurance for personal and commercial autos and trucks, motorcycles, boats,

recreational vehicles, and homes. Progressive is the third largest auto insurer in the country; a leading seller of motorcycle and commercial auto insurance; and through ASI, one of the top 15 homeowners insurance carriers. Founded in 1937, Progressive continues its long history of offering shopping tools and services that save customers time and money, like Name Your Price®, Snapshot®, and HomeQuote Explorer®.

Experience to Lead:

We believe every business deserves to have great leaders. To achieve that goal, we design and deliver unique experiences that bring leadership to life through immersive, experiential leadership development programs in unforgettable locations. To that end, we are dedicated to delivering the highest level of leadership development in the most powerful vehicle available — experiential learning.

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