

Hands-on business simulation transforms executive-level leadership at Garmin

The GPS technology company steered its Garmin Leadership Academy to success by prioritizing practice and integrating Abilitie's Management Challenge.

“Honestly, without the simulation, I don't see how the GLA would be special. I don't see how it would be sticky. I don't see how it would be any different from anything else that any other company is doing for leaders in general.”



*Nancy Hasak,
Senior Learning and
Professional Development
Facilitator at Garmin*

L&D CHALLENGE:

Bridging a growing skills gap among senior level leaders to accelerate overall company growth

Driven by the vision to excel in every market it serves, Garmin's L&D team recognized the need to invest in its leadership pipeline. In the 2022 annual talent review, the L&D team found a skills gap between emerging talent and executive-level leadership. This analysis prompted a comprehensive overhaul of the L&D program to better prepare leaders to drive overall company growth.

In designing an engaging leadership development program, Garmin faced two challenges:

1. Garmin's existing leadership development simulation was outdated and had low participation.
2. The company's leaders spanned various business units, necessitating a cohesive and inclusive learning experience.

To begin devising a solution, Garmin pored over 200+ reviews from 1,400 leaders across the company and identified five core competencies shared among its top performers:

1. Communication / Change Management
2. Coaching
3. Giving Feedback / Difficult Conversations
4. Delegation
5. Strategic Thinking

These competencies became the pillars of the Garmin Leadership Academy (GLA).



MEET GARMIN



Industry
Electronics



Company size
19,700 employees



Headquarters:
Olathe, Kansas

Garmin develops cutting-edge GPS navigation and wearable technology, from live sonar for boaters to smartwatches for runners. Founded in 1989, the company has grown to more than 19,000 associates in 35 countries.

SOLUTION:

Integrate an immersive business simulation into an existing program to boost engagement and prepare leaders for success

Garmin aimed to boost participation by incorporating more experiential learning into the GLA through a flexible, easily deployable, and highly effective business simulation. After a thorough search, **Abilitie's Management Challenge** emerged as the best choice.

Garmin incorporated Abilitie's Management Challenge simulation into the two-day GLA to supplement the networking, discussion, and coaching elements of its existing curriculum. This solution offered a ready-to-use platform that was entirely virtual, required zero installation time, and provided the fun and engaging environment needed to generate more excitement among participants.

Management Challenge is a team-based, competitive simulation where participants hone their people management skills by coaching six realistic characters who exhibit common issues that leaders encounter in everyday management. There's Tamika, the conscientious

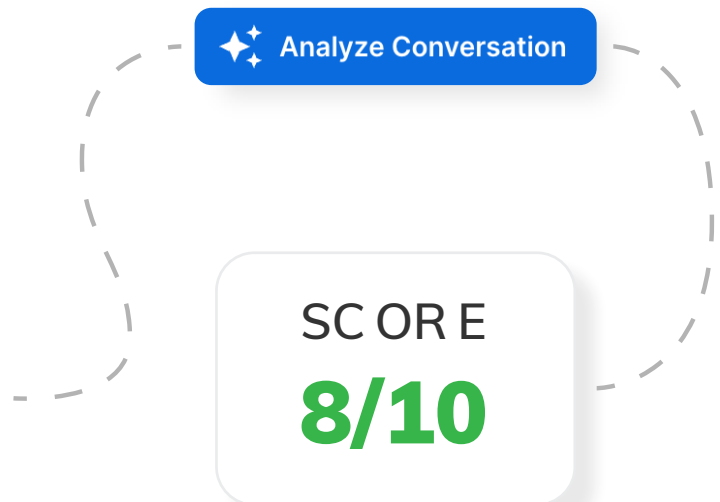
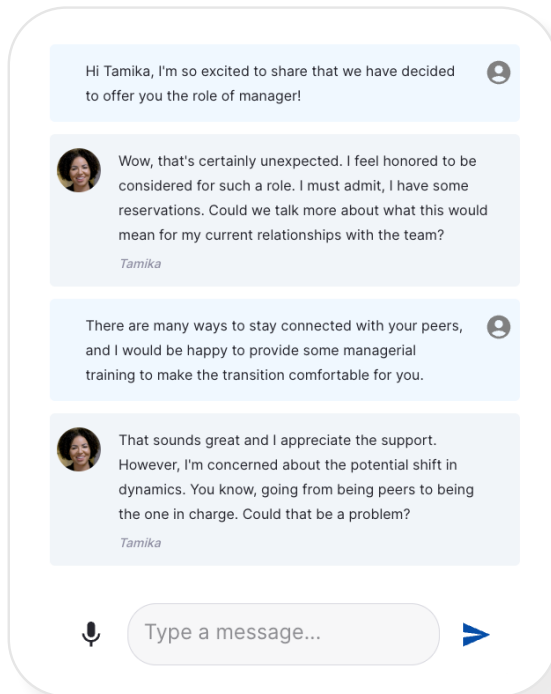
high performer who's hesitant to step into a leadership role, and Jim, the go-getter salesperson who's too eager to climb the corporate ladder.

Through hands-on, experiential learning, Garmin's leaders practice concepts through virtual scenarios and apply them to real-world situations that they've all experienced, regardless of their differing business functions.

Tom Patterson, Leadership and Professional Development Business Partner at Garmin said, "It's not just a simulation. It's not just them coming in for two days and getting a participation certificate and being talked at. It really is that combination of real-world experience, feeling invested in these characters, practicing together, and having the psychological safety to make mistakes. In the simulation, we can fail together so then we can go and succeed out in the real world."



Management Challenge



Practicing Essential Business Skills for Immediate Results

To create an exclusive training opportunity, Garmin's senior leaders must be nominated by executive-level leadership to participate in the Leadership Academy. 53 leaders were chosen for the inaugural class.

Before participating in the simulation, GLA participants also undergo a Wiley DiSC assessment and a 360 review to understand their individual management styles' strengths and weaknesses, based on the challenges unique to Garmin's leaders. Expert facilitators link these results to the characters in Abilitie's simulation, fostering discussions about how to approach various leadership scenarios effectively.

Through Management Challenge's online portal, participants can apply coaching methodologies and see how those strategies impact each character, and the overall simulated business, in real-time.

The choose-your-own-adventure nature of the simulation infuses playfulness and uniqueness into the program that participants engaged with immediately. Two teams can coach the same character—and still get two different outcomes, which sparks lively conversations about what it means to coach well. This cohort-based learning method also helped create the excitement and camaraderie Garmin was looking for in its program revamp.

RESULTS:

A Re-imagined Training Program with Impact

By enhancing the GLA with Management Challenge, learners were able to apply the concepts learned in the simulation to their real-life teams, ensuring practical application of newfound skills.

The GLA is now providing a highly sought-after learning experience that enables a holistic approach to leadership with a virtual simulation that produces impressive results in the workplace.

The metric of success at Garmin encompassed three pivotal aspects: securing executive-level endorsement, achieving high enrollment rates in the program, and conducting post-program surveys. With 53 participants in the inaugural class and over 34 associates already nominated for the upcoming year, the groundswell of interest and participation has exceeded expectations.

Furthermore, executive-level leadership exhibited an unprecedented level of support for the program. One Garmin Vice President said, “I received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the three participants that I had in the initial training in terms of value, approach, content, and resources across the board—completely top marks. (This program has) the energy, professionalism, and value add in its delivery.”

In addition to the rave reviews from Garmin’s top leaders, the Garmin Leadership Academy has already achieved measurable success in the results from post-program surveys (average score on a 5-point scale):

4.70

“The learning modules (Coaching, Communication, Delegation, Feedback, and Strategic Vision) within the program were a value-add to this experience.”

“The facilitators helped make connections between the content and my work as a leader.”

4.73

4.79

“I would recommend this course to other leaders within Garmin.”