

Xerox Corporation



Blended learning prepares leaders around the world

Start with the imperative to develop next-generation leaders, add the pressure to do it efficiently, and then kick it up a notch by mixing employees from 16 countries into the same experience. A partnership between Xerox Corporation and the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) has taken this complex challenge and turned it into a recipe for success.

The Xerox Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) is a five-month program that blends face-to-face sessions, Web-based learning platforms, online assessment, personal executive coaching and internal mentoring. Originally developed for Xerox's North American operations, ELP got its start in 2001 when Xerox challenged CCL to create a program that would prepare a pool of up-and-coming employees for leadership roles. Xerox also sought to develop more people, more efficiently by using leading-edge learning technology.

"When the program expanded to serve Xerox's European operations, another challenge was added: to overcome language barriers and time zone differences to prepare this new generation of leaders," remembers David Baldwin, a senior associate for CCL and lead facilitator for the Xerox program in Europe.

The employees participating in the European ELP reflect the global diversity of Xerox's business, with each session typically drawing 36 high-potential managers from 14 countries. They work in a variety of timezones and represent a broad range of functional areas and speak a dozen or more languages.

CCL's blended learning approach has been effective, beginning with a two-hour "virtual" kick off using Web-based conferencing. The program continues with a three-day class at Xerox headquarters in the UK; three "e-modules" that participants complete at their own pace; and a final two-day, face-to-face session. Baldwin also conducts team calls and individual coaching sessions.

The most challenging part of the program for the Xerox participants involves working as cross-functional, cross-cultural, geographically dispersed teams to identify, plan and begin a business project based on the company's strategic initiatives. Each team presents their results to a group of vice presidents and several executives at the culmination of the program. By working on real projects, learning and collaborating, and having access to coaching and support throughout, the ELP participants gain valuable, tangible leadership experience.

"Xerox sees immediate results since the class projects are helping reduce costs, improve the quality of products and deliver better service to customers," says Baldwin. "At the same time, the company is building a pool of leaders who are steeped in how to manage complex problems in an increasingly complex world, and that, in turn, is helping to position Xerox Corporation for continued success."

Objectives:

- Identify the skill set and experiences needed for effective leadership in the digital economy.
- Build a pool of leaders who are equipped to manage complex problems.
- Prepare employees for participating in cross-functional, cross-cultural, and geographically dispersed teams.
- Overcome time zone differences and language barriers to prepare a new generation of leaders.

Outcomes:

- ELP projects are helping reduce costs, improve quality and deliver better service.
- Participants gain an appreciation for the complexity and diversity of the organization.
- Improved communication and teamwork skills translate to meaningful leader development.