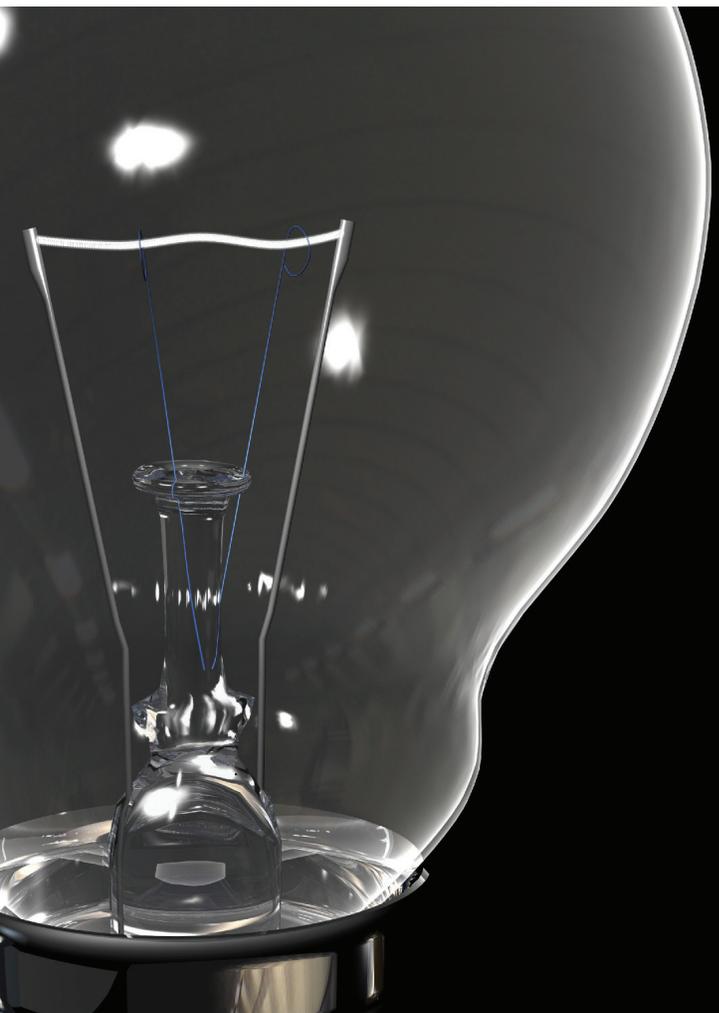


WHY SIMULATIONS SHOULD BE A CRITICAL PART OF YOUR NEXT TRAINING PROGRAM

"To acquire behavior, the student must engage in behavior."

B. F. Skinner

A well-executed business simulation is designed to create “aha” moments, where concepts become behavior changes.



Often the most interesting take-away shared by participants at the conclusion of a business simulation is that the key lessons they learned were things that they already knew. So if people have the knowledge that they need, why don't they act on it? If they did, their organization wouldn't continue investing time and money in training and development. Why would a company waste valuable resources teaching people what they already know? The reality is, even though the knowledge is available people don't necessarily utilize all their resources which is why experiential learning is important. It addresses the knowledge and performance gap while providing the best ROI for your training dollars along with the time invested by your leaders.

1 What We Know Doesn't Always Translate into What We Do

Have you ever experienced a knee-jerk reaction in a situation only to experience instant regret for your behavior? Even though you're well aware of the appropriate response, it's sometimes difficult to translate knowledge into action. A key reason that simulations can result in real behavioral changes may stem from the theories of the learning guru, Chris Argyris. He suggested that what we know and embody (our espoused theories) do not always translate into what we eventually do (our theories-in-use). This is especially true when situations are ambiguous, stressful or emotionally charged, as they often are in today's fast-paced, high-stakes business

environment. Simulated learning can help leaders identify and understand this gap between what they say and what they do; especially under pressure. A good simulation moves the learning from the head to the gut and that's when behavior starts to change. Leaders learn to be more mindful of the gaps between their intentions and their actions. This only happens through analysis of real events.

2 Realtime Feedback About Our Behavior

We all know that our behavior affects our relationships with others. Common sense and research both indicate that the ability to build and maintain good relationships is critical to leadership effectiveness. As a result, this is often where our greatest learning and development challenges and opportunities can be found - in the quality of our relationships.

Effective leaders know this. A study conducted by Discovery Learning revealed that when 3,000 mid-level managers participating in a leadership development program at either the Center for Creative Leadership or Discovery Learning were asked to set personal development goals, 37% selected goals related to being a better manager or administrator, while 67% selected goals related to building better relationships.

Effective leaders realize that when they take action without considering their people, they often weaken their relationship with the people they rely on to accomplish company goals. Yet under pressure, leaders don't always act on what they know - and are often blind to this discrepancy.

Good simulations offer immediate opportunities for feedback and reflection in a way that traditional classroom or online training can't. This feedback provides immediate insights into our behavior and the impact it has on those with whom we work and depend on for outcomes.



3 Shorten the “Learning Horizon”



Simulations can bridge the gap between what we know and what we do by allowing us to collapse the “learning horizon.” Peter Senge describes the learning horizon as the time required to engage in behavior and then see and understand the consequences of our actions. When we are dealing with complex problems in an environment with a lot of noise, the learning horizon may be so long that connection between behavior and consequence can be blurred if not lost.

Simulations compress the learning horizon and provide opportunities for comparison between current and future behaviors and experimentation in a compact, safe and non-judgmental environment. During a simulation, leaders can step outside their comfort zone, try new ideas and behaviors, and make mistakes - all without risk to careers or the organization.

4 Integrated Learning



Evidence of the power of learning through hands on experience can be found in Bloom’s theory of “overlapping domains.” This includes the Cognitive domain which encompasses intellect and thought processes (i.e. knowledge), the Affective domain that encompasses feelings and emotions (i.e. Attitude). Lastly, it includes the Psychomotor domain which includes our ability to implement our learnings.

Bloom suggests that to be effective, especially in a work environment where developmental efforts are intended to create behavioral change, the learning experience must call on all three domains. First published in 1956, Bloom’s theories are still widely used today in effective

training and development interventions, and simulations, which can include all three domains.

An effective simulation challenges the knowledge, emotions and skill sets of a person just like any work environment would.

5 Adults are Problem Solvers

People learn lessons of effective leadership when they're having fun - or are emotionally charged. Malcolm Knowles, the grandfather of Adult Learning practices suggests that learning is most effective when past skills and experiences are utilized. Adults are problem solvers and to feed that desire, they need a structured forum for developing the most important foundation of leadership - experience. Knowles identified four essential factors of effective learning in adults:

- ▶ *Adults need to know why they are being asked to learn a skill*
- ▶ *Adults learn by doing*
- ▶ *Adults approach learning as problem solving*
- ▶ *Adults learn best when the topic is of immediate value*

A well designed and executed simulation directly addresses all four of these effective learning factors. In short, simulations are arguably one of the most useful mediums for adult learning.

6 An Engaging Simulation Reflects Truths About Organizational Culture

A well-designed simulation can be an effective tool when learning objectives include changes in awareness and behaviors. Examples of changes in the workplace include:

- ▶ *Enhancing self-awareness of leaders*
- ▶ *Helping under-performing teams*
- ▶ *Improving a group's communication process to handle constructive conflict*
- ▶ *Preparing employees for departmental change*
- ▶ *Rethinking outdated work processes*

Simulations work in these scenarios because they can draw out behaviors and relationship dynamics that exist in the workplace that do not manifest in one-on-one coaching. This takes traditional training one step further by having the participant transfer knowledge into action in an environment that more accurately represents their workplace.

To learn more about MHS' line of simulations, please visit mhs.com/talent.



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