

Building Stakeholder Management Skills for a Global IT Multinational

- A Case for Experiential Learning

The client is an American IT-product company in the network software space, which is part of a large US software conglomerate employing around 5000 employees worldwide. Its 200-member team based in India comprises of technical documentation specialists that support teams from around the world.

The documentation specialists performed the critical function of creating product guides for each new product releases and ongoing updates. To create and update such guides, the documentation specialists must collaborate with multiple product owners, who could be based in different locations around the world.

The documentation specialists, consequently, operate in a setting that requires continuous interaction and collaboration with multiple stakeholders. Multiple stakeholders coupled with large number of projects was having an adverse impact on deadlines.

The key challenge here was the inability of the documentation specialists to manage their stakeholders and negotiate deadlines with them. The need of the hour was to have a holistic solution that would improve the stakeholder management capabilities of the documentation specialists.

Challenge

- Stakeholder management is a skill gained through experience and real-life context, and therefore the solution would need to have a high quotient of experiential learning. However, internal attempts at developing an experiential learning solution had not given the desired results
- Given the nature of the learning need, the solution would have to focus on learning synthesis and experimentation
- The clients internal training programs were not able to measure the impact of learning post the sessions, and therefore tracking needle movement in behavioural change was impossible



Solution

Based on consultations with the client, KNOLSKAPE created a solution that would enable the documentation specialists to become adept at stakeholder management. The approach that KNOLSKAPE took was to consider stakeholder management as an amalgamation of key capabilities and therefore curated its learning program focusing on the following three competencies:

- Communication Skills
- Negotiation Skills
- Assertiveness

The rationale for this approach was that negotiation skills would enable learners to communicate their workflow and deadlines effectively, while skills on assertiveness would enable the documentation specialists to carry greater impact in their communication.

The solution consisted of customized one-day workshops for negotiation skills and communication. The negotiation skills workshop focused on the nine principles of effective negotiations, while the communication workshop focused on assertiveness. To supplement the classroom intervention, and aid learning synthesis, case study analysis was chosen as the preferred methodology. The KNOLSKAPE cloud-based case study analysis tool, AktivCase was used to solve the cases of the learning sessions.

AktivCase provides learners with 50+ frameworks for solving business cases. The advantage of the platform is that it eliminates the need for having paper pencil case studies, thereby reducing logistical challenges while also allowing learners to experiment while learning.



Impact

- Owing to the well-grounded instructional design, the learning retention among the participants was very high. An internal survey by the organisation revealed that more than 80% of the employees could recollect key learnings post three weeks of the program
- The three-pronged approach led to sustained behavioral improvements. This was inferred from reports of the documentation specialists on improvements in their stakeholder management capabilities
- As the solution had a holistic approach, there were collateral impacts as observed through improvements in communication and assertiveness among the documentation specialists

Overall, the solution developed by KNOLSKAPE accurately met the learning needs of the organization, while also ensuring high level of learner progress. High levels of learner engagement and contextualization, along with overall solution fidelity were the stand out features of the program, because of which the client was able to overcome their business challenge.

