

# SUPPLIERS

## A Vendor-Provided Case Study

Discovery Learning Helps BorgWarner revamp its leadership development.



Greensboro, North Carolina

[www.discoverylearning.com](http://www.discoverylearning.com)

The power of experiential learning transcends industry. “We wanted to revamp our high-potential development program because we had a new competency model in place, and we wanted a partner to help us redesign,” says Laurie Schamber, manager of organizational learning at BorgWarner, Chicago.

In early 2001, Schamber began looking for a partner to help revamp the company’s leadership development program for high-potential candidates. BorgWarner, a maker of components and systems for automatic transmissions and engines, and four-wheel drive vehicles, employs nearly 14,000 people worldwide. “We knew we wanted a simulation and 360-degree feedback,” says Schamber.

“We have to assess our high-potential managers on their ability to move into an executive rank. The experiential learning is a springboard to learn about their strengths and weaknesses as leaders,” Schamber explains. “We can’t assess, and they can’t learn as much, without seeing themselves in action.”

The research bears out Schamber’s perspective. A Center for Creative Leadership project that compared high-potentials who reach their potential to those who don’t suggests there are many similarities between “derailers” and “arrivers.” Although the arrivers seem to make mistakes early in their careers, they show a greater capacity to learn from those early experiences.

BorgWarner’s new program incorporated Discovery Learning’s PressTime simulation, *Decision Style Profile*, and 360-degree Leadership Development Survey. Discovery Learning certified BorgWarner’s nine in-house trainers to deliver the simulation and assessment components of the two-day program, and the pilot ran in August 2001 with Discovery Learning’s assistance.

“There were rave reviews on the simulation,” Schamber says. “Even though it’s publishing-focused and, therefore, outside of our industry, engineers responded to the roles and found them to be relevant because it’s about bringing a new product to market. The debrief has been very rich. Participants have gotten fresh insights about who they are and how they’re perceived.” The simulation was also intensely facilitated (one facilitator for every three participants), with voluminous notes taken on the individual and group dynamic.

### Follow-up is key

“We follow up within 30 days on each individual’s development plan and discuss key things to work on, key challenges,” says Schamber. “We may also give specific assignments to help them achieve their goals.” Without that ongoing, in-person commitment, she explains, BorgWarner can’t expect to reap much benefit from the investment. So far, more than 120 participants have been through the process. Schamber says BorgWarner plans to offer it to the top 20 percent. “That’s for the cream of the crop.”

Schamber says BorgWarner liked the fact that Discovery Learning had a close relationship with the Center for Creative Leadership because BorgWarner had worked with the center and uses its benchmarks tool. And BorgWarner felt that the PressTime simulation, though it re-created a work environment outside of its industry, was very relevant because of its focus on bringing a new product to market. But the most important factor was the customer orientation.

“Discovery Learning shared the data and info even before we made a commitment,” says Schamber. “It was willing to give us every insight so we could make this succeed on our own, and that was important to us.”