

Business Simulations: The Challenge Leaders Need

Airline pilots are required to regularly train in simulators to keep their skills tuned. **It's easy to see why.** Flying planes requires the application and the integration of a complex mix of skills in the moment — and can pose devastating risks if things go wrong. **Organizational leadership is exactly the same, yet few organizations use the power of simulations to provide development for leaders.** Business simulations create an opportunity for them to get feedback and pause and reflect on their performance.

A business simulation challenges leaders in five critical ways:



1. Scan the environment and read the context.

Great leaders often “see” a situation or dynamics differently from (or before) others. The ability to synthesize disparate information is a hallmark of a great leader. For many leaders that skill comes through practice.



2. Think strategically and prioritize action.

Great leaders can articulate a broad range of potential options in complex situations, and they can identify and sequence which action to take first. Ruthless prioritization challenges many leaders, particularly in the face of ambiguity. It is a skill honed through experience.



3. Apply skills and behaviors to decisions and interactions.

Leaders get nothing accomplished if they cannot effectively engage direct reports, employees, bosses, or peers. Business simulations offer an opportunity for leaders to practice their interactions through role-plays and team dialogue — and create a foundation for feedback.



4. Respond in the moment, identify signals, and address change.

Nothing is static. Competitors, customers, employees, and the market are all in constant motion. As challenging as it is to set direction, it is even more challenging to decide when to shift. Business simulations allow a leader to experience change and then go back and reflect on what they “missed” in order to be better prepared for the real world.



5. Understand the cascade effect of choices.

Great leaders think multiple steps ahead. The immediate impact of a decision may be far less profound than the next series of actions and reactions that it triggers. Leaders make better choices when they develop their foresight and ability to think in multiple time dimensions. By compressing time, simulations create an effective foundation for developing that skill.

If you are a leader, how could you test your leadership skills by going through a business simulation experience? Below are questions to consider.

A simulation-based learning experience could provide more insights into your answers:

- Do you have unconscious biases about your information sources and/or your frame for your business challenges?
- Are you paying attention to the relationships you are developing as well as the work you and your team are getting done?
- Are you managing for today and building for tomorrow in every decision you make?
- Do you actively use your vision and direction to lead your team on a daily basis?
- How effectively do you empower your organization to deliver beyond your line of sight?
- Do your actions match your intentions as a leader?
- Are you communicating effectively to align and empower your team?

Leaders learn from feedback: business results, observations from others, and personal reflection. A business simulation provides powerful, risk-free feedback to accelerate leader growth.

We at Insight Experience would be delighted to talk with you about challenging and growing your leaders with business simulations. It's the learning experience they need.