

Celemi Tango™ readies Nokia managers for leadership responsibilities

CELEMI CLIENT CASE

At Nokia Enterprise Solutions, a division of the global telecommunications giant, preparing the next generation of leaders is critical. “The telecommunications industry is wrought with reorganizations and new hires one day and layoffs the next,” explained George Winston, an independent career and developmental consultant who works with Nokia. “In this tumultuous environment, it is imperative that a company like Nokia recruit top performers and continually develop their skills so they are prepared for the challenges they might face in leadership positions.”

To build its executive bench strength, the Enterprise Solutions division created a rigorous 18-month training program called “Symphony Leadership,” presented in four “movements.” Incorporating skills assessments, coaching sessions, team projects, classroom learning and case studies, the program concludes with a dynamic cumulative activity — a business simulation called Celemi Tango™ — that reinforces the major business concepts covered during the program.

Aha! Moment

The simulation impresses how people are the heart of any business' success and how critical it is to have the right people on board early. Recovering from a bad hire can be extremely painful.

— Andrew Namboka, Engineering Director, Singapore

“The Tango session emphasized the need to act quickly and with conviction once a strategic decision is made. That’s what makes it successful,” noted Andrew Namboka, an engineering director in Nokia’s Singapore office and a Symphony graduate. “The simulation gave me a greater appreciation of the pressures senior business leaders contend with on a daily basis.”

During a Tango session, small teams of coworkers compete against each other to gain market share for their simulated company. They are charged with making decisions about cash flow, client recruitment and retention, project management and in-house talent. After the teams determine a business strategy, which range from a specialty boutique to a high-volume organization, they maneuver plastic coin carriers to track the inflow and outflow of cash — around a game-styled work mat, each team trying to muscle its way to domination.

Over the course of several business cycles (or “years” in Tango terms) team members make strategic decisions that impact customer relationships, employee satisfaction and corporate image. As they fight to differentiate themselves from competitors, they struggle with insolvencies, hostile takeovers, mergers and defecting employees in a shrinking marketplace.

“Tango had the appropriate level of complexity and captured the teamwork required to operate a company,” remarked Donald Harrison, a financial operations manager in California. “The simulation got very competitive as it progressed and team members got to know each other better. Tango presented the broad-based dilemmas and decisions that need to be made in a company like Nokia.”

Critical financial information “gets real” for Tango participants as they complete their own income and expense statements as well as balance sheets at the end of each simulated business cycle. Financial results are posted and reviewed by everyone during short sessions led by Celemi-certified facilitators. Team members are encouraged to make note of competitors’ financials and to wander around the room to gather competitive intelligence. During brief breaks, they strategize with their teammates for the next business cycle.



What is Tango?

"It's a fiendish game," noted editor Thomas A. Stewart, writing of his own experience with Celemi Tango in Fortune Magazine. This board-based, non electronic simulation is aptly named: it does take two to Tango – customers and employees; tangibles and intangibles; short term and long term; profitability and investment. "If one tries to bend the other to its will, both end up in a heap on the floor," concluded Stewart. Over the course of a typical two-day session, participants compete for employees, customers and market share while managing capacity, price, budgets and more. When the music stops, only one group will be left standing – that with the greatest total market share.

For Mr. Winston, Tango was the ideal cumulative activity. "It brings together all of the company's functional groups and gives them an opportunity to meet and experience a diversity of thinking that they might not normally be exposed to in their regular work environment." The Enterprise Solutions groups include European, Asian and American operations with employees from engineering, marketing, human resources and research and development.



Mr. Namboka, who recruits, develops and directs the sales engineering staff in the Asia-Pacific region, summarized the breadth of the experience: "Our

team is very technical and analytically minded. In Tango, we had the opportunity to worry about entirely different problems. The simulation impresses how people are the heart of any business' success and how critical it is to have the right people on board early. Recovering from a bad hire can be extremely painful."

John Roach, a learning consultant with Advantage Performance Group who worked with Nokia Enterprise Systems to develop the Symphony program, declared Tango a natural fit for the company. "The beauty of this simulation is that it required no modifications to be pertinent to Nokia's business. It covers the major business concepts and demonstrates the real impact of employee knowledge and corporate image on the company's profitability," he observes.

At the conclusion of the Tango simulation, teams are given time to prepare a presentation for a committee of Nokia leaders who pose as investors. The teams disclose their market share, corporate direction, competitive and capital needs, and sometimes, make a case for getting out of the business entirely.

"Tango closely parallels the hard business decisions people at Nokia constantly need to make," concludes Mr. Winston. "It is a great, visual and interactive way to develop overall business acumen and prepare future business leaders."

About Nokia

Nokia is a world leader in mobile communications, driving the growth and sustainability of the broader mobility industry. Nokia connects people to each other and the information that matters to them with easy-to-use and innovative products like mobile phones, devices and solutions for imaging, games, media and businesses. Nokia provides equipment, solutions and services for network operators and corporations.