

## **How Sony Empowered Frontline Leaders to Lead Change**

Fiscal year 2008 proved to be one of the most difficult in Sony's long history. Intense competition threatened Sony's relevance. The yen's sharp rise, its erosion of Sony's overseas business when coupled with the economic downturn exposed deep vulnerabilities despite Sony's past restructuring and cost-cutting efforts.

Sony Corporation's CEO and President, Sir Howard Stringer, recognized that to survive the company would have to undergo a massive strategic change to recapture the spirit of innovation so deeply embedded in its DNA. The company Stringer said needed "a transformation into a more innovative, integrated, and agile global company". Sony Electronics, (SEL) the largest business unit of Sony Corporation of America would be the first to experience this transformation.

### **Your Success Depends on Front Line Leaders**

Sony's senior leadership knew that the success of Stringer's organizational transformation hinged upon two critical components. First, SEL had to embrace change as a critical business driver that would impact their bottom line. Second, SEL would have to empower their frontline leaders, the primary driver of performance and engagement across the organization, to be change leaders.

#### **Building Alignment Among Leaders**

Sony selected BTS with its deep knowledge of Sony's business to customize a discovery-based learning program that would capture the attention of their leaders. Navigating Change as the program was called was rolled out to over 600 leaders in two months, taking place in 10 locations, with 24 classroom sessions and four Webinar sessions.

#### **Senior Management: "We Are All in This Together"**

Knowing that executive support was critical, SEL took a top-down approach with leaders at all levels of the organization participating in the sessions together. From C-suite executives to business unit heads to frontline leaders the message was clear. "We're in this together and we'll get through this together." In fact Bersin & Associates, a leading research and advisory, found that executive involvement in frontline leadership programs like SEL's is a best practice of world-class organizations.

#### **Navigating Change and Encouraging New Behavior**

Sony's frontline leaders needed a new mindset and tools to embrace change:

- Competence in dealing with ambiguity
- Techniques to lead teams more effectively through the change process

- Competence to develop well-defined business cases for change initiatives
- Measurement plans to track performance against benchmarks aligned to Sony's new direction.
- Confidence to implement change and identify opportunities for change that would improve business performance.