

Training & Management Development Methods

PACER promotes one team, one vision at GM CEE

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Overview

This case study provides a summary of why the PACER programme was developed and delivered for the Central and Eastern Europe Region of General Motors (CEE) and what business benefits it was targeted to deliver.

Whatever the business challenges facing an organization, the clear communication of the business strategy and the willing engagement of all employees in the delivery of this strategy are key to the continued success of that organization.

The traditional focus in Europe is on the more established markets where the issues are not about managing rampant growth (this would be wishful thinking) but more about the challenge of maximizing return from a fairly static market share. The issues are efficiency and morale, and a playing not to lose approach often prevails. In CEE the business climate is one of unpredictability coupled with dramatic growth influenced by the complications of managing a diverse region of more than 19 main markets and ten secondary markets, 29 nationalities, three alphabets and two main religions. Under these circumstances, a playing to win mindset is of paramount importance.

The idea for PACER grew over a series of meetings between Chris Lacey (the executive director for GMCEE) and ChangeMaker consultants while facilitating senior management team meetings, reviewing structure and direction to meet the demands placed on the region by dramatic growth. The genesis of the concept was the desire to ensure that it was not only the senior people who were trying to drive the complex business but that all employees at all levels had an understanding of the challenges

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facing the business and how they could be involved in a successful future.

We were dealing with an already successful region that needed to shift a gear to maintain and accelerate the progress. In the mid-1990s GM had rolled out a Difference programme across the whole organization to communicate organizational changes and motivate dealers. It was important for PACER to be clearly differentiated as there would be a considerable number of people still in the organization who had experienced this. Communications made it clear that it was not a change programme for dealers. It was targeted specifically at all GM employees and was about breaking down barriers (cross-functional and cross-border/business); it was about taking responsibility for personal behaviour in developing the business and in particular about developing a clear understanding of how the multi-brand approach is critical to the development of an ever-growing business.

One solution would have been to run events in separate countries. This may have proved a logistically simpler exercise but would not have returned the tremendous benefits of mixing nationalities and functions to develop a real understanding of how one team TEAM needs to work together to achieve one vision.

Key themes

The PACER programme was conceived as an organizational-development and internal-communication programme specifically and uniquely designed for GM CEE employees and the employees of some of its closest service providers.

The key themes of the programme were:

- the vision for GM CEE in the future and how the new organizational structure would facilitate continued profitable growth;
- the role of the individual within that vision and the opportunities for personal development, growth and career development within GM CEE and the wider GM organization;
- how further to improve team performance and how to build teams across the various elements of the GM CEE organization;
- gaining a better understanding of customers, their needs and how to deliver excellent levels of service and support;
- GM's multi-brand strategy and how it would contribute to growth within GM CEE;

- how to solve problems using existing techniques in order to facilitate growth; and
- the application of appropriate processes and standards in times of rapid growth.

The programme framework, style and delivery process

The programme used modern, involving training techniques and processes to ensure that the participants learned through positive involvement in the sessions and maximized their understanding and retention. There were indoor and outdoor sessions. Experiential learning was the core learning concept and the method involved the use of structured exercises to deliver specific messages.

The learning was supported by the use of booklets during the event, which carried the key messages and learning log areas for the participants to make their own notes. There was an action planning and personal commitment session at the end of each programme and then follow-up by the delivery of a personal commitment letter after three months to each delegate and further follow-up materials, workshops, booklets and posters to reinforce the key messages.

All employees were expected to attend the programme, which was run across 12 sessions so that only small numbers from each operation were absent from the workplace at any one time.

Delivery was in English, as this is the business language of the region. Care was taken to ensure understanding of the key messages, with colleague translation encouraged to ensure comprehension. The delivery team was led by natural English speakers but contained a diversity of nationalities and mother tongues to ensure empathy with the language issues.

Each programme was supported by a senior executive from the region, who led the GM-specific business messages through a series of presentations to illustrate the history, recent successes and future plans of the region.

ChangeMaker International led the delivery, facilitated each programme and provided the following services:

- design of all programme content;
- preparation of all of the appropriate learning processes, tools, aids and materials;
- the recruitment and training and ongoing management of an appropriately qualified training-delivery team to run 12

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programmes with up to 80 participants per programme made up of three lead facilitators and ten facilitators, a safety manager and a team of outdoor-skill technicians for the rope-course exercises;

- consultancy with the executive team of the region to ensure close adherence to business strategy, values and direction; and
- evaluation and continuous improvement of the project.

PACER was designed as an all-employee communication mechanism. There were clear business issues and messages in CEE related to regional complexity, lack of predictability and rapid growth. There was also a strong desire to ensure that the playing to win mentality replaced the more conservative playing not to lose approach that has been evident in the organization.

What has been developed for this programme is a delivery framework which is highly relevant to the current issues in GM CEE but which has absolute relevance to other business issues and strategies.

Using the framework to deliver the messages

The framework was developed in close consultation to develop core messages that make an impact on the participants so that they are enthused by the opportunities to explore the way they work, how they relate to their colleagues and how they understand what the business is aiming to achieve. This is coupled with a strong emphasis on the brands in the region and the importance of the multi-brand strategy. We wanted participants to understand the WIIFM (what's in it for me) and to see that the key to improved performance and personal satisfaction centres around taking personal responsibility.

We decided on three main themes that are highly relevant to this region, but also have strong resonance for all businesses interested in the highest levels of employee engagement. Each day built on the theme:

- *Day 1: My responsibility for developing me.* Being proactive by taking opportunities.
- *Day 2: My responsibility for working in and helping to build even more effective teams.* Local/cross-regional/cross-functional. Breaking out of the silos.
- *Day 3: My responsibility for understanding our brands.* The need personally to represent these brands and the importance of the multi-brand strategy.

Harnessing the collective power of the employees across the business region was essential and was done by ensuring that the events were

engaging, fun and stimulating. There was plenty of opportunity to network with people and even to meet people who had only been known previously on the telephone.

The learning content

This breaking of barriers was important, but so was the learning content of the programme. Unlike some employee-engagement projects, the essence of this approach came from a real development base. All activities had a purpose that was related to key messages built from elements of the business strategy and also created by responses to the employee-satisfaction survey. A good example of this was the work/life balance issue, which was addressed through PACER in terms of taking personal responsibility for the effective use of time.

Tables I-III follow showing the programme format for each day and how each session was designed to achieve specific business outcomes.

The high/ropes/challenge activities provided a powerful approach but it is important to remember that they are just a medium. Each activity can be structured to meet a variety of objectives. It is not the exercise itself but the way it is run and the particularly the way in which it is facilitated that gets to the real issues to be discussed. These exercises were chosen and adapted to meet the needs of PACER. There are many others that could have been used.

Feedback and evaluations

Initial feedback, both during the project run and immediately afterwards, was very strong. This was based on subjective reporting from ChangeMaker facilitators, GM executives and some of the delegates.

A typical response was:

After having taken part in two Opel D!fference sessions in Spain, I came to the PACER session in Hungary with high expectations. In fact, the PACER experience was even better than Opel D!fference. I congratulate you and the whole team on putting this together. I know how much work you must have put in to accommodate hundreds of participants, making sure that all of us had great fun, a safe environment, an unforgettable experience and went away with the right message.

The reason that PACER made such a difference was: "One team, one vision, one million". That slogan successfully got through to the large team of people, from different functions, countries, cultures and so on. Of course, participants appreciated very much that top GM executives found the time to join PACER and had quality time to talk on the GM vision, and to everybody, regardless level, job or country.

A big thank-you to the PACER team for a job done! (Pawe Widel, Governmental-relations Director, General Motors, Poland).

Table 1. Programme overview: concepts and needs met (Day 1)

Time	Activity title/type	Deliverer	Concepts/content covered	Needs met
13.00	Opening address	CJL	Why are we here? Success so far Opportunities ahead	Appreciate the role that they have played in the success of the business
13.20	Team challenge 1 Hight activity – the pole	CMIL facs	Support and challenge Setting personal goals Asking for appropriate help	They recognize that they are in control of their potential Take responsibility for their stuff
	Break		Break	
15.35	Workshop 1 GM knowledge quiz Who Wants to be a Millionaire?	CMIL facs	GM mission/vision/values GM regional structure GM history/heritage European organization structure Performance/objectives	See individual potential and are excited Increased loyalty and retention Better react to changes in GM's business
	Break		Break	
17.50	Workshop 2 Who is the team?	CMIL facs	Working together Why are we here?	There is greater alignment Greater empowerment The power of the team
18.30	C&E region overview	GMC&E exec	C&E regional focus/organization/ challenges	People understand why it has to be Appreciate the role that they play in the success of the business Increased loyalty and retention
	Session closed	CJL	Summary of the day	

Notes: CJL = Chris Lacey or senior GM exec; CMIL facs = ChangeMaker International facilitators

Table II. Programme overview: concepts and needs met (Day 2)

Time	Activity title/type	Deliverer	Concepts/content covered	Needs met
08.00	C&E region business challenge	GMC&E exec	The pressure/opportunities of growth	Greater alignment Understanding priorities Better resource allocation Contribution margin/ACM management
08.15	(a) Workshop 2 Colour blind plus Team challenge 2 The arrow	CMIL facs	Communication in teams – especially in multi-cultural terms Role clarity in teams and especially in a multi-team environment Contribution margin/ACM management	The power of the team The impact of team members' behaviour on others and vice-versa Empowerment Agreeing and keeping processes Alignment across the region
Break		Break	Taken during the workshop	
11.30	(b) Team challenge 3 High activity 2 The wall	CMIL facs	Responsibility Empowerment Trust Playing to win Standards	Managers manage, supervisors supervise, etc. The value of appropriate processes Resource allocation within teams Pace Standards policing vs inspiring
	Lunch		Lunch	(continued)

Table II.

Time	Activity title/type	Deliverer	Concepts/content covered	Needs met
15.30	(c) Workshop 4 Nine customers plus Workshop 3 Voice of the customer and problem solving	CMII facs	Moments of truth Customer enthusiasm – RSS/PSS/ SSS Who is the customer? Dealer standards – RSS/PSS/SSS "Go fast"/fix and find	They really get who is the customer They take responsibility for "their staff" They understand the power of the team Process/priorities Policing or inspiring? The role that they play
	Break		Break	Taken during the workshop
18.45	Session closed	CMC&E exec	Learning statements	

Table III. Programme overview: concepts and needs met (Day 3)

Time	Activity title/type	Deliverer	Concepts/content covered	Needs met
08.00	Overview presentation	CM/C&E exec	Multi-brand strategy Contribution margin/aggregate Contribution margin Easy to do business with	Who is the customer? Priorities/resource allocation
08.15	Team challenge 4 Multi-brand exercise and driving activity	CMIL facs	Branding – what is it? – brand quiz Brand attributes Customer attributes Marrying the brand to the customer How the brand contributes to margin The brand wall – customer categorization is not the same as labelling What the customer will expect from the dealer	Who is the customer? Multi-brand strategy Resource allocation Individual opportunities Use of appropriate processes They appreciate the role that they play
	Break		Break	Taken by each group during brand drive takeover <i>(continued)</i>

Table III.

Time	Activity title/type	Deliverer	Concepts/content covered	Needs met
12.30	Team challenge 5 Spider's web	CMIL facs	We are one team with one vision, not the small groups into which we may be divided	The power of the team Sharing wisdom Processes The role that they play
13.00	Small groups Learning logos "Letter to self"	CMIL facs	What gets measured gets done. Written commitments discussed with colleagues are more likely to be acted upon on return to work. Letter returned to each person after three months	Theoretical learning will be turned into changed behaviour in the workplace
13.40	Whole = group challenge The weight	All	This is the closing activity with the symbolic lifting of a weight that is far too heavy for any person or small team to lift	Working together to meet the vision makes it easier. Celebrating success
13.55	Session close	CJL		

A detailed evaluation form was sent out to 200 (25 per cent) of the participants. The programme objectives were measured against three scales:

- (1) Was it realistic to try to achieve them in the programme?
- (2) Were they actually achieved?
- (3) Were they relevant to the participants at the current time?

The mean scores for these, in the above order, were 4.10, 4.06 and 4.21 out of a maximum 5. A response of more than 80 per cent was achieved in each category, which supported the original gut-feel response.

Geographical variations

There were distinct differences in response by geography:

The level of satisfaction by region varies: colleagues from Poland were the least satisfied with the training and colleagues from Area 1 and Turkey are the most satisfied.

(Area 1 is Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. Area 2 is Albania, Macedonia and Serbia & Montenegro) (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1.

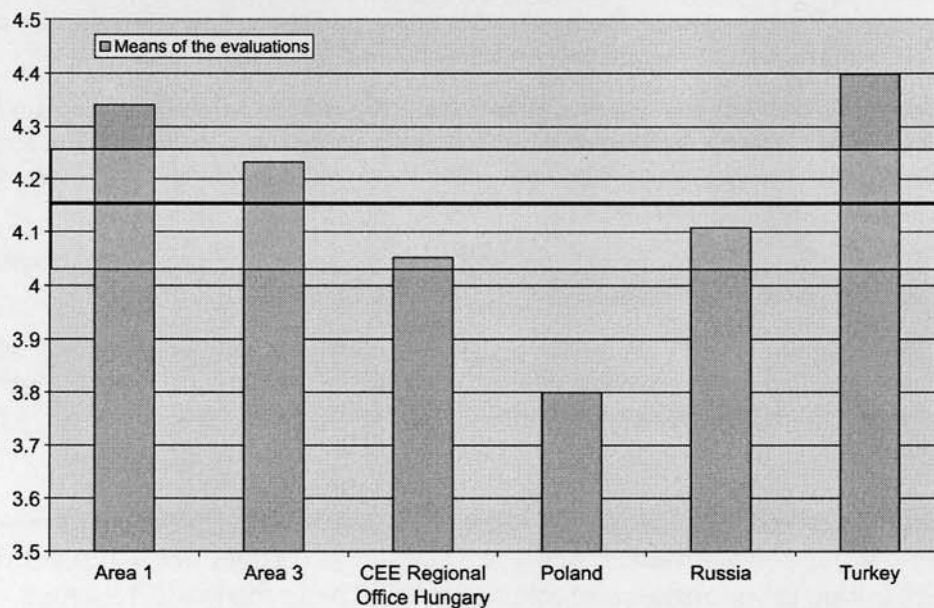
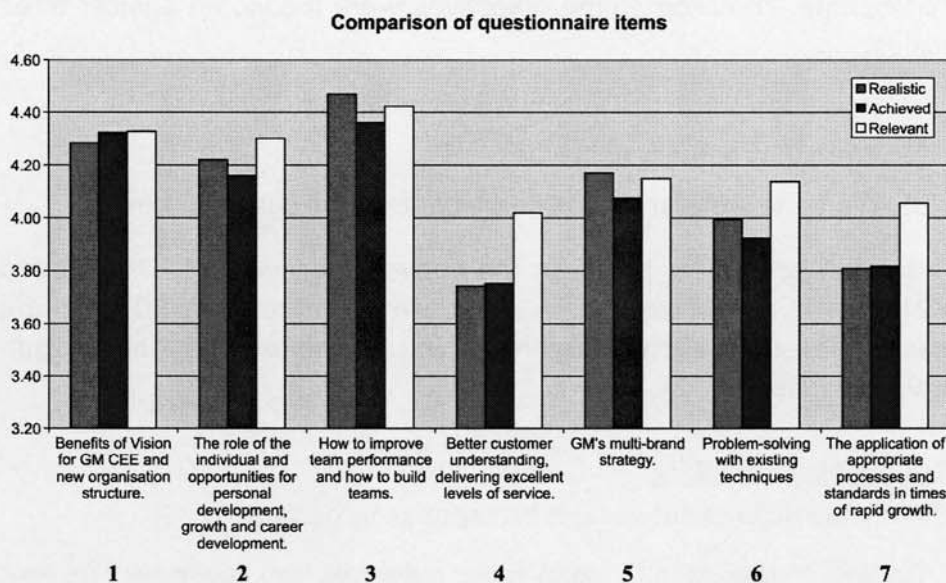


Figure 2.



Summary

The over-riding feeling of success experienced as each programme ended was reflected in the results received from the survey at a short period after the programme was attended. The report states:

The strongest scores were for Group 3, on how further to improve team performance and how to build teams across the various elements of the GM CEE organization. It is clear that programmes of this nature can have a very strong impact on the participants in terms of team performance and teambuilding and that this is a predictable result for this kind of programme. It may be useful, in future, to measure how this is sustained within the organization and so becomes more than just a feel-good factor.

The next strongest item group is statements 2, 6 and 7, on personal development and career growth, problem-solving and using processes. These items touch everyday work and people can easily apply the learning points of the training at work.

The next group is items 1 and 5, on vision and organizational structure, and brand-strategy. These are conceptual items and very closely linked.

The last one is item 4, which stands alone: better service and customer understanding. Less time was spent on this during the training and the training was thought to be less relevant for this topic, and is predictably the lowest evaluated item.

Current plans are to follow up with all delegates, with printed materials to reinforce the messages, and to continue the development into 2008 with top-up programmes and other events linked to the PACER themes.

Points for thought

- Running events in separate countries may have proved logistically simpler but would not have returned the benefits of mixing nationalities and functions to develop a real understanding of how a single team needs to work together to achieve a single vision.
- Experiential learning was the core learning concept and the method involved the use of structured exercises to deliver specific messages.
- Care was taken to ensure understanding of the key messages, with colleague translation encouraged to ensure comprehension. The delivery team was led by natural English speakers but contained a diversity of nationalities and mother tongues to ensure empathy with the language issues.
- The organizers wanted participants to understand the "WIIFM" (what's in it for me) and to see that the key for improved performance and personal satisfaction centres around taking personal responsibility.