

CASE STUDY

Lake Forest Graduate School of Management

PRACTICE TOPICS

CUSTOMER SERVICE

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

NEGOTIATION

COMMUNICATION STYLES

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

- **Creating custom situations for a complex, specialized industry**
- **Practicing multiple skills in a condensed format**
- **Engaging learners in experimenting with new competencies**

Our first project with Lake Forest Graduate School of Management was part of ALLSTAR, a three-day leadership program for a large multinational printing company. Quebecor World was acquiring other printing operations, so they needed to train their new employees along with their current workers. They wanted to involve all levels of the company, sending 20-30 people at a time to the ALLSTAR program over several years.

LFGSM asked us to create a half-day interactive session for the middle afternoon of the program. We were to provide practice for all of the previous classroom training – the “lab” to allow the learners to experiment with what they’d heard about during the “lectures.” Topics included conflict resolution, customer service, negotiation, and the four DiSC communication styles. We also developed simulations involving difficult customer service issues and the etiquette of taking a client to lunch.

We began by learning everything we could about the complex world of the printing business: its problems, its pressures, and its specialized terminology. We wanted to create realistic situations that our learners would recognize – a slice of their lives. Through a series of meetings with LFGSM instructional designers and Quebecor executives, managers, and workers, we got a feeling for their specialized world and put it into interactive vignettes and simulations.

The main practice situation followed an account manager as she dealt (ineptly) with an angry customer, a passive-aggressive salesman, and a shy press foreman. The learners helped her adapt to the others’ communication styles, satisfy and educate the customer, negotiate with the salesman, and listen actively to the foreman. Then participant volunteers came up to work with the interactors in the simulations, solving difficult customer-service problems and practicing their business etiquette.

ALLSTAR won the Optimas Award from Workforce Magazine and the ASTD Excellence in Practice Award for Managing Change. Participants have consistently ranked Workplace Interactors’ session as one of the top-rated and most memorable activities of the ALLSTAR program.

Since ALLSTAR, we’ve frequently presented practice sessions for LFGSM’s corporate learning courses. Lake Forest likes to use our workshops as a finale, giving participants a chance to practice all the skills they’ve learned through the previous classes (sometimes up to three weeks’ worth). Clients we’ve worked with include a U.S. manufacturing company; a global corporation with participants from Europe, Asia and South America; and a medical university.