

Turning Local Managers into Global Leaders

BRASKEM'S GLOBAL LEADERS PROGRAM

The Challenge

How can a fast-growing global chemical company create a global leadership mindset among its high-potential managers worldwide while expanding into new markets?

That was the challenge facing Brazilian-based Braskem, Latin America's largest petrochemical company.

“This program is about turning local managers into global leaders. Participants learned new frameworks to operate with a global perspective and to work across operational boundaries.”

— David Robertson, PhD, Professor of Practice, The Wharton School,
and Director for the Braskem Engagement

The Goals

To achieve its vision to become the world leader in sustainable chemicals, Braskem had completed a number of strategic acquisitions, including U.S.-based Sunoco Chemicals and Dow Chemical's U.S. and German plastic assets.

“Our challenge during this internationalization phase is how do you organize the company? How do you train the people to work in this new context? That's why we decided to do the program,” says Camila Dantas, Braskem Education and Career Manager.

Braskem's management team needed a program that:

- Embraced a global leadership mindset around globalization, culture, and communication
- Increased their business acumen with the most advanced skills in decision-making, negotiation, and innovation
- Integrated learnings into action-learning projects, successfully positioning Braskem as a global player



THE IMPACT

- Braskem's Global Leaders Program was a resounding success—giving participants new frameworks to work effectively cross-culturally as a single global company.
- To date, course participants presented three of the six action-learning projects to Braskem's executive committee as potential growth strategies.
- As new leaders join the company, Braskem will look to Wharton and the Global Leaders Program to help strategically develop their high potentials.

The Solution

Wharton's Braskem Global Leaders Program brought diverse faculty together to tackle key competitive and market questions such as:

- How do you think about a problem or market opportunity from a global perspective?
- How do you approach people management in a manner that invites engagement?
- How do you become a truly global player?

Thirty-two managers from Brazil, the United States, and Mexico participated, kicking off the program with a "rowing" and team-building exercise in Philadelphia. The program also included two modules and action-learning projects:

Module One — Explored globalization, leading through organizational culture, strategic decision-making, innovation, and negotiation.

Module Two — Covered global corporate responsibility and sustainability, scenario planning, emotional intelligence, leading change, global branding strategy and reputation, and human capital.

Action Learning Projects — Applied new business and leadership skills to identify projects relating directly to strategic opportunities within Braskem's business.

"Wharton's superb faculty can bridge the gap and make business concepts come alive in the classroom," says David Robertson, PhD, Wharton Professor of Practice for the Braskem engagement. "The action-learning projects were particularly helpful, allowing managers to apply the learning so it doesn't just become a theoretical exercise in the classroom."

"The cultural component was key—finding out how to best work together and learn from one another given that they were growing rapidly," adds Amy Miller, Program Director, Manufacturing, Energy, Technology and Consumer Products Practice, Wharton Executive Education.

The Wharton program offered tools and frameworks that Braskem leaders could immediately apply to their day-to-day work. Participants developed six action-learning projects. They included developing a new methodology to increase Braskem's product portfolio, examining the pros and cons of entering a new market, and assessing how best to leverage growth opportunities for the U.S. shale gas business.



“The Wharton program gave our leaders a new perspective and understanding of global business and cultural challenges. We definitely will invest in the Global Leaders Program to develop new managers.”

— Camila Dantas, Education and Career Manager, Braskem

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