



## Extraordinary Leader™ Case Study

# Competitive Advantage Created through Developing Extraordinary Leaders

## THE PROBLEM

If ever there was a company that customers rely on to “get it right” in our volatile and ever-changing technological world, it’s Symantec. As a global leader in infrastructure software, Symantec helps customers protect their infrastructure, information and interactions with software and services that address risks to security, availability, compliance and performance.

It’s a safe bet that when the California-based company opened shop 25 years ago, its founders—although obviously blessed with foresight—never could have envisioned just how interconnected yet widespread technology and all that accompanies it would become. They never could have known just how rapidly their business would grow. They certainly didn’t foresee having 99% of the Fortune 1000 companies as customers.

Yes, Symantec’s success is sweet. Yet with 17,700 employees in 40 countries and no end to the world’s “technology dependence” in sight, standing still and resting on laurels isn’t an option. Giving customers “Confidence in a Connected World,” as Symantec’s tagline reads, is a 24/7 job. And then some.

That’s one reason why Symantec embarked on a journey of executive development. Their leaders were already successful, bringing decades of diverse experience and a history of achievement to what Forbes Magazine calls one of “The Best Managed Companies in America.” Having successfully merged two like-sized companies, Veritas and

Symantec, they wanted to push to the next level. There were additional organizational motivators driving them. Good wasn’t good enough. Successful leaders needed to be GREAT. Standing still was not an option at Symantec.

The primary goal of the executive development initiative was to identify and build on the strengths of Symantec’s senior leaders. They wanted insight that would provide direction. They wanted feedback that they could act on. They wanted their leaders to focus their individualized development plans in key areas where they could leverage their strengths—aligning these strengths with their passions and the organization’s strategy. They wanted to promote a learning and high performance culture.

## THE SOLUTION

Armed with a goal and driven by desire, Symantec set out to find a program that offered just what it was looking for. They believed that increasing their leaders’ effectiveness, and finding a way to connect their development process to strategic business outcomes, would pay off big time. They recognized the need to identify leadership attributes that would drive organization effectiveness, believing in the link between great leaders and great organizations. Along the way they discovered that this would require them to shift their development focus away from the approaches that most of their competitors were using and adopt a strengths-based approach to competency development. They were also looking for

## The Problem

- Symantec’s success equaled rapid growth challenges.
- Building a high performance, learning culture was critical.
- Sr. Leaders wanted 1) to identify and build their strengths, and 2) tools anchored in research to help increase their effectiveness.

## The Solution

- The Extraordinary Leader program was adopted for VPs and HIPOs.
- HIPOs development efforts were supported by ZF trained coaches.
- 360 feedback was an integral part of this process.

## The Results

- They recognized top-of-the-line value with the Extraordinary Leader program.
- Participants cited renewed passion and commitment following the process.
- Success spurred Symantec to adapt the program for other parts of the organization.

## ABOUT SYMANTEC

Symantec provides a variety of content and network security software for both consumers and businesses, used for functions such as virus protection, intrusion detection and remote management.

tools, real tools anchored in research to support development efforts.

As it turns out, Zenger Folkman had just what they were looking for—and more. Not only did Zenger Folkman's Extraordinary Leader program and 360 Assessment offer the research base, insight, focus and development approach Symantec was looking for, but the program also offered benchmarking against “the best of the best” and unmatched research-based results reporting, and development tools.

Better still, Zenger Folkman prides itself on building relationships rather than selling programs. It is not a vendor; it is a partner. A partner that provides ongoing support and top-notch service. Symantec listed that as a requirement as well.

As part of Symantec's Executive Leadership Program for VPs, executives went through Zenger Folkman's one-day Extraordinary Leader program. Participants received feedback using the program's 360-degree survey, thereby gaining a clear understanding of their perceived strengths and weaknesses as leaders. The compiled feedback reports were then coupled with Zenger Folkman research to create individualized development plans focused on building each participant's leadership strengths. No time was wasted. During the workshop these plans were connected to an action-learning exercise employing a real business issue.

The Extraordinary Leader program also was used for Symantec's Accelerated

Leadership Program. In this instance Symantec chose to use the resulting 360-degree feedback as a basis for creating development plans and ongoing six-month coaching relationships for company leaders who Symantec identified as having a high potential for promotion. Critically important to the success of this program was finding the right development coaches. Select HR partners were trained by Zenger Folkman to fill this vital role.

Again, Symantec chose the Extraordinary Leader program and 360-degree feedback process for their Brave Heart Program. This program was designed for their nominated high potentials in sales.

In fact, the 360-degree feedback portion of Zenger Folkman's Extraordinary Leader program has become an integral part of the consideration process when Symantec promotes individuals to the vice presidential level. The feedback offers a timely and honest snapshot of how people view the potential Vice President in his or her current position, thereby providing insight into how he or she will perform and be perceived by others once promoted.

## THE RESULTS

For participants at the VP level, the Extraordinary Leader program has become a huge piece of the overall leadership development initiative. The 360-degree feedback is the key “take-away” that they talk about, primarily because its footing is based not on textbook standards or industry norms, but solely on empirical data on how others view them. Scattered among the

many affirmations are wake-up calls and eye-openers, but it's all good. The detail puts things in focus. The focus enables the creation of development plans. The development plans make for better leaders.

The 360 Assessment is viewed as a cornerstone of Symantec's Accelerated Leadership Program, as well. The ability to see what others think of those who have been identified for promotion essentially removes the “blinder effect” from the process. The feedback reveals both strengths and flaws. The result is a win-win-win scenario for Symantec.

The success of the Extraordinary Leader development process has spurred Symantec to customize the program for other groups throughout the organization.

As testament to its value, five of Symantec's most senior executives volunteered to go through the training. They see the Extraordinary Leader program as offering top-of-the-line value and recognize how much it brings to the company. The results are going a long way, they say, in finding the best match for jobs both individually and organizationally.

In all instances, participants walk away from the process with renewed passion, excitement and commitment. Because the strength-based philosophy goes hand-in-hand with Symantec's commitment and approach to developing its leaders, the company has an opportunity to re-emphasize its focus on building strengths at every turn. The message is a point well-taken throughout the company.

The Extraordinary Leader™ approach focuses on the ability—in fact, the necessity—for individuals to hone their leadership competencies in key areas, and organizations to develop great leaders in these areas. It provides research-based strategies for strengthening leadership, both in individuals and in organizations, and delivers today's most sensible and flexible leadership development program.