Zodiak®: The Game of Business Finance and Strategy

Business Acumen Training for Managers, Employees and Sales Professionals
BUSINESS ACUMEN BEYOND THE EXECUTIVE SUITE

In today’s complex, competitive and fast-paced business environment, business acumen must go well beyond the executive suite. Only when managers, employees and sales professionals understand your financial drivers, are aligned with your company’s strategic objectives; and “get” the connection between strategy and financial success can you have a true competitive edge.

What is business acumen?

Business acumen is a keen understanding of what it takes for an organization to make money. It combines financial literacy – the ability to interpret numbers on financial statements – with business literacy – recognizing how strategies and decisions impact these numbers.

Consider this example: In team sports, players need to know how the game is scored. To impact the score, they need to know how to play the game. In business, financial literacy is about understanding the score and business acumen is knowing how to impact it.

Why is it so important?

When the business acumen of managers, employees and sales professionals increases, they make more profitable decisions, influence top-line revenue generation, and take actions that align with organizational strategy.

“What made the simulation relevant to improving financial and business acumen was that the employees began making the connections between the operating results of the game and the operating results of the company.”

– Southwest Airlines
POWERSFUL BUSINESS ACUMEN TRAINING
THAT’S FAST, FUN AND EFFECTIVE

Zodiak: The Game of Business Finance and Strategy is a unique one-day classroom simulation that builds the business acumen of learners throughout your organization:

**A critical leadership competency for managers**
Managers are challenged as never before to achieve business results. That’s why business acumen is being incorporated into leadership development curriculums. This important competency links directly to business success, giving managers the skills to align departmental and personal actions to overall financial and strategic objectives.

**A competitive edge for sales professionals**
To win new sales and secure customer loyalty, sales executives must credibly and confidently position products and services within the context of a customer’s financial and strategic objectives. The development of business acumen increases skill in using a consultative, customer-centered sales approach.

**A big-picture alignment for employees**
Every day, the actions, decisions and attitudes of your employees impact business success. With increased business acumen, they’ll understand how departmental objectives and their own jobs fit into the big picture. And that means higher levels of commitment and motivation. *Your Audience? It’s Your Choice.*

**Learning through discovery**
Call it a sophisticated business simulation. Call it an exercise in experiential learning. Or call it a board game. Whatever you label it, the simple fact is that Zodiak is fun. And that’s the key to its unique power.

“Stereotypically, finance can be rather boring to teach and difficult to place in your daily responsibilities, but we found Zodiak to be an interactive, informative and delightfully nontraditional way to achieve our goals. We spend a lot of time training our staff on the IT aspects of their jobs, but what we have experienced on some of our projects is that by broadening their perspectives, they become more value-added contributors.”

— Lockheed Martin
ZODIAK: A POWERFUL ONE-DAY LEARNING EXPERIENCE

First, the Zodiak simulation
As new owners of the struggling Zodiak company, learners sign for a bank loan, attract investors, purchase equipment and materials, and deliver products and services. As they do, terms such as cash flow, return on equity, working capital, cost of goods sold and assets come vividly to life.

In just four hours, as they handle chance events, move game pieces, answer to investors and make tough business decisions, something remarkable happens. Learners embrace new insights. Not just about how the numbers work but also about the consequences of business decisions and actions on financial success. That’s true business acumen.

By the conclusion of the simulation, you’ll be amazed that they can:
- Construct and interpret income statements and balance sheets
- Explain the relationship and critical differences between cash and profit
- Understand key financial measures and ratios, including return on assets, gross profit margin and return on sales
- Describe how strategies involving inventory, accounts receivable, investments, staffing, cash flow and more impact financial success

Next, “Connections” to their own organization
The Zodiak simulation is powerful, but what follows – a two- to-three-hour session known as Connections – makes the learning come to life. Learners use knowledge and insights from the simulation to look at their own company. They explore strategies, processes, financial concepts, terminology, profit drivers, cash flow, the competition and more. It’s here that learners also connect to their own behaviors – the day-to-day decisions and actions that impact the bottom line.

By the end of the Connections session, your learners will be able to:
- Explain your company’s key financial terms, ratios and financial drivers
- Describe how the company’s strategies are impacting the bottom line
- Understand where their departments – and their jobs – fit into the financial and strategic picture of success
- Follow through on plans for on-the-job application of their new knowledge and insights
CUSTOM-TAILORED FOR A PERFECT ZODIAK FIT

Paradigm Learning helps clients take full advantage of the Connections experience. For many, Connections exercises are customized so that the fun and learning extend into the learners’ own world, guiding participants to apply what they’ve learned to real job situations.

Customization may include:

- Business models that graphically depict your company issues – cash flow, operational processes, strategic initiatives, financial metrics and more – and become powerful takeaways to extend and reinforce what is learned
- Company-specific situational challenge exercises that guide learners to review a situation, analyze options, compete with other teams, make decisions and assess their ultimate bottom-line impact
- Small-team problem-solving exercises that target your company’s key financial, operational or strategic issues and ensure that learning is relevant and long-lasting
- Pre- and post-measurement processes and preparation, retention and reinforcement tools that extend learning beyond the classroom

IMPLEMENTING ZODIAK IN YOUR COMPANY

Use Zodiak to:

- Broaden your leadership development curriculum
- Power up your sales training initiatives
- Accelerate employee commitment to major changes
- Help employees think like business owners to impact the bottom line
- Energize a management, sales or companywide event

“Our people have learned how to act on behalf of our customers’ best interests by speaking their language .... The knowledge they’ve gained builds their credibility and allows them to open dialogues with prospects at higher levels in their clients’ companies.”

– Comdata
SELECT THE ZODIAK PROGRAM THAT’S RIGHT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION AND AUDIENCE

There are six Zodiak programs available for a variety of applications. They are:

**Zodiak: All Industries**
Companies in manufacturing, utilities and many other industry sectors are faced with tough decisions every day – about processes, prices, product development, asset management, capital investments and more.

*During this program, managers and employees deal with issues such as:*
- Investing in new products
- Managing inventory, costs and cash flow
- Making equipment investments
- Responding to quality challenges

**Zodiak: Service Organizations**
Companies in banking, insurance and other service sectors face challenges in offering multiple products and services, utilizing personnel efficiently and flexibly, and containing costs.

*During this program, managers and employees deal with issues such as:*
- Analyzing staff utilization, training and outsourcing options
- Investing in the development of new services
- Assessing and implementing technology options
- Improving customer service processes

**Zodiak: Sales Professionals**
Today’s sales professionals must be trusted advisers who work with customers to improve their businesses. With higher levels of business acumen, they can have more strategic discussions and access buyers at higher levels.

*In this program, sales and marketing professionals deal with issues such as:*
- The positioning of products and services within the customer’s financial and strategic drivers
- The relationship between price discounting and profitability
- The use of business knowledge to build higher-level and longer-lasting customer relationships

**Zodiak: EVA Organizations**
Managers and employees at all levels need to understand the strategies that affect a company’s EVA** (Economic Value Added) performance in order to be able to make a positive impact on this critical measure.

*This program illustrates:*
- How EVA* is calculated and measured
- The impact that price reduction can have on EVA
- The impact that sales and inventory increases have on EVA
- How managers and employees can “drive” EVA success

---

*EVA* is a registered trademark of Stern, Stewart & Company in the United States, Mexico, France, the United Kingdom and Australia.
Zodiak: Government/Working Capital Fund
Business acumen is a must in today’s complex government landscape. Developed with the U.S. Air Force, this program was designed for managers and employees in agencies using a working capital or revolving fund. It is customizable for federal, state or local applications.

Learners deal with issues such as:
• Demands for services that exceed appropriations
• Deficits and budget cuts
• Vendor relationships and purchasing impacts
• Personnel disengagement

Zodiak: HR Professionals
Managers and specialists in all human resource disciplines are increasingly being challenged to align their initiatives with corporate strategy, demonstrate ROI, and support revenue growth and profitability.

In this Zodiak program, learners increase their business acumen by addressing issues such as:
• Linking the HR budget and cash flow to overall financial success
• Aligning department goals to the organization’s objectives
• Analyzing and communicating ROI
• Increasing credibility with senior executives

DELIVERING ZODIAK
Our experienced facilitators will conduct on-site Zodiak sessions, or your own in-house facilitators can be trained and fully equipped to deliver Zodiak. It’s your choice.

SEE A ZODIAK DEMO TODAY
Contact us to learn how Zodiak can provide your managers, employees and sales professionals with the business acumen they need to positively impact your bottom line. Call us at 727.471.3170 or visit us at ParadigmLearning.com.
BUSINESS GAMES, SIMULATIONS and DISCOVERY MAPS®