

CASE STUDY

News Corporation *Upping the IT Quotient*

The reach and influence of media titan News Corporation are unprecedented and growing. With business units as diverse as 20th Century Fox, *The Times*, MyNetworkTV, HarperCollins Publishers, Classic FM, National Geographic Channel, *Inside Out* magazine, Fox Interactive Media, and MySpace, the company communicates with 70% of the world's population on a daily basis. And while the size and variety of News Corporation's activities create tremendous opportunities, its far-flung and wide-ranging businesses also present enormous coordination and leadership development challenges.

To raise the game of its IT executives worldwide, News Corporation's Dave Benson, Senior Vice President and CIO, found the perfect vehicle in MIT Sloan's custom programs. "We initially went out to a private training consultant to help us develop the program," Benson recalls. "We quickly realized, however, that this approach lacked the gravitas needed to be able to draw key personnel from units around the world." At the recommendation of News Corporation's head of HR, Benson turned to academia in search of the right partner.

Serendipitously, Benson had on his desk Peter Weill's book *IT Governance: How Top Performers Manage IT Decision Rights for Superior Results*. Inspired by what he was reading, Benson contacted Weill, who is a Senior Research Scientist at MIT Sloan and the director of the School's Center for Information Systems Research (CISR). Benson took Weill through News Corporation's goals for the program: to develop the leadership skills of the participants, to enhance the ability of executives to run their IT operations like businesses, and to better align News Corporation's IT activities with its diverse business units. "After incubating our vision for more than a year, we were very anxious to get the implementation right. Peter's immediate reaction was 'This is exactly in line with what we're already doing.'"

Benson's first meeting with the MIT Sloan team confirmed the fit. "Virtually every concern I'd been harboring for the last year went away. Reputation, content, logistics, cost— everything fell into place."

The News Corporation custom program integrates MIT Sloan's front-line research and expertise in finance, marketing, leadership development, and generating business value from IT. The tailored curriculum and one-on-one coaching give participants new skills, perspectives, and tools,

PROFILE

With dozens of business units in the U.S., continental Europe, the U.K., Australia, Asia, and the Pacific basin, News Corporation communicates with 70% of the world's population on a daily basis.

ACTION STRATEGY

Raise the performance of its top IT professionals worldwide and better align News Corporation's myriad IT activities with its businesses.

LEARNING MECHANISM

A custom curriculum that capitalizes on the research and expertise at MIT Sloan's Center for Information Systems Research (CISR) and combines it with the School's expertise in finance, marketing, and leadership development.

RESULT

ROI within a crucial sector that spans News Corporation's diverse business units. IT executives collaborate with colleagues around the globe on vital News Corporation projects while developing essential professional skills.



“The key to the success of this program is the combination of MIT Sloan’s reputation, a strong customized curriculum, outstanding faculty, and the ability to deliver it all without relieving people of their day jobs.”

Dave Benson
Senior Vice President and CIO
News Corporation

which, as a team, they apply to News Corporation projects during a two-month interterm between modules at MIT.

“The group projects are defined collaboratively among MIT Sloan faculty, staff, and News Corporation CIOs,” explains Benson. “This approach gives us several important benefits. The projects reinforce and build on the lessons learned in the classroom. The small group collaborations help to develop the person-to-person network within the company across multiple businesses and geographies. And, best of all, we get consulting support and ROI on News Corporation’s high priority internal IT projects.”

The results to date are impressive. One of the groups has proposed a framework for sharing internet development strategies across all News Corporation business units to reduce duplication of effort and enhance coordination. A second team developed a new internal communication mechanism that enables the company to deliver common messages to all News Corporation employees instantly.

According to Benson, the program is as successful with sponsoring CIOs as with the participants themselves. “Corporate has agreed to fund the program. The business units have agreed to share their best people. The participants say it’s the most rewarding professional development opportunity of their careers. What can we possibly do for an encore?”

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