



The FCC Services Newsletter

## **Interplay Business Simulation Builds Business Acumen**

Expanding our strong experiential learning and leadership development suite of services, FCC Services is now offering a new and engaging program. The Interplay Business Simulation is designed to teach and create dialog about what it means to be strategic, how to think and plan cross-functionally, and how to prepare for potentially disruptive decisions. Interplay was developed for and piloted with industry giants Microsoft and Apple, and was rolled out to the Farm Credit System earlier this year for Farm Credit Services of America, Frontier Farm Credit and Farm Credit Mid-America.

Interplay is an interactive, board-based simulation that demonstrates the impact of financial and business decisions across an organization. Each team of four or five members establishes its company's offering and competitive strategy, and defines individuals' roles within the organization. The simulation then encompasses multiple rounds of decision-making, which involve committing limited company resources to various initiatives to meet customer expectations, and then calculating the business results. "Shift Happens" events complicate decision rounds, forcing teams to respond quickly to a changing business environment. Teams compete against each other and against outside competitors, and at the end present their strategies and results in a "Shark Tank" environment.

"All organizations have limited resources, and senior leaders need to determine how best to apply them – for example, do you invest in human capital or product development or information security," says Chris Keller, Senior Vice President of Talent and Leadership Development with FCC Services.

"Interplay demonstrates the impact these decisions have on the organization as a whole, helping leaders gain a more global understanding of the complexities of managing an enterprise."

Chris worked with Brent Snow, co-creator of Interplay and owner of Ten Thousand Feet, a consulting company delivering Interplay to companies across the globe, to customize the simulation for Farm Credit. This included establishing the competitive market, introducing strategies and initiatives relevant to Farm Credit, and creating "Shift Happens" events like regulatory changes and restricted credit availability. Farm Credit CEOs Bill Johnson and Doug Stark attended the entire full-day event.



“The way FCC Services tailored the Interplay simulation for Farm Credit was very effective,” says Doug, former FCS of America CEO. “The experience directly addressed the developmental needs of high potential leaders in our organization.”

The Interplay simulation actually began before the “game play” event, as teams of cross-organization and cross-functional members collaborated in a pre-work exercise to determine their products, competitive strategies and individual roles. For example, one team chose to be an agricultural data integrator; another was an appraisal business.

The day of the simulation began with an overview from Chris and Brent, framing the external market factors the teams would face and the values of both tangible and intangible assets within the simulation. Each team then presented their choice of business model and its rationale. The simulation itself involved four high-spirited rounds of game play, after each of which the teams reported their results via financial statements posted on the “Wall of Fame.”

“I found the group at Farm Credit was fairly sophisticated and able to really think through strategies that could work in their market and for their customers,” says Brent. “They also ran disciplined businesses, and I was impressed with how almost every team came in close to their forecast, which is unusual.”

The simulation culminated in investor presentations when the teams reported their results, explained their decisions, reflected on the outcomes and discussed what their future course would be. During the presentations, facilitators and the two CEOs questioned and commented, sometimes challenging the participants on their assessments based on the reality of their results, but always in good humor.

“The activity gave us all an opportunity to see how difficult it is to juggle different responsibilities, needs and factors that go into making a business and a team successful,” said one participant. “It had great insight, examples, situations and fun!”

With overall participant evaluations rating the Interplay simulation a 4.83 out of 5, participants shared other comments including “one of the best trainings that I have ever attended with FCS of America” and “exceptional and something I feel most, if not all, leaders would find value in.”

“This was an excellent first-hand opportunity for us to witness our teams’ strategic approach to business challenges and how effectively they worked together in teams,” says Bill Johnson, Farm Credit Mid-America CEO. “The program provided a great opportunity for us to challenge and encourage them to raise their own bar of performance.”



Please contact Chris Keller at 303.721.3270 or [chris.keller@fccservices.com](mailto:chris.keller@fccservices.com) to explore how Interplay can support your leadership development programs, either individually or in collaboration with other Farm Credit System organizations.