

# Bank on Learning

**Janus invests in future leaders and takes a healthy approach to improving employee performance.**

**In 2006, Janus Capital Group established the following objectives for the forthcoming year:**

- be a great place to work
- attract and retain quality talent
- promote from within.

In its reincarnation since 2005 as a true learning organization, Janus has evolved into a place where learning and development are valued, playing a key role in the accomplishment of corporate objectives. One hundred percent of senior executives at Janus include learning objectives as part of their performance goals, and 95 percent make public statements in support of learning.

It wasn't always this way. As the company faced challenges during 2001-2002, investment in learning and development was nearly eliminated, as some senior executives did not perceive the value of learning and development at the company. In the last few years however, Janus has renewed its commitment to employee learning and development, viewing it as a critical component to firmwide success.

Michelle Thompson was hired as director of leadership and professional development in 2005 and oversees a full-time staff of five. Thompson reports to Shannon Sisler, senior vice president of human resources, though she enjoys unfettered access to all of the company's nine C-level executives.

Indeed, that's how many decisions about learning and performance initiatives are made. As part of her annual planning process, Thompson meets one-on-one with each of the company's nine senior executives and discusses current leadership offerings, and development and department objectives.

Executive, managerial, and supervisory development account for 20 percent of Janus's learning content, and it is where Thompson found the most demand when she joined Janus. She and Thomas Toth, senior instructional designer with the company since 2006, have worked to refine and implement two signature programs—the Emerging Leader program and the Essential Leader program.

The Emerging Leader program, designed for high-potential individual

contributors and future leaders, consists of four days of training over four weeks, plus a practicum project. Participants come from all departments, helping to build cross-functional relationships and enhance cross-departmental business knowledge.

For each entering group, a senior leader (vice president and above) is asked to be the class "sponsor." He attends classes, interacts with participants, and provides the opportunity for a mentoring relationship. In addition, participants are required to interview a senior leader of their choice and report back to the class on that interview.

Participants also complete a leadership practicum. They work with their managers to devise a project that will allow them to apply the learning and gain leadership experience. On graduation day, each student makes a presentation about his practicum project and receives peer feedback on delivery and content.

The Emerging Leader program prepares participants for the social side of success as well—they receive etiquette training, learn how to order and taste

Michelle Thompson,  
Director of Leadership and  
Professional Development



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– Michelle Thompson  
Director of Leadership and Professional Development, Janus Capital Group

wine and handle the check, and host a business lunch or dinner.

Janus graduated 48 emerging leaders in 2007. Within the first year, 78 percent received increased responsibilities or a promotion; 22 percent were promoted within the first three months.

“Our company was hungry for development opportunities,” says Thompson. “With the Emerging Leader program, we were able to show immediate value. It is activity-based with strong links to the business, and features a holistic approach to development.”

Toth agrees. “The challenge is changing behavior back on the job and making the leadership skills stick. The practicum project is pretty intense, but really helps with that. We think that a major cultural shift has resulted from this program.”

Although it’s an asset management firm, with an enormous focus on numbers and performance for its clients, Janus applies different metrics to learning and development. Thompson describes it as a move to a culture that balances the “what” and the “how.”

“We like to focus on our leadership development programs as an indicator of our success and efficiency. In 2005, we didn’t have any leadership class offerings,” recalls Thompson. “Now we have four targeted leadership development programs, more than 35 professional

development courses, more than 100 online courses, sponsored mentorship programs, and networking events. Most important, more than 95 percent of employees have taken part in a company-sponsored training class or program.”

In addition, the Denver area is well known as a haven for athletes and fitness buffs, and Janus fits right in. In its most innovative learning initiative of the last year, learning and development partnered with HR to implement the Corporate Athlete program.

Created by the Human Performance Institute (HPI) in Orlando, the Corporate Athlete program is a science-based method for helping people align their personal and professional goals, manage their energy with fitness and nutrition planning, and create a strategic action plan for leading their lives. Two of Thompson’s employees earned certification from HPI to teach the Corporate Athlete classes at Janus.

Participants begin with a 360 evaluation, which seeks feedback not only from co-workers and supervisors, but family and friends as well. Every person who attends the Corporate Athlete program, regardless of title or level, gets both the 360 and a personal coach who works with them through the program.

At Janus, the Corporate Athlete curriculum is delivered in four full-day class sessions throughout one month. Personal trainers and nurses from local fitness centers serve as adjunct faculty, helping to create workout and nutrition plans, while Janus facilitators teach the concepts.

The program has brought real business benefits. Janus’s healthcare cost increases for the last year were well below the national average, and overall costs were below budget.

The Corporate Athlete program was largely inspired by responses to Janus’ annual employee satisfaction survey, indicating that workers were struggling with stress and work-life balance.

Thompson and her staff rely on this survey for feedback that can drive learning and performance initiatives. “People are staying at our company and being promoted from within,” she reports. “Positions filled with internal candidates

increased from 31 percent in 2006 to 38 percent in 2007. Plus, they’re telling their friends that Janus is a great place to work—21 percent of external hires last year were employee referrals.”

Thompson sees bench strength, successor training, and ongoing leadership training as key to the sustainability of Janus’s organizational results. The Essential Leader program is required for all people managers. It begins with a performance-based 360 report and one-on-one coaching, then continues with coursework that emphasizes communication and interpersonal skills, coaching, creating effective teams, delegation, conflict resolution, business improvement processes, and their leadership legacy.

Participants are taught to think about cross-training, development planning, and succession planning for the benefit of their own careers and the growth of their team members. Like the Emerging Leader program, it also concludes with a project practicum, designed to improve the way participants lead teams. An executive sponsor and multiple executive-level guest speakers help to demonstrate executive support and reinforce key concepts. **T+D**



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