

harley-davidson

BUSINESS WAR GAMES

Many people in the training profession liken business war games to high-energy corporate exercises consisting of computerized business simulations, content lectures, pen-and-paper activities and group discussions.

But a war game is really “tricking people into learning,” says Jeff Lefebvre, president of PriSim Business War Games. The Libertyville

Illinois-based company recently customized its Redline war game for Harley-Davidson, and the company has been riding in the fast lane of training success ever since.

“PriSim was willing to invest in us, and the investment has paid dividends with some of our more critical customers saying this is the best training we have ever put on,” says Andy Smith, manager of business development for Harley-Davidson University.

Through the Redline experience, participants improved their understanding of how Milwaukee-based Harley-Davidson works and how its dealerships make money, but it’s a more “holistic understanding,” Lefebvre says.

Redline is typically used in a two- to three-day seminar and

involves 15 to 35 people broken out into teams. Participants work through five simulated rounds, each of which challenges them to manage a Harley dealership in competition with the other teams. In between the rounds, mini-lectures, case studies and paper exercises reinforce key concepts and principles.

The facilitators, meanwhile, throw curve balls into each round: increasing or decreasing interest rates, adding new products, making people quit or even setting up a “catastrophic” event. In order to be successful, participants must work well as a team, listen well and think strategically—all skills needed for success in business. It’s not until the end, however, that the participants realize they’ve been “tricked” into learning the whole time, says Lefebvre.

“During the simulation, you’re there having fun, competing and talking,” he says. “But by the end—wow! You realize you learned a great deal in order to compete.” —H.J. Dec.2002

