



“SLII® was the perfect model to boost the leadership skills of our employees.”

Client Story

Building Leadership at Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport

The talent development department at Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport wanted to build a strong leadership pipeline for all levels of leaders within the organization. “The airport works at a dynamic pace 24/7, and several services must be coordinated to ensure that processes run smoothly for our passengers,” said Blaženka Žakula, talent and development manager. “It can be an unpredictable environment and our people must be able to meet challenges.”

“We knew our managers needed to focus on the development of their people, so it was important to invest in training to meet our business and productivity goals. We used a variety of HR tools to assess people’s specific needs and determined that we wanted to create leadership development plans for three target groups: senior and middle managers and first-line managers.”

Žakula and her team worked with Marija Pavić and Jelena Acević, consultants with Blanchard® authorized global partner Blanchard Serbia, to create and implement the leadership development program using SLII® from Blanchard. SLII® is a time-tested model that trains leaders how to provide the right amount of support and direction to each team member as they navigate certain tasks. SLII® also focuses on teaching leaders how to have productive conversations that empower their direct reports to achieve goals.



Blaženka Žakula

They designed the program to be released in three phases.

In the first phase, participants engage in prework assignments that include an assessment of their leadership style. They are introduced to the basics of SLII® through a comprehensive article that familiarizes them with the concepts prior to their attending the training workshop. They also complete the SLII® Fitness Test, which asks them to rate themselves on how well and frequently they already use the skills of SLII®.

During the second phase, senior and middle managers attend a two-day SLII® workshop to learn the skills and language to lead situationally. They have a chance to not only practice using new skills but also get acquainted with tools and resources they can access after training to help them apply their new skills back on the job. Each participant sets personal development goals at the end of the class. First-line managers attend a one-day SLII® class to gain a foundation for the mindset and skills of a leader.

“We wanted our senior and middle managers to master the application of SLII® skills to develop people in their teams. And we wanted our first-line managers to gain the necessary knowledge to understand their role as a manager and start applying SLII® skills to help their employees be successful,” explained Žakula.

The third phase is a follow-up workshop held one to two months after the initial training. Participants come together in group coaching sessions facilitated by a trainer to share personal achievements, experiences, or obstacles they faced when applying their SLII® skills. They also have an opportunity to reflect on personal goals they developed at the end of phase two. Then they take the SLII® Fitness Test again to compare their progress since the initial training.

Results of the Training

Feedback from senior- and middle-level manager participants indicates that they see improvement in their leadership style and communications with their people, along with improved results in operational activities.

Evaluations of the one-day program with first-line managers include the following improvements in knowledge and skills, based on a four-point scale.

- Understanding leadership roles improved from 2.6 to 3.5
- Improving delegation skills improved from 2.3 to 3.3
- Setting SMART goals improved from 1.8 to 3.4
- Conducting goal-setting conversations with employees improved from 2.4 to 3.5
- Evaluating the development level of an employee improved from 1.8 to 3.6
- Aligning leadership style to development level improved from 1.9 to 3.6
- Conducting 1:1 conversations with a boss improved from 2.2 to 3.4
- Assessing the level of team independence improved from 2.5 to 3.5

“The results of the first-line managers were slightly higher than the senior managers, which is to be expected since the higher level leaders already had some leadership experience. Our intention was to improve the skills of senior leaders and to provide foundational skills to people who are new to management roles,” said Žakula. “It was a reminder that people who are promoted into a manager role don’t spontaneously acquire leadership skills. They need to be given the opportunity to succeed in their new role by learning leadership skills and being supported as they apply them early in their career. SLII® was the perfect model to boost the leadership skills of our employees.”

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