

## Development program enables leader to generate incremental \$2 million.

*"I would recommend STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP to anyone who wants to maximize their leadership effectiveness and increase the value they bring to their employer."*

ARIS ZAKINTHINOS, DIRECTOR OF SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT, PLATFORM COMPUTING

### SUMMARY

Aris Zakinthinos had energy, ambition and big career plans. Platform Computing, his employer, had already pegged him as having high potential for a larger role in the organization. With the help of MICA's STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP program, Aris got the chance to progress much faster than he ever expected.

Challenged with building critical leadership competencies quickly—Zakinthinos turned to MICA's STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP program. This intensive, yearlong program for high potentials integrates—assessment, feedback, action planning, training, coaching, behavioural rehearsal, peer mentoring and action learning—into a powerful development experience.

The benefits Zakinthinos derived from the program were significant:

- He generated an incremental \$2 million by forging strong relationships with an "at risk" client
- His post-assessment 360° showed improvements of 20%-30% on his key development priorities (and the highest ratings possible for 'leading innovation and change')
- He's been promoted twice and has gone from managing six people to 33

MICA is a consulting firm specializing in Strategic Talent Management. MICA helps clients select, align, develop and advance the people required to achieve measurable business results. STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP was created in partnership with the Management Research Group®, a global leader in assessment-based development.

At his supervisor's advice, Aris had enrolled in MICA's STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP program starting with a 360° assessment. When the results came in, Aris was, to say the least, thrown for a loop. As a prime candidate for promotion—Aris Zakinthinos' 360° feedback identified key areas that would need improvement in order for him to advance. "I didn't know whether to believe it or dismiss it as a dumb test," he recalls. Boiled down, the assessment suggested that

Zakinthinos, a development manager with Markham, Ontario-based Platform Computing, didn't effectively demonstrate strategic thinking skills, that his orientation was tactical and short term. For someone like Zakinthinos, who had been identified as a high-potential leader and aspired to become one of Platform's senior decision makers, long-term strategic thinking is essential.

Ambitious in his academic career, Zakinthinos earned a bachelor of



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mathematics degree in computer science from the University of Waterloo as well as a master's in computer science and a doctorate in electrical and computer engineering from the University of Toronto. In 2000, he joined Platform as a product architect. Shortly thereafter, he won a promotion to development manager and was given responsibility for six people. The future looked bright. Now this.

### IT'S WHAT YOU SAY AND HOW YOU SAY IT THAT COUNTS

There's almost no possibility of rising to senior leadership positions without demonstrating strong leadership behaviours. The good news is these behaviours can be learned. After considering other options Zakinthinos chose MICA's STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP program.

“Based on my 360° assessment, which identified specific leadership strengths and development opportunities, I decided to focus my learning on three main areas: strategic thinking, demanding higher performance of myself and others, and leading for innovation and change,” Zakinthinos says. Over the next year, Zakinthinos applied the learning and tools he was acquiring in the coaching labs to his real work challenges and projects.

One of the most valuable behaviours Zakinthinos developed is how to best highlight his strategic thinking capabilities so his colleagues would perceive them more readily and develop greater trust in his ability to lead. He also learned to ask the right questions, both of himself and of his co-workers, to get his team thinking and working more strategically.

“The result is that my team and I have become much more relevant to the company,” he says. So relevant that Aris and his team cemented a partnership with an “at risk” client, generating incremental revenue of more than \$2 million in just two years.

With a limited class size of 15 participants, Zakinthinos' felt it really contributed to his development. “It was a great opportunity to observe the high-potential leaders in my cohort all dealing with similar issues”. Although the participants came from very different businesses, the leadership issues they faced were nearly identical. “The

program allows you to see leadership issues from many different perspectives, and you ultimately arrive at a deeper level of understanding of the problems you may encounter and the solutions you can apply,” he says.

“The structure of the program is ideal. You learn leadership skills in the classroom and through coaching. Then you apply them on the job, and afterwards you return to the classroom to discuss your experiences.”

#### PLEASED BY RESULTS

Zakinthinos and Platform are both pleased by the results of his enrollment in the STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP program. His post-assessment 360° showed improvements of 20%–30% in the key subject areas he focused on, and he placed in the 90th percentile in the area of leading for innovation and change.

Additionally, his superiors and co-workers now consider him to be an effective strategic thinker. He's been promoted twice, once during the course and again after it had finished. Zakinthinos now holds the position of Director of Software Development and is responsible for managing 33 employees.

“I would recommend STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP to anyone who wants to maximize their leadership effectiveness and increase the value they bring to their employer,” Zakinthinos says.

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### STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP WORKS

An advanced and challenging yearlong program, STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP is unique in that it integrates—assessment, feedback, action planning, training, coaching, behavioural rehearsal, peer mentoring and action learning—into a holistic and powerful development experience.

The foundation is a rigorous assessment that supplies participants with feedback affording them clear insight into their leadership behaviours and impact on key stakeholders [e.g. Boss, Peers and Direct Reports]. It then provides them with the learning tools and support they require to focus their development efforts and achieve the results they require.

MICA developed STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP based on its 30-plus years of experience in the field of leadership development. At the heart of the program is an advanced 360° assessment tool, created by Management Research Group®, an assessment-based development firm located in Portland, Maine. MRG's assessment model derives from extensive study into the

winning behaviours of 250,000 leaders globally from 24 different industries. The base of the model consists of six core leadership functions and 22 behavioural leadership practices.

Comprehensive in nature, STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP includes extensive feedback, peer mentoring and one-on-one executive coaching. It also incorporates coaching labs, a sophisticated approach to education that involves the application of classroom learning to on-the-job leadership challenges. Also known as action learning, it has two important benefits for participants and the companies that sponsor them. Firstly, it leads to enhanced retention and behaviour change. Secondly, time invested is not 'time away' from the business but, in fact, time invested in the business! The pay back is immediate.

Without question, it represents a superior approach to learning for busy leaders, and it is a key differentiator between the STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP program and the largely theoretical programs typically offered by academic institutions.

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