BUSINESS SMART INTERNATIONAL

CASE STUDY

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
The Big Picture Simulation
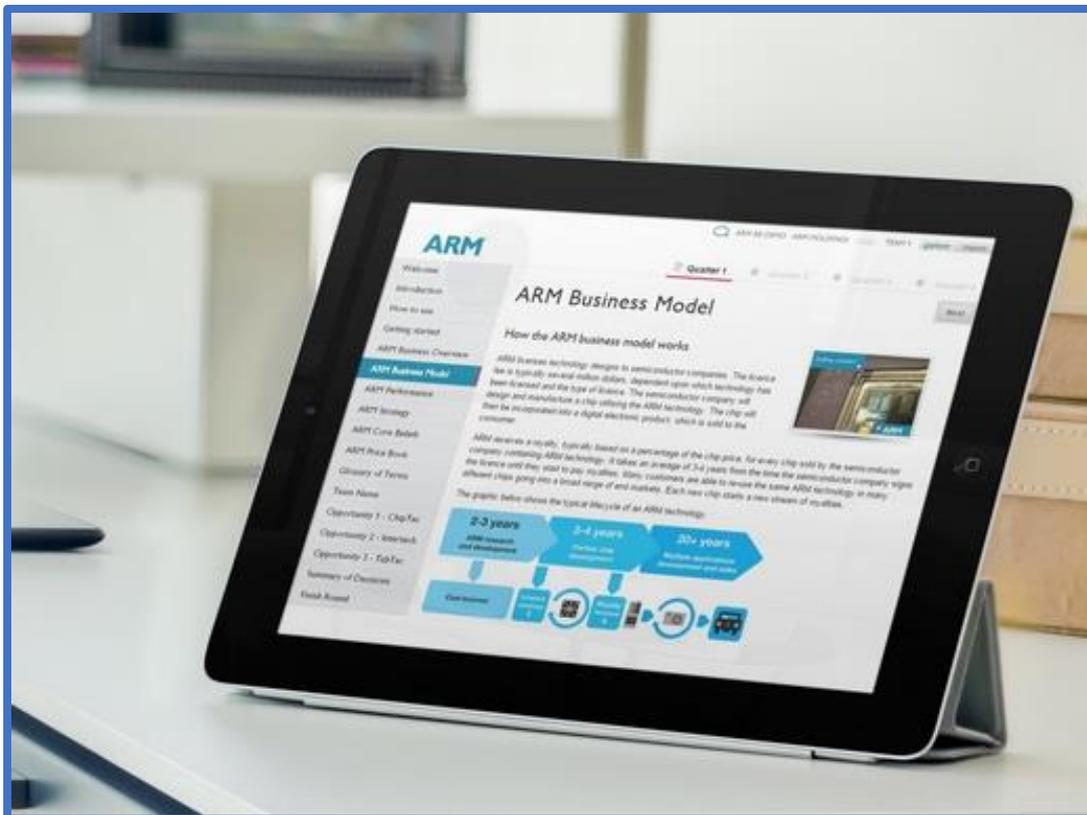
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Executive Summary

The Big Picture Simulation is a bespoke business game, which is used by a major technology company for employee engagement and on-boarding events.

The purpose of the simulation is to introduce the client's business model and culture in an interactive and engaging way – including some healthy competition and team collaboration.

The game scenario reflects the client's unique and complex business model and how they satisfy the needs of their customers profitably. Learners work in teams to complete a series of business challenges within the client's virtual business simulation and seek to gain the highest score.

It has proven to be an engaging, interactive and fun learning experience. It has received rave reviews from both participants and internal sponsors. It continues to be used as an essential tool on the client's On-Boarding / Employee Engagement journey.

The client is a multinational technology and software design company valued at around £24 billion. With its headquarters within the United Kingdom, it is considered to be market dominant in its chosen markets. The client continues in gaining market share and is one of the best-known 'Silicon Fen' companies.

The reason for using a learning game

The initial reason for considering a new approach for their on-boarding session for new hires was due to the low level of engagement being experienced through a traditional PowerPoint presentation style session. Previously, a senior leader would walk the group through an overview of the business, the business model and some examples of existing customer relationships. This process was found to not adequately engage the audience; it also involved a lot of time and extra effort for the various senior managers who would volunteer to run the session. Therefore, the Talent Development team and a team of senior commercial managers, decided to find a new solution. This solution would prove to be more engaging for the participants, be more enjoyable for the facilitators to deliver and would require less work to achieve even better results.

Purpose of the game

The main purpose of the game was to create a new and more engaging way to introduce new employees to the Client's business model, culture and values and demonstrate how the company pulls together to work with its customers.

Previously, this was being achieved using the more traditional approach of a facilitated PowerPoint presentation. However, this was not achieving the desired level of engagement for the session nor was it positioning the innovative culture of the client to its young and intelligent recruits. Further, the client wanted a solution that reflected and complied with the demands of the digital age. It was also decided to allow the new hires to work in teams, thus aiding networking, collaboration and teamwork; all elements crucial to the culture.

Innovative Game Design & Methodology

The core design of the simulation/game involves participants being immersed in a virtual, yet realistic, business focused scenario where they will manage a simulated Client business over a 4-year period. The structure of the game sees each of the 4 years set up as a separate round, where the teams must review and respond to the scenarios before the stated deadline. Once all of the teams have submitted their decisions, and the results have been processed, the facilitator then leads a review of all of the teams' progress and results.

Each round represents a business cycle
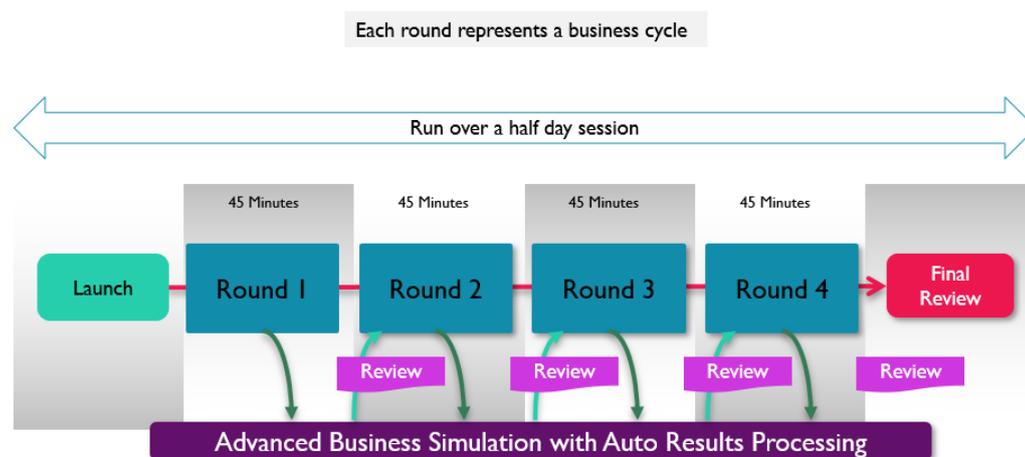
The really exciting thing about the Client business simulation is that its far more than just a game and fun user experience, enabling participants to learn about the Client business model and culture. This simulation incorporates, in a unique way, some crucial learnings for employees, like the importance of engineering schedules and what happens to quarterly revenue if a project slips, being fined heavily for not adhering to export rules and much more. These were seen as key elements for the new hires to understand.

Assisted by Smart Technology

At The client's request, during each live event it was requested that there is just one game facilitator. This meant that the solution would need to utilise some innovative technology to run, manage and facilitate each of the live sessions – which might have up to 250 participants playing in over 30 teams. There were a number of areas where some smart technology would need to be built into the total solution, these included:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Feedback

The game itself needed to provide specific and tailored feedback to each team automatically after each round. The feedback needed to be based on the actual decisions and actions taken by each team during each of the various multi-dimensional scenarios. Artificial intelligence was used to analyse each of the teams' decisions and provide tailored feedback, which feels as if an expert coach is actually discussing the feedback with them. This feedback helps participants understand the quality of each of their decisions and to learn key lessons, no matter the route they took.

Dynamic Scenarios

As well as using AI for the tailored feedback, the game utilises custom algorithms to drive dynamic elements within the scenarios of the game. For example, within one of the customer scenarios, the teams' responses will cause them to go down a different path with the customer or even initiate a different set of responses from the customer. This means that, like the real world, the participants experience a true to life experience, which is influenced by their actions.

Integrated Gamification

One key requirement for this solution was to increase participant engagement during the sessions. Senior stakeholders wanted to add some healthy competition between the teams, and to also add in some extra fun and banter. This was achieved by including team scorecards and a live leader board, which was updated and presented after each round. The team scorecards were designed to reflect how well they responded to each scenario, aligned their actions with the company values, and how sustainable their performance would be beyond the simulation's 4 financial quarters. A total winner was announced at the end of the session based on their final scorecard score.

Rapid Results Processing

As the game is used in live time bound events it was important to have a solution which could analyse team decisions and produce accurate results in a very short space of time. This was achieved by using a powerful simulation engine, on the cloud-based platform, which can process the results for all teams (and the facilitator reports) in less than 30 seconds. This means that the facilitator can immediately jump on stage to conduct the reviews, thus keeping the pace and momentum going. However, the slight delay in showing the teams the results certainly adds to the suspense and excitement in the room!

Cloud Based Simulation Platform and Processing

The technology used allows the simulation to be played in a workshop environment, however it can just as easily be delivered completely online or as a blended solution. There is no downloading of software onto the client's tablets, laptops, smartphones or mainframe. This enables flexibility and scalability for the future.

Taking engagement to another level

The combination of the game design, methodology and technology has taken the level of engagement and learning to another level. Through our observations and refinements, we have uncovered a few key elements which have contributed to this and they are:

Relevancy and Context – The whole content, context and storyline of the simulation game is based on The client's business, customers and marketplace. This has helped bring a level of authenticity to each scenario helping participants to see an obvious connection to the organisation and their role within it. It also means that the participants treat each scenario more seriously, as it does not feel like a 'made up' scenario or simple 'game'.

Intellectually Stimulating – Each scenario was developed with a number of layers of complexity and in-built challenges, which on the face of it would appear quite complex, and maybe un-exciting, to a non-Client employee. However, this proved to be very effective with this audience who are all very highly educated and intellectually astute - many with PhD's. We are able to raise or lower the complexity based on client requirements.

Social & Collaborative – The simulation events are set up as a team-based learning activity (as opposed to individuals completing the game – which would also have been possible). Setting the programme up as team-based game, where each table became a team, proved to be a powerful feature of the event. Not only does it ensure all participants are engaged in the game, but it adds a real sense of team spirit and camaraderie as they move through the rounds. Participants also comment on the added benefit of the opportunity it provides to network and collaborate with colleagues from across the business.
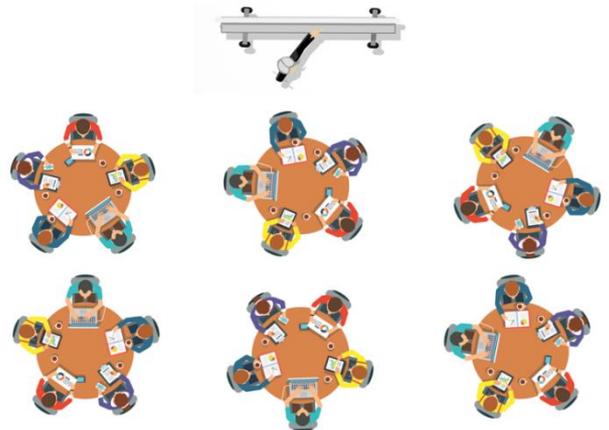
Aspirational – Observing the teams in action, it becomes apparent that the highs and lows they experience are driven by their performance aspirations, which occur throughout the event. This certainly helps all teams remain engaged as they strive to work through challenges and beat the other teams in the room. At any stage the teams may be aspiring to complete a scenario as best they can, to win a round or to be the top overall team on the leader board.

Entertainment – As with most live events adding an element of entertainment also made a difference. After running the first phase of live events a few refinements were made to add additional group wide entertainment elements to the design. These included on stage videos, spot awards (i.e. Eco awards), team fines, live team evaluations and comments. All of these elements were introduced as on-stage elements, where the whole group got to be entertained with these light-hearted but relevant interjections.

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Unique Facilitation Platform

As this game is designed to be used during large, fast paced on-boarding events a new solution was required to aid the facilitators in running a professional, consistent and hassle-free sessions every time, no matter where in the world they are located. In fact, the solution would need to allow for a variety of different facilitators to quickly get up to speed and run sessions across the globe. This would need to be fast, fully automated and automatically prepare the full set of tailored review slides & charts for each review in any language.

A bespoke facilitator platform was designed to meet the objectives of the Client Big Picture Events. This involved creating the structure and content for the reviews for each of the rounds of the game. These were all automated, so the facilitator was not required to do any manual work at all during the session. The facilitator could simply jump up on stage and run through the reviews using a clicker or next button to advance through the auto-generated content.
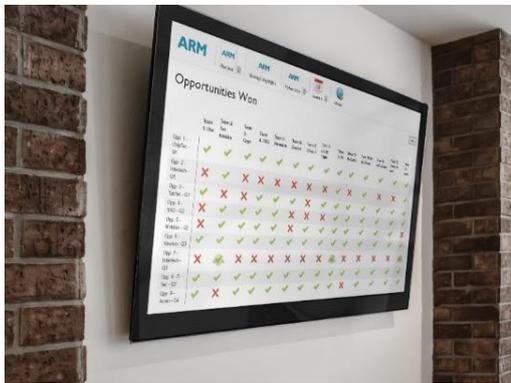
Another valuable feature of the facilitator platform was the inclusion of Train-The-Trainer section available to all new facilitators. This included video overview, demo games, sample reviews and a number of useful downloadable resources. This enabled The client to allocate and on-board new facilitators from all Global regions, meaning sessions could be run across the regions without the need to fly facilitators around the world at great cost.

Participant Feedback

After each event the participants are asked to submit their feedback and provide an overall rating for the game. The overall rating for the game is 4.7 out of 5.

Here is a selection of participants comments from a recent game session:

"Thoroughly enjoyed this session - gave me much more of an understanding as to how we are successful"

"The best I have done in my 30-year career"

"Very effective at revealing the nuances of the business"

"This was a fantastic session! It was great at providing me with an overview of our business model and how it works to serve Us and our partners"

"Very effective way of showing how our business works in a short space of time"

4.7
out of 5

A Global Solution

To date, over 3,500 new joiners have experienced the Client's Big Picture Game Simulation through their attendance at a regional Big Picture Events which are held in 7 separate countries. However, other sessions and facilitator access means that the platform currently covers 17 countries in which The Client operates.
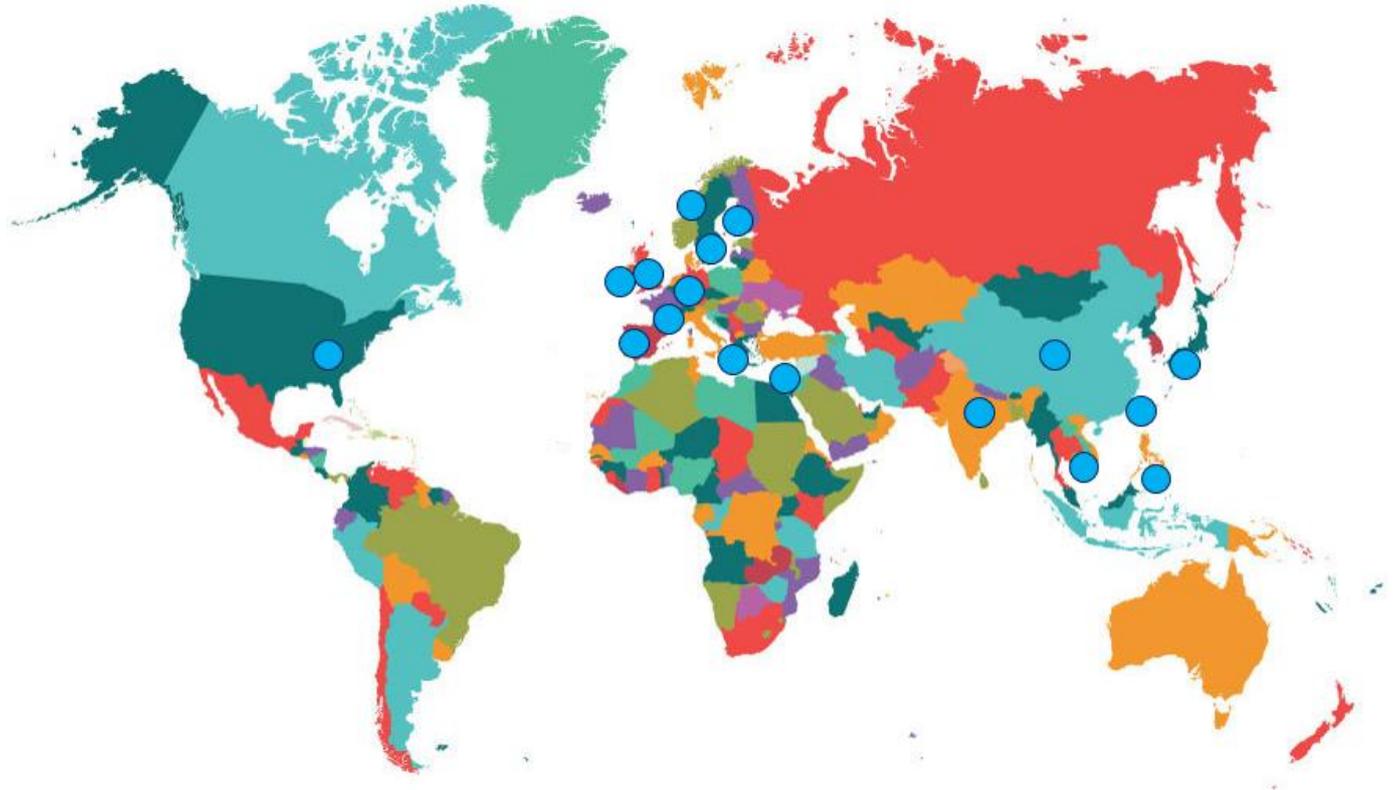
Access to the Client Simulation

Because of the nature of this bespoke simulation this can only be done via a guided online walkthrough with the prior permission of the Client.

About the Client

The Client is a leading technology and IP company and its technologies reach 70% of the global population, with more than 130 billion items shipped to date. The Client was founded by a dozen engineers working from a converted barn in the UK, a quarter of a century ago. Now, more than 6,000 employees from 61 nationalities.

About Business Smart International

Business Smart International is a leading developer of business games and business simulation for both the corporate and business school market. It has developed its own proprietary methodology and simulation platform for both off-the-shelf and bespoke solutions. Its solutions have been used by over 160 organisations globally.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL: +44(0) 845 371 3088

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