

# CASE STUDY: TRANSMEDIA FOR MICROSOFT D&I PROGRAM

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## Learning Through Transmedia Storytelling

Microsoft's diversity and inclusion program is an example of a single story experience told across multiple platforms. The program was developed by Korn/Ferry with strong partnership from Microsoft for composition, and Gronstedt Group for the video production component. One week before the one-day training program, participants were sent a "movie trailer" to build excitement. The trailer showed highlights of a dramatized television-style show, proclaiming, tongue-in-cheek, that "Human Resources Illustrated gave it three thumbs up."

When Microsoft leaders arrived for the live session, a facilitator introduced posters into the conference facility featuring each character of the story with QR codes. Participants were divided into teams and charged with locating the posters and scanning the QR codes with smartphones or tablets. Employees also watched introductory videos of each character on their mobile devices to learn more about each of them.

The scavenger hunt activity leveraged all five characteristics of the transmedia play that aids learning: The team needed to be resourceful to find the posters; social to discuss the issues each character is introduced; mobile through the use of smartphones and tablets; accessible to scan the QR codes in any order and join in from a variety of starting points of their stories; and finally re-playable on the mobile device throughout the day—so they could go back to earlier videos that make more sense later in the story.

After the introductory scavenger hunt, attendees watched a video that set up the storyline: An IT team is planning a large project where tremendous demands will be placed on them. Annika, the team leader, is the "hero" of the journey. However, Dariush, who participates via conference call from Kracow, Poland, doesn't see her as such.



Later in the day, the class watched scribe videos—animated shorts of artist sketches drawn on a whiteboard with audio narration. In one of these instructional videos about conducting a coaching conversation, the characters from the live-action video

appear as cartoons. The animated characters in the scribes are in narrative synchronization with the live-action video. However, we don't hear the characters talk.

An instructor voiceover talks about how to hold an effective coaching conversation and illustrates his points with the animated Annika and Dariush characters.

Each medium is used for its strengths: Live-action video drives the storyline forward. In one of the videos, Sara, an HR business partner, calls Annika to schedule a meeting. Sara plays the role of the mentor, providing information that Annika uses to face up to her faulty assumptions about her team members, and to start coaching them. The scribe video explains particular skill sets, such as coaching skills, which the hero of the live-action video puts to use.

Later in the day, each team was asked to research the barriers to inclusion for one of the characters in the story. The teams received a laminated card with their printed assignments and a QR code. By scanning the QR codes, each team could watch a video about one of the characters, which provided more detailed backstories to their barriers.



For instance, team member Lauren reveals that she's expecting a baby and is hiding her pregnancy as she is struggling with the idea of disappointing the team because she wants more work-life balance. She knows she needs to speak to Annika, but is reluctant and unsure of how to approach her.

The participants reported back on what they'd learned, and how to address the situation. The engagement level for the training was evident: "Participants leaned back to watch the story on the big screen and leaned forward to watch on the small screen

throughout the day," explains Doug Maxfield, VP of Business Development at Korn/ Ferry. Each medium made its own unique contribution to the storyline that framed the day's learning activities, and complements our Meeting With the Mentor and Test, Allies, and Enemies categories in the Hero's Journey structure.