

# Executive Education in Practice

Client Success Story

## The Challenge

Jabil, a global manufacturer with locations in over 30 countries, works across nearly two dozen industries, supplying a vast range of components and equipment. Jabil's health care division is the largest global provider of health care manufacturing solutions in the industry, serving consumer health, orthopedics, medical devices, and more.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Shane Smith was leading a team within the health care division that builds medical devices for their customers. Smith and his team found themselves facing a spiking demand for the company's medical products, while trying to navigate supply chain disruptions, logistics that were at a breaking point, and employee shortages affecting their plants globally.

“The challenge in front of us was daunting, but the desire to ensure our customers were able to help their patients was our rally call to make it happen.”

While Jabil faced uncontrollable external factors impacting global production, the power of effective leadership was something they could leverage. By adopting a tone of communication that resonated, demonstrating agility in action, and embracing creative problem-solving, they could effectively tackle these challenges. Fortunately for Jabil, Smith had completed the Duke Leadership Program. This equipped him with the precise skills required to lead decisively during crises—a strategic investment that paid off for the company and for Smith.

[fuqua.duke.edu/programs/executive-education](https://fuqua.duke.edu/programs/executive-education)

## The Solution

By the time the pandemic struck, Smith had already begun his journey of leadership development, driven by two primary motivators:

- Having an exceptional and talented team under his wing, he was determined to hone his leadership skills, ensuring he wouldn't falter in guiding them
- Eager to propel his career forward, he wanted to be certain he had the necessary skills and positioning to seize opportunities for advancement

Smith took a thoughtful approach to executive education and did his due diligence before choosing Duke.

“When doing my research, I looked into quite a few programs and narrowed them down to the ones that fit my needs,” he says. “Of those remaining (maybe five), I listed what the program offered against what the cost was. Duke was by far the greatest return on investment.”

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EDUCATION



## The Solution Cont'd

Smith says the Duke Leadership Program was key in his professional development. Rooted in extensive research spanning organizational behavior, sociology, psychology, and political science, the program provides working professionals with personalized guidance and actionable strategies to enhance their leadership skills. By customizing the curriculum to address participants' individual strengths, weaknesses, and concerns, the program ensures relevance and applicability to each attendee's unique circumstances, including:

- A proprietary 360-degree leadership assessment
- A one-on-one executive coach
- A personalized action plan for an organizational change initiative with short- and long-term objectives

The program's mission to cultivate more effective leaders perfectly aligned with the leadership challenges that Smith and his team encountered as the pandemic unfolded. With the skills acquired, Smith implemented the lessons learned.

## The Learning

One of his team's biggest tasks at hand was to increase their production of ventilators from 50 per month to 5,000 per month. Not an easy ask when resources were stretched to the limit and the global manufacturing environment was nearly at a standstill.

"We had people unable to get back into our production site due to lockdowns, components not available due to country lockdowns, lack of testers and other equipment to support the demand, etc."

## The Learning Cont'd

As Smith led his team through unprecedented hurdles, he applied insights from the Leadership Pyramid, a framework he studied at Duke. Focusing on three key domains—Contextual, Inspirational, and Supportive—he guided his team through a maelstrom of obstacles. Smith's leadership was not merely theoretical; he put these principles into practice, fostering improved communication and empowerment among his team members, drawing directly from his Duke experience.

"We were working sometimes up to 20 hours per day, 7 days a week to make this happen," he recalls. "We believed that every additional product we shipped could save additional lives. The team that made this happen is still the best team I've ever had the honor of working with."

In the end, says Smith, he and his team were successful in meeting the increased demands. "This was accomplished, in part, with key takeaways from the Duke Leadership Program."

"The team at Duke is second to none. The diligence in making these programs successful is apparent and appreciated. The instructors are enthusiastic and genuinely care to engage with us. After a day of courses, I asked my classmates if they ever experienced instructors in college at the level of the Duke instructors. The unanimous answer was 'no.' The entire team truly makes this program a differentiator. Thank you to the whole team."



Shane Smith,  
Senior Business Unit Director,  
Jabil Healthcare



## The Learning Cont'd

In addition to the Duke Leadership Program, Smith completed a series of other courses through Duke Executive Education. These programs have been pivotal in pinpointing his leadership strengths and areas for improvement, while also equipping him with a comprehensive understanding of the health care sector:

- Business Negotiation Skills
- Navigating Health Care Trends
- Creating a Data Driven Culture

Smith credits these programs for honing skills he could immediately apply on the job—for example, an enhanced ability to effectively request data analysis from cross functional teams, a skill he refined during the data program. The Business Negotiation Skills course is among his favorites. (“Maybe my favorite.”) His position at Jabil frequently involves contract negotiations. Equipped with the advanced negotiation skills he acquired and practiced in the course, Smith feels a heightened sense of confidence.

“Since taking the course, I always complete the prep template I received at the course and am clear on my position and what the BATNA\* is going into the meetings.”

The results are tangible. “Comparing contracts negotiated before the course and after the course shows the benefits,” says Smith.

\*Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement

## The Outcome

Smith achieved his dual objectives in pursuing executive development at Duke: transforming into a leader capable of decisive action while nurturing a high-performing team, and securing the career promotion he sought.

He is now Sr. Business Unit Director at Jabil, spearheading the development and execution of business strategies for key accounts. In this role, he oversees operations, ensures customer satisfaction, leads contract negotiations, drives business development initiatives, and manages financial aspects within his unit.

“I have seen quantifiable improvements in business results, business negotiation outcomes, team efficiencies, and a promotion. Interpersonal improvements continue through team dynamics. Messaging, communication, recognizing results, and building a strong bond are all areas I have improved.”

Smith’s experience in the Duke Executive Education program proved instrumental in navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic, meeting the increased demands of team leadership, and advancing his own career. His tenure at Duke continues to resonate, leaving a lasting imprint on his professional journey.

