

Excellence in Practice 2021



Capgemini France
/ emlyon business school

Making Leaders

In 2017, a global transformation plan at Capgemini (branded “LEAD” appropriately enough) combined with a need to manage talents differently, to pave the way for an ambitious leadership development programme. For the first time in the group’s history, all French business units would be involved in a high-profile training programme with a single mission: renewing the managerial culture by developing the interpersonal skills necessary to meet the group’s organisational and people challenges.

In 2018, Capgemini and emlyon business school jointly designed and began delivering this initiative which became Making Leaders, a 10-month immersive learning journey on the road to Leadership 3.0, whose keywords are “mindset shift”, “cross-functional”, and “personal transformation”. Three years later, Making Leaders has become a trademark at Capgemini France with over 500 alumni from the top tiers of the company, a third wave in progress, and a genuine, tangible behavioural change on the ground in the teams.

Finding a dancing partner to jointly design an innovative leadership intervention

Back in 2018, Franck Baillet, EVP for Learning & Development at Capgemini France, was very much aware of the new environment the consultants had to operate in. As he remarks, ‘We now have to cope with different types of demand, not only from our clients but also from our consultants, from our people. We recruit a lot of people every year. In France, it’s more than 4,000 people across our different businesses, many of whom are millennials’. Franck considered that Capgemini France ‘had to do

something to better equip our managers to help them face these challenges and to inspire the younger staff, showing them that this is a company where we have a lot of freedom to do things and that we are positively challenged by our employees and our managers to grow, to develop ourselves’.

From the outset, Franck was clear that having an external provider, ideally with brand prominence, would be necessary to engage and retain the consultants in the face of the pressure to generate fees and deliver for clients. He set up a steering committee of HR Directors and Business Unit leaders from the different entities across France, and they ran a competitive two-round contest between leading French business schools. Ultimately, emlyon business school was selected owing to its ability to jointly create and co-design the emergent programme structure, with just the right blend of academic content and on the job practice key for impact.

Building a team of chefs to cook up an effective and palatable L&D experience

Custom Training Solutions manager at emlyon, Thomas Misslin, was the initial point of contact at the school and remained heavily involved in the evolution of the resulting “Making Leaders” programme. The programme’s name, merging as it does the “Leader for Leaders” motto prevalent at Capgemini and emlyon’s tagline “Early Makers”, is tinged with a little irony, as the central tenet of the programme is not that leaders are “made” but rather that they are “grown”. With this latter metaphor, leadership is seen as a journey of evolution rather than a process of construction. Thomas avers, ‘It’s like growing a plant. You water it, you wait for the sun to rise. Patience becomes a





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virtue. You add some fertiliser. You pray, you hope, whatever it takes. And then things get going. All of this really is anchored in McGregor's Theory Y of human development, which he described in detail in his seminal 1960 work *'The Human Side of Enterprise'*.

Early on, Thomas brought in Claire Moreau, a coach and affiliate professor with emlyon business school, to help design, build a team for, and run the programme with him. Claire's objective was to get the participants to "experience" more than "learn" (read "pile-up knowledge") in the programme, which she describes as being the "DNA" of the team's pedagogic approach. This approach was drawn from the practice of Carl Rogers, one of the founders of humanistic psychology, combined with a dose of Seligman's positive psychology and David Cooperrider's Appreciative Inquiry method.

Making interactive, innovative, and inspiring leaders

A central pillar of the programme was for participants, many who had grown up with the assumption that they had to fully understand an issue to crack it – a foundation of their consultants thinking – to be able to cope with increasing complexity and "VUCA" contexts. 'We wanted them to feel that they had the ability to address uncertainty with their team whom they could trust to get the better of it', says Claire Moreau. In the end, the programme focused on three leadership qualities that would enable participants to come out on top of VUCA; and Making Leaders came to mean Making Interactive Leaders, Making Innovative Leaders and Making Inspiring Leaders. This easy to grasp framework became a rallying cry of sorts when low-tech, high-touch experiential workshops took participants a tad too far out of their comfort zone. The very simplicity of this model also helped managers keep it front and centre amid their dizzying and demanding schedules.

Each class was made up of a number of cohorts of ten managers; and within that, they self-organised by electing representatives who got together outside of the regular programme schedule to jointly design "leadership projects" that detail, in practical ways, what it means to be a leader at Capgemini in the 21st century, in line with the Group's Leadership Model. The emlyon team describes, 'this dual approach—inputs and practice on the one hand, and actual productive work around leadership on the other—finds itself woven into the programme, whereby the group as a whole, the class, has the responsibility for jointly producing something useful and relevant out of this program; something which is decidedly theirs. They get to actually get work done, together, putting to immediate use the learning gained in the programme. At the end, they feel as if the programme is theirs... which, funnily enough, becomes true because of that feeling'.

Claire Moreau, the programme director, concurs, 'beyond training participants, an important and needed contribution to be sure, we're creating the conditions so that managers get truly interested and start learning of their own volition, practising with their teams, and so on. In this way, they take responsibility for their own learning. During the final day of the programme, they jointly certify themselves as leaders... so letting the managers themselves recognise other leaders in their midst and how much they've changed in the programme. There's this spirit of it being jointly designed. You fully participate. You can't sit back and wait for knowledge to come. You have to do something, to be a fully-fledged actor. You have to take chances. In short, I think we "teach" them to be leaders by being leaders, by constantly placing them in situations to act the part: they are leaders already, and we take it as a starting point, not as an end-state result. And that makes a big difference'.





Far from making life easy for the emlyon programme manager, this “hands off” approach to guiding the programme is a real challenge. As Thomas says with a tinge of trepidation, ‘There is more tension at our end because important parts of the programme cannot be planned for. When things are scripted, the trainers are in control, delivering their presentations and running well-formatted workshop activities, but when they stand back and let participants engage and evolve the pace and direction of the programme, they need to be much more attentive and responsive. And surprises abound’.

With this approach, the programme becomes, to some extent, a journey of “unknown unknowns” for the programme designers as well. But this is seen as another “secret ingredient in the recipe” that creates the space for change in participants to take place. ‘They come up with things that you had no idea they might come up with. And then we get feedback from HR Directors telling us, ‘You know what? We’re going beyond what we expected with this programme.’

A final key factor behind the programme’s success was Capgemini’s buy-in: senior business leaders did create the conditions for this initiative to work, both by contributing their time in the steering committee and by sharing honestly with participants their own learning path and challenges. When senior leaders are open and honest with their managers about their own leadership journey, bumpy as it sometimes is, this sets the tone for others to similarly be honest about theirs. ‘We can’t force people to say things, to make admissions... but our job is to create the opportunity, and sometimes a powerful yet simple question is enough. And when the CEO opens up, of course this allows others to share their personal fears and vulnerabilities.’



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