



STRATEGY

Executing Strategy from the Middle: A virtual extended program in financial services

Managing Directors at a leading financial services and commercial banking firm need to develop the skills and behaviors required to understand and execute business strategies. This virtually delivered program spans four weeks and includes individual assignments, facilitator-led presentations, and simulation decision-making. Over the past three years, this program touched over 120 leaders, providing them with actionable models and frameworks to use back on the job.

Challenge

At large financial services firms, Managing Directors find themselves in the middle of the organization. They do not actively work on crafting the firm's strategy but are responsible for translating that strategy into goals, metrics, and workstreams, all while building the capabilities of their teams. How can Managing Directors practice this type of decision-making in a safe environment, while learning new models and techniques and without the learning experience burdening their precious time?

Solution

The **Executing Strategy from the Middle** program was artfully designed to immerse Managing Directors in a four-week extended learning experience. It includes a rich mix of activities, assignments, content, and participation in a business simulation experience that gives participants the opportunity to practice the core content of the program. These activities are largely self-paced to allow learning to happen at a time appropriate for participants, and they help leaders make the targeted connections among the course content, the simulation experience, and their work back on the job. The program employs a variety of learning methodologies, including:

- » Individual assignments that incorporate content and frameworks, which are designed to develop strategic execution skills.
- » Curated colleague conversations — virtual chat sessions — focused on company strategy execution challenges.
- » Executive sponsor involvement.
- » Small group activities, including virtual role plays designed to build critical interpersonal and leadership skills.
- » A dynamic business simulation in which participants are charged with translating and executing organizational strategy.
- » Facilitator-led discussions and presentations.

Learning Objectives

Participants develop and improve skills to:

- » Understand and translate broader business strategy into clear direction and plans for their organization.
- » Align organizational, team, and individual goals and inspire others to achieve them through inclusive behaviors.
- » Assess, identify, and develop the capabilities required to successfully execute strategic goals.
- » Create and demonstrate accountability among stakeholders to achieve current and future goals.
- » Better understand how one's leadership actions impact business results.

Design Highlights

Program Agenda

For leaders who were burdened by the pandemic, learning had to be delivered in a manner that was as time-effective as possible but that also gave them a way to connect with each other. In response to those needs, Insight Experience developed a blended program with week-to-week consistency.

Mondays and Fridays: Live events

- Large group meetings to discuss key learnings in the live, group webinar.
- Team meetings to review detailed reports and information.

Tuesday – Thursday: On your own

- Complete videos and readings.
- Engage in colleague conversations.
- Review platform announcements and notifications.
- Meet with your trio to role-play (week 3 only).

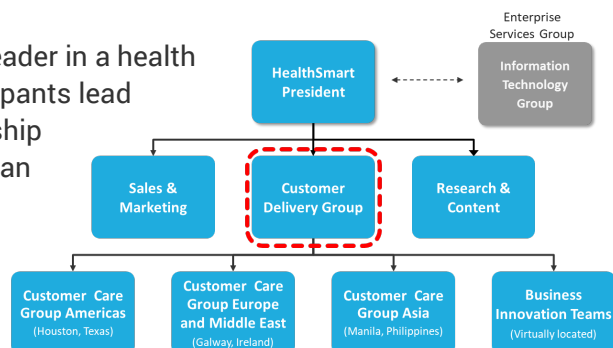
Extended Learning Format

Executing Strategy from the Middle uses a virtual learning platform for individual and group activities. Participants access the platform to learn about and complete all weekly activities and assignments at their own pace. This format allows Managing Directors to log in to complete their weekly work when it best suits their schedule. Each individual learning activity is expected to take about 10-15 minutes so that learners can complete their learning in small pieces, if needed. This program was designed with flexibility in mind to accommodate the competing demands of leaders at this level.

The screenshot displays the Insight Experience virtual learning platform interface. At the top, there are four main sections: 'Dive In!' with a note about individual work until Friday, a 'Program Kickoff Webinar' scheduled for Monday 8:00 AM EDT, a 'Don't forget' reminder about the simulation being active from Friday 8:00-10:30 AM EDT, and a 'Document' section for the 'Program Kickoff Deck'. Below these, a progress bar indicates 'Understanding the Strategy ~ 15 minutes' (0/2). The main content area shows 'In this section...' with a video titled 'UNDERSTAND Strategy' (6:41 min) and a 'Discussion' titled 'Colleague Conversation - Understand Gaps'. Both have a '1 pts' value and a '0' heart icon. To the right, a quote asks: 'Can you summarize your company's strategy in 35 words or less? If so, would your colleagues put it the same way?'. At the bottom, another progress bar shows 'Translating the Strategy ~ 15 minutes' (0/2).

Simulation Overview

Participants assume the role of a multi-function department leader in a health information and service business. As department head, participants lead product development and customer care groups. Their leadership challenge is to translate company goals into local priorities; plan and develop the organizational capabilities needed to achieve them; and flawlessly execute these plans through inclusive leadership.



Success in the simulation is based on how well teams:

- » Understand and translate strategy into goals and plans for their department.
- » Align organizational initiatives with broader strategies.
- » Develop the capabilities required to execute strategic goals.
- » Hold stakeholders accountable to commitments and results.

Here is what some participants have said about this program:

- » “I really enjoyed this course. It was really well balanced and not a major impact on my time. The simulation was a brilliant twist. Probably the most enjoyable learning experience I have had here.”
- » “The simulation was definitely a great experience. The Robust Dialogue Model Frame is absolutely critical and something we shall adopt right away.”
- » “This was the most comprehensive course I have taken which takes me back to my business school days. I am thankful for the discussion, encouragement and collaboration with the instructor and my cohorts.”
- » “I learned a lot and find myself quoting things I have learned in this session in my conversations at work already so not only has it enlightened me but I am sharing the knowledge with others.”