



# Cranfield Executive Development

## Annual Impact Report 2021

Executive Summary

**“At the heart of our purpose, why we exist, is to support the creation of individual and organisational impact; to deliver and promote sustained outcomes that shift an individual’s and an organisation’s practice.”**

**Mark Threlfall, Director,**  
Cranfield Executive Development.

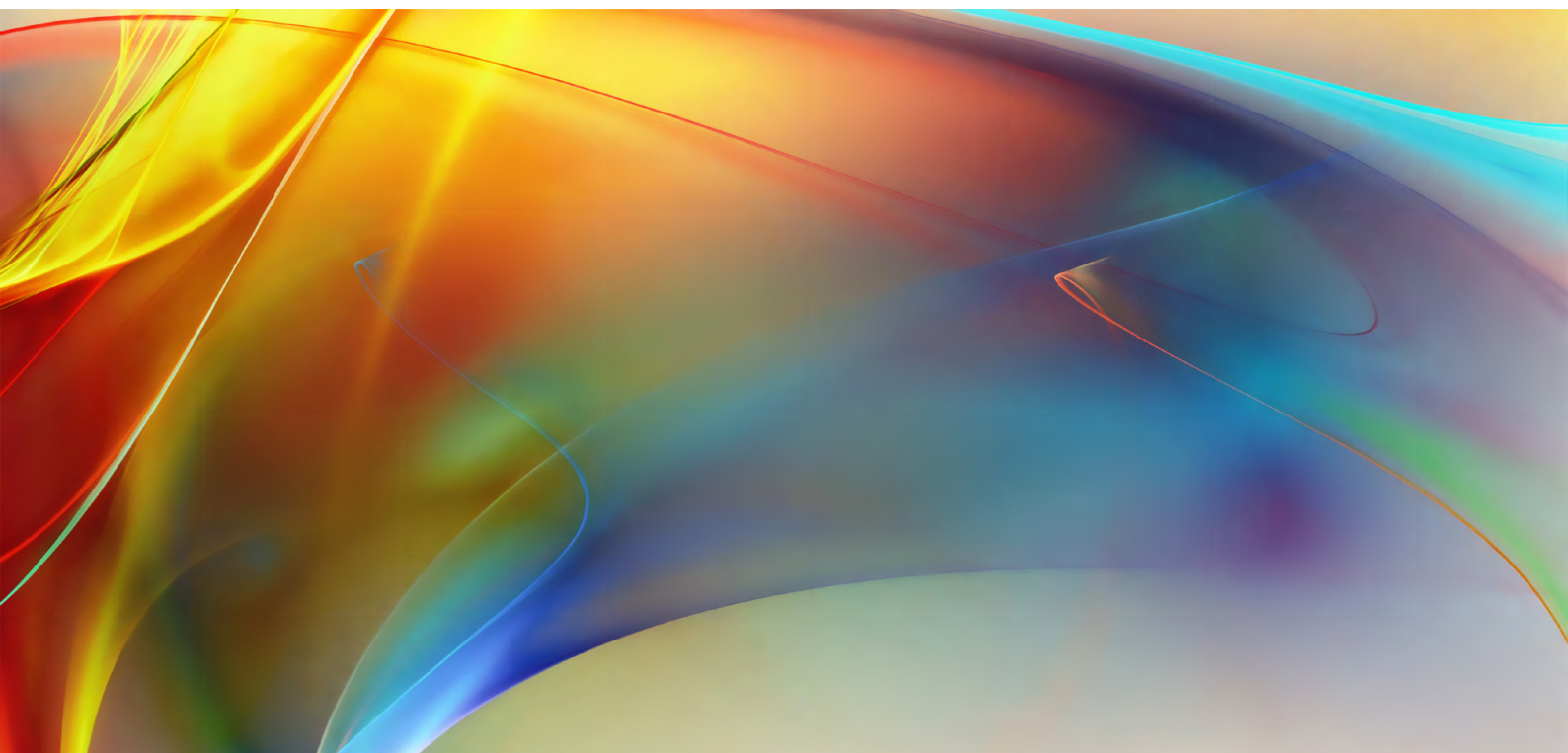


Do we deliver impact that warrants the investment clients make in learning and development? Does our industry understand how value is delivered through the work that we do? These are the big questions that drive the Cranfield Annual Impact Survey, designed to harvest insight and understanding into how Cranfield’s programmes are working for individuals and organisations in real terms and in measurable ways.

Executive education providers tend to paint a detailed picture of the ‘inputs’ involved in their offering—such as programme design, methods and content. In monitoring the sector, most of the questions asked by the Financial Times’ ranking research are about inputs. Yet, very little information is offered by providers about ‘outcomes’—the real impact of executive learning experiences on individual and organisational participants.

Addressing this, Cranfield Executive Development (CED) conducts an annual survey of the participants of its own open and customised programmes for an honest appraisal of what’s worked well, what’s been less successful, what are the tangible impacts being made, and how sustainable they are.

Principally, the results are used internally at Cranfield Executive Development for continuous improvement and to optimise performance of their own practice. However, these results make revealing reading for anyone concerned with the impact of learning interventions like these, whether you are on the supply or demand side of executive development.



# Results

The methodology for assessing the impact of Cranfield's programmes has been developed by Dr Wendy Shepherd drawing on insights from her award-winning doctoral thesis. The results are presented based on six key categories of 'impact driver' that link development with organisational level changes.

## 1. Conversations

During development and back in the workplace new conversations develop as a consequence of what has been learnt. The way participants communicate beyond the programme was found to change:

- **86%** changed the way they communicated,
- **91%** initiated new conversations within their organisations,
- **87%** shared what they had learnt with other people within their organisations.

## 2. Sense-making

During development, participants are encouraged to apply what they are learning to their own organisational context. This broadens perspectives and often leads to specific changes in the way the participants work within their organisation beyond the programme:

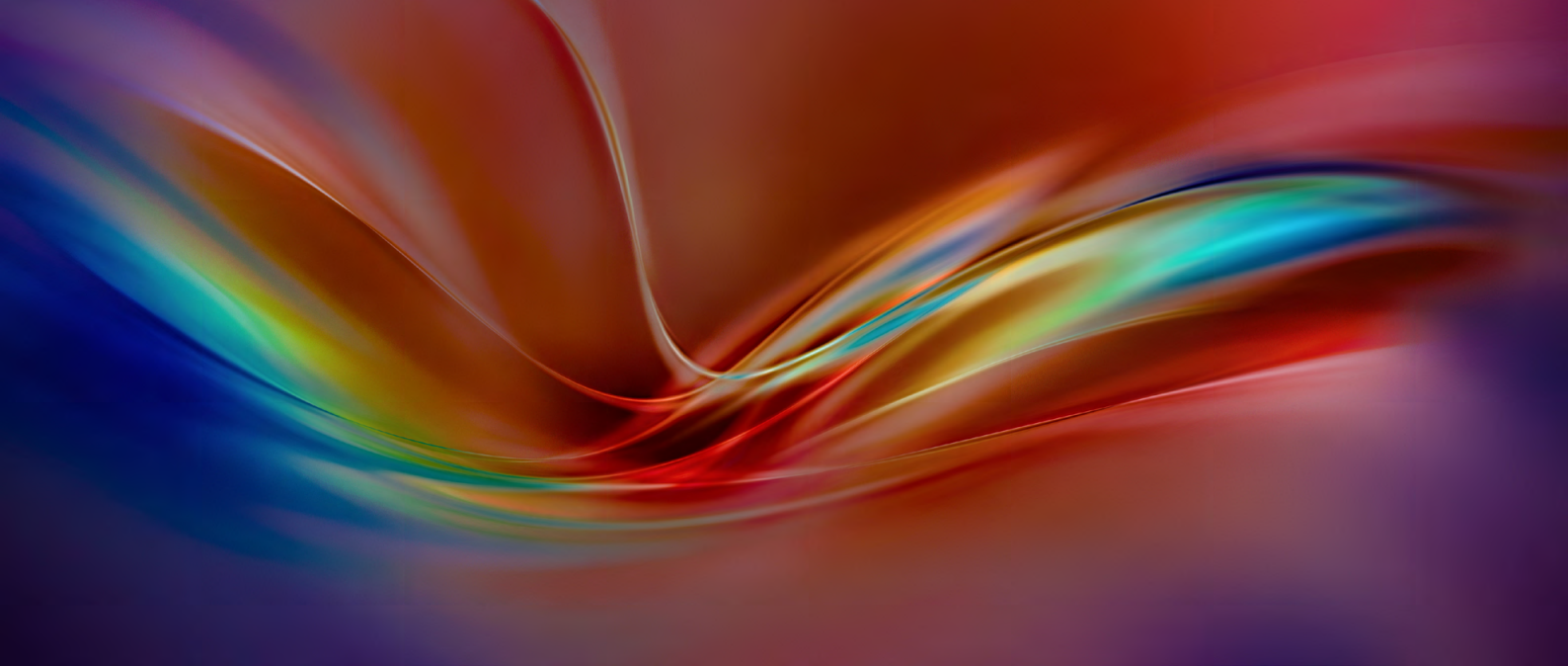
- **84%** on customised programmes have solved personal challenges by using new techniques,
- **75%** of participants solved organisational-level challenges.

## 3. Relationships

During development, participants build new relationships with other participants and organisational members who attend the programme. Back in the workplace, relationships can also improve as participants put into practice what they have learnt:

- **83%** on our customised programmes developed new relationships that have been beneficial beyond the programme,
- **56%** believe that the relationships they have developed have been beneficial to their organisation's performance,
- **60%** kept up the relationships they formed beyond the programme.





## 4. Alignment

Development often leads to participants re-aligning what they do to meet with the requirements of their organisation's strategy or best practice:

- 74% on customised programmes changed their priorities following the programme,
- 93% of those who changed their priorities reported an improvement in their performance,
- 84% reported that their change in priorities improved their organisation's performance.

## 5. Engagement

Many participants report an increase in commitment to their employer and higher levels of motivation as a consequence of attending our programmes:

- 73% of customised participants reported that they were more committed to their organisations,
- 87% of customised participants reported that they were more motivated as a consequence of attending the programme.

## 6. Capability

Changes in capability are developed through a combination of tutor guidance, feedback and through the participants' experience of working with others during our programmes:

- 89% can link their change in capability to performance benefits within their organisation,
- 79% of customised participants solved organisational challenges as a consequence of what they had learnt,
- 75% of all participants solved personal challenges as a consequence of what they had learnt.

# Insights and takeaways

The encouraging results of the 2021 impact study, which covers the period when the pandemic was greatly disrupting both CED's business and the business of its clients, reflect the exceptional work done in this period to innovate and move to online learning. In addition to detailing the results of the impact study, the 2021 report provides an account of how, despite the challenges of Covid-19, the CED team continued to deliver demonstrably impactful development for its clients.

## **The survey results show that organisational-level impact is being achieved across a variety of critical areas in executive development**

- New and better quality conversations are being had, with greater sharing of knowledge,
- At a time of great complexity, sense-making metrics are improving in tangible ways,
- New and existing relationships are strengthening ties within networks, teams, and organisations,
- Greater alignment to strategic priorities and goals are highly reported,
- Motivation, commitment and engagement are on the rise following programme participation,
- Problem solving both personally and organisationally are improved as a result of capability building.

# Contact us

**[Download the full report here to learn more about Design for Impact™](#)**

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