



Cranfield Executive Development

Annual Impact Report 2021

“The people who led the course were amazing – I found them absolutely inspiring in their confidence and just in the way they held themselves. That’s where I want to be.”

Katie Burgum,
EBS Automation Ltd

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Welcome

When you ask people who work in learning and development why they chose this career (or why they stay), often I hear that they want to make a difference; a difference to people and to the organisations they work for.

These laudable outcomes ring true for us as Cranfield Executive Development. 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.

In a recent webinar titled [“The Great Training Robbery”](#), Dr Wendy Shepherd and I put forward the slightly provocative view that, as an industry or sector, we need to take a good hard look at ourselves and ask some searching questions. Do we deliver impact that warrants the investment clients make in learning and development?

A more nuanced question is: Does our industry understand how value is delivered through the work that we do? We have invested heavily in understanding how our programmes work for both participants and their sponsoring organisations. The understanding we have developed informs all that we do within Cranfield Executive Development.

Each year we contact the participants that have attended our programmes to gain insight into what has worked and what hasn't worked so well. The information we gather is primarily used to bring further improvements to our practice. It is also used to demonstrate the impact we make in a tangible way.

This annual report summarises the results of the impact study we conducted in 2020 and covers the period when Covid-19 was having a major impact on our business and the business of our clients. In addition to the results of our impact study, you will see first-hand accounts of how we responded to the challenges of Covid-19 to ensure we continued to deliver impactful development.

Mark Threlfall, Director
Cranfield Executive Development

“Our expert-driven development offering leverages the world-class, industry-specific research generated by Cranfield University. This contemporary expertise enables us to support organisations in identifying and tackling the emerging problems they face. We are ideally positioned to build unique and sustainable solutions that address pressing organisational problems; taking a systems approach to building capability and empowering our clients.”

Mark Threlfall, Director
Cranfield Executive Development



Cranfield Executive Development customer profile

Cranfield Executive Development's clients include global organisations, small businesses and governments across a range of industries.

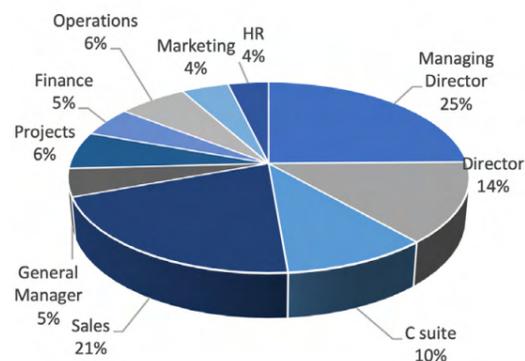
The typical profile of an organisational customer is as follows: 250+ employees with a turnover of £250m to £10bn, headquartered in the UK and operating within government, technology, oil and energy, financial services, construction or manufacturing. An increasing number of our clients and delegates are from the Middle East.



"I recommend the training to other colleagues within and out of my organisation."

Dahir Gambo
Customer Experience Strategy:
Creating a customer-centric organisation

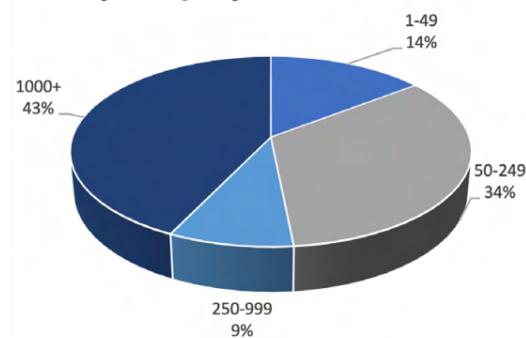
Profile by function



50% of the leaders we serve operate at director level or above. Typically their development needs are associated with leading change.

The managers we serve come from a variety of functions. Typically, their development needs are associated with general management rather than specific functional expertise.

Profile by company size



Organisations of different sizes are typically served by different parts of CED's portfolio:

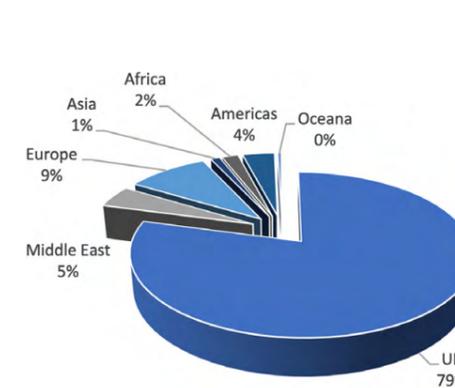
Small owner-manager businesses are served by our Business Growth Programme.

Our Open Programme portfolio typically serves organisations employing 50 to 1,000 employees or individuals investing in their own personal development.

Our Customised Programmes typically serve larger organisations employing 5,000+ employees.

In England, we provide Level 7 Leadership Apprenticeships which are aimed at organisations that contribute to the Apprenticeship Levy. Our first Apprenticeships were linked with a Master's-level award, however, in 2022 we launched a non-award-bearing Apprenticeship.

International profile

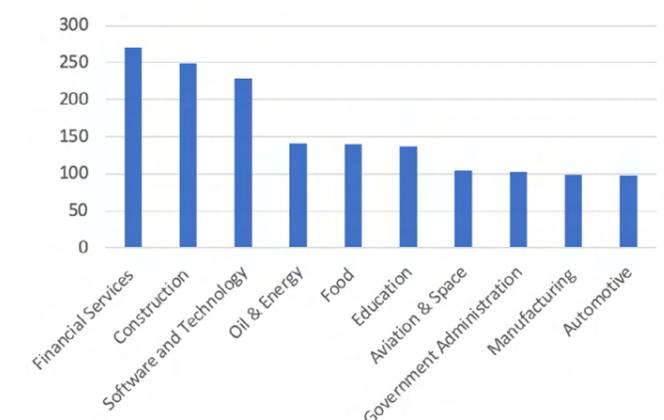


Our domestic market is by far our largest market, with 79% of our customers either entirely based or headquartered in the UK.

Our second largest market is currently Europe, although in recent years we have seen significant growth in the Middle East and Africa. We anticipate further growth in these markets in the near future.

Top 10 sectors

Customers hail from more than 40 industry sectors, leading to a rich learning experience across our programmes. Financial services, construction, software and technology sectors have increasingly gained precedence over the past five years.



Results of the 2020 Impact Survey

Within Cranfield Executive Development, impact is central to all that we do, to such an extent that it features as one of the key pillars of our strategy.

In 2012, we sponsored Dr Wendy Shepherd's award winning doctorate, which developed an explanation of how organisational-level impact is delivered through executive development. The findings from this research have informed the development of 'Design for Impact', our unique approach to impact management and measurement.

The approach includes a series of design propositions, which provide guidance on the design of interventions for specific contexts. The propositions include what we have learnt over the years about what works and, perhaps more importantly, what doesn't work in specific contexts.

Our customised interventions are designed paying close attention to the development of objectives linked to the six major impact drivers that deliver impact to the organisations that sponsor our programmes. These objectives are then used throughout the delivery of our programmes to both manage and monitor impact.

Annually, we contact all people who have completed programmes during the previous 12 months to gain feedback about the impact the programme has had on them and their organisation. This feedback is used to learn more about how our programmes are delivering impact and what we can do to further improve our practices.

In April 2021, 1,500 participants who had participated in Cranfield Executive Development programmes during 2020 were invited to take part in this year's Annual Impact Survey.

The survey was designed using the six categories of impact driver that underpin the Design for Impact™ process:

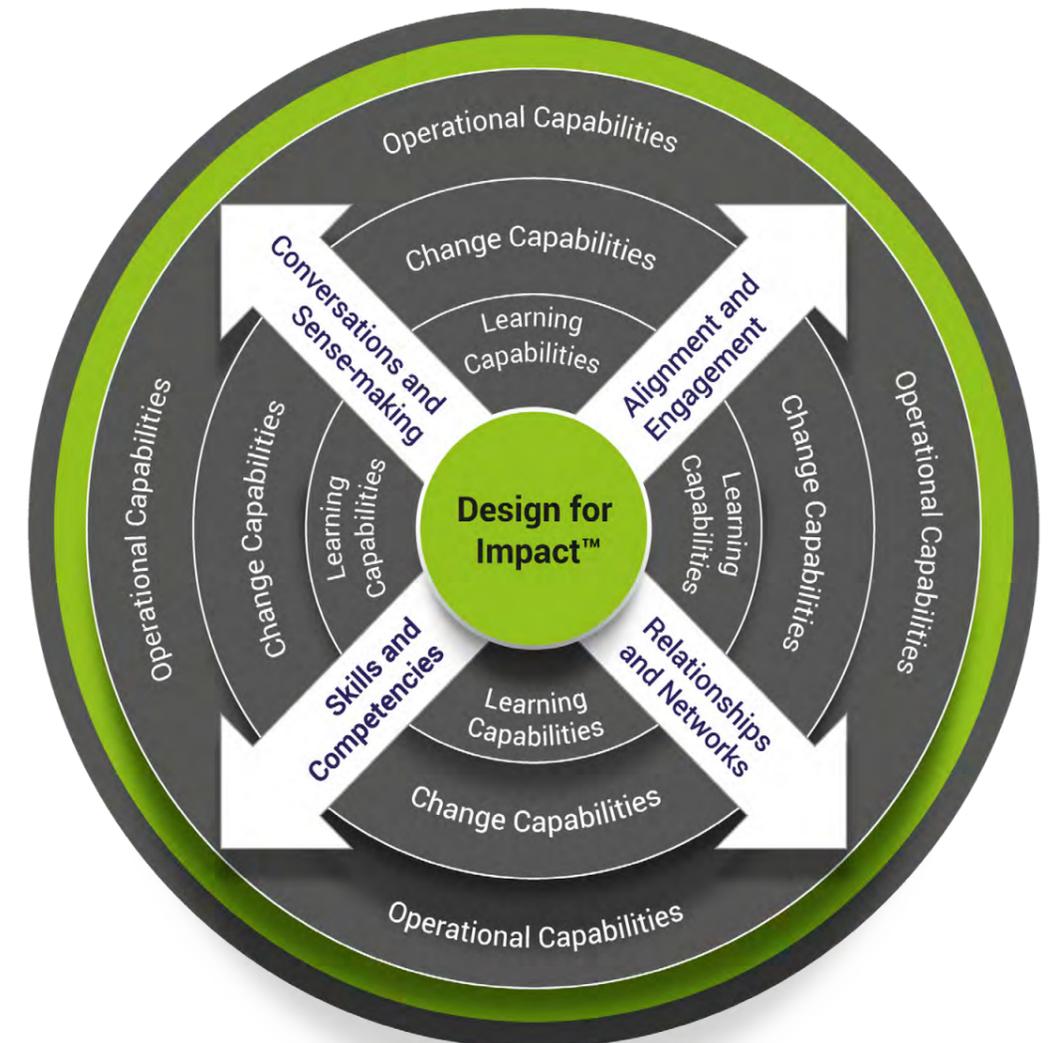
- Conversations and communications,
- Problem-solving and sense-making,
- Networks and relationships,
- Changes in engagement, motivation and commitment,
- Changes in alignment and prioritisation,
- New skills and capabilities.

We received 168 completed responses to the survey and conducted 43 follow-up interviews with those that had responded to the survey.

The highlights from the survey are displayed on pages 10 to 21 and two participant snapshots taken from the interviews are on pages 30 to 39.

Design for Impact™ is Cranfield's unique approach to the design, management and measurement of executive development programmes. The approach, derived from more than 10 years of research, ensures that client impact is central to what we do.

All of our interventions are underpinned by an impact model that includes organisational-level capability objectives and participant-level impact drivers.





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 also found to change.



of our participants changed the way that they communicate



of our participants initiated new conversations within their organisations



of participants shared what they had learnt with other people within their organisations

Participants' comments on Conversations

"I use the tip they gave to keep listening or stay silent for longer a lot now. I learned that people want to fill the silence, so it usually means you get more detailed answers than you would if you were firing questions constantly. That was really helpful, and it also works well on Teams calls."

Bart van den Broecke
PRM MasterClass

"It allowed me to take out the noise and concentrate on exactly what it is I'm trying to deliver, whether that's to a room of people, to one person, to my CEO, or to my team."

Katie Burgum
Impact and Influence

"I am more focused and able to communicate to the business in a more efficient and clear way."

Saskia Bulen
PRM Masterclass



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% of participants on customised programmes have solved personal challenges by using new techniques.



100% of our participants learnt something new.



75% of participants solved organisational-level challenges.

Participants' comments on Sense-making

"The exercise around ideal customer led to a review which reshaped our marketing and goal setting for new business. We are also leaner by addressing this issue and profits are up despite the pandemic and static sales."
Caroline Southgate
Business Growth Programme

"We now have a long-range cashflow forecast, a proper budget, financial KPIs, improved management reporting on the finances every month, and a new understanding of what genuinely drives profitability. I can't believe we ran a business for so long without this information and clarity."
Liz Male
Business Growth Programme

"By creating a business plan year on year we have been able to monitor our financial goals month by month. This in turn has seen growth in the business' financial turnover and profit."
Ryian Ludwick
Business Growth Programme

"It allowed me to focus myself and think about how I came across to the team and how they were receiving the information that I was giving them."
Katie Burgum
Impact and Influence



Relationships

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



83%
of participants on our customised programmes developed new relationships that have been beneficial beyond the programme.



56%
of participants believe that the relationships they have developed have been beneficial to their organisation's performance.



60%
of all participants kept up the relationships they formed beyond the programme.

Participants' comments on Relationships

"I already had a good relationship with my bosses, but it feels like we're now more on an equal level – which we're not, obviously – but there's more trust. When you tell them something, they don't question you. They say: 'OK, if you say so then you're probably right'. I think that's a result of building that trust, which was a key topic on the course. If you don't build that trust you will always have friction between people."

Bart van den Broecke
PRM MasterClass

"I have developed new relationships with other departments. This has resulted in centralised warehousing, with more control and less cost."

Haitham Albahri
Supply Chain Management Programme

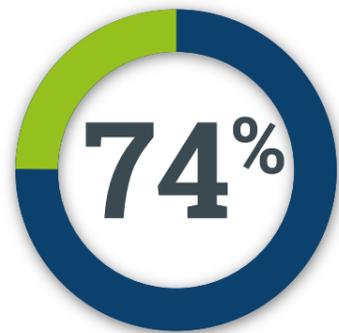
"I found the course content very relevant especially in dealing with people in your organisation, the networking was invaluable to listen to other people's challenges."

Laura Coade
Developing Leadership Practice



Alignment

Development often leads to participants re-aligning what they do with the organisation's strategy or best practice.



of customised programme participants changed their priorities following the programme.



of those who changed their priorities reported an improvement in their performance.



reported that their change in priorities improved their organisation's performance.

Participants' comments on Alignment

"Setting a clear business growth plan as part of the programme, as well as a clear plan to deliver it, has focused the business and my own role within it, which has delivered profit improvements ahead of plan."

Philip Gibson
Business Growth Programme

"It has driven focus and we have had a strong growth in sales where we are focussing."

Greg Williams
Marketing Strategy and Planning

"I am more involved in the offer phase with clients than before the course, so our bid teams and Key Account Managers can concentrate on other offers outside Belgium. This gives a financial benefit. I am now also in more of a business leader role towards the PMs for my clients. So thank you very much that I could attend this training!"

Saskia Bulen
PRM Masterclass



Engagement

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



of customised participants reported that they were more committed to their organisations.



of customised participants reported that they were more motivated as a consequence of attending the programme

Participants' comments on Engagement

"I am more dedicated as an employee, more self assured when taking on leadership roles more productive and confident."

Angelia Wilson
Women in Leadership

"Impact and Influence was the trigger for me to move into an operations management role. Had I not gone on the course, I wouldn't have moved in that direction – and moving in that direction has meant that I've gone on to do the BGP, which is really part of the succession plan for me to take the MD role when our CEO steps down."

Katie Burgum
Impact and Influence

"The course made me believe in myself and how to convey that belief onto others."

Nicky Elliot
High Performance Leadership

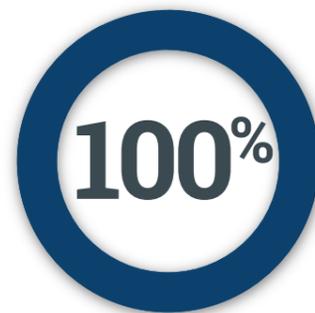


Capability

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



of participants can link their change in capability to performance benefits within their organisation.



of participants learnt something new.



of customised participants solved organisational challenges as a consequence of what they had learnt.



of all participants solved personal challenges as a consequence of what they had learnt.

Participants' comments on Capability

"It taught me how to stop being one of the group and how to make it clear in how I handled myself, how I gave direction, and how I relayed information that I was speaking from a leadership view rather than a team view."

Katie Burgum
Impact and Influence

"The sales performance of my organisation has improved with a much better profit."

Dahir Gambo
Customer Experience Strategy:
Creating a customer-centric organisation

"The programme has enhanced my decision making which has improved our team's efficiency."

Mahmoud Moukhtar
Customised Development, Elisalat

How Covid-19 changed the way we work

Virtual resources

At the end of 2019, the School of Management developed a new digital education strategy that included a three-year plan to introduce a range of improvements aimed at enhancing the experience of our students and introducing a range of new digital-first products. The strategy included a range of measures that would be deployed over this period to engage, inspire and upskill faculty and staff in the use of existing and emerging education technology.

Unexpectedly, the demand for virtual resources rose steeply as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. However, when the University campus closed, the planning that was already underway placed the School of Management in a good position to successfully transition to online education delivery. **The first programme was delivered live online to over 100 students within three days of the nationwide lockdown being announced.**

To enable this transition to occur seamlessly a team of digital education specialists was assembled from within the Cranfield Executive Development team. The team focused on providing technology training and online learning design support for faculty, prioritising those who had upcoming sessions to deliver. **Using Zoom the team was able to develop approaches that were similar to the traditional learning style delivered within the School of Management.**

Using digital technologies such as virtual backgrounds, whiteboards, video playback and breakout rooms effectively ensured that students continued to receive the highly engaging and participative style of education they were used to. Cranfield Executive Development had already been using Zoom to deliver interactive client webinars for a year before the first UK lockdown, and as a result had the requisite licenses and expertise in place to support the switch.

The digital education team provided training for faculty, associates and support staff across the School in the use of a range of technology that would prove to be useful over the coming months. The digital education team also initially provided a facilitation service for all lectures which allowed faculty to get used to online delivery without the need to try to manage the technology at the same time. The facilitators managed Zoom features such as security settings and breakouts and **over time we have introduced more advanced tools to support engagement in lectures.** This facilitation support has continued over the last 12 months ensuring uninterrupted and successful delivery. The feedback we have had from our participants has been incredibly positive.

The next section provides detailed insight into changes made to our delivery with HRDF as a consequence of Covid-19.

"I think Cranfield did the course virtually really well. It must have been difficult, but in a bad situation they made the absolute best of it. The way that they could separate you and put you into break-outs and allow you that quiet time to do your own work and your own plan was great. I think there would be a temptation otherwise to try to do it in less days and make it more heavy, and I think you would dilute the quality. The way they did it I would say was spot on from a virtual training setting in giving people that element of reflection, time to break out and go and do. That worked really well."

James Bugden
Key Account Management

How Covid-19 changed the way we work

Innovations in development: HRDF Saudi Arabia

An interview with

Dr Imran Zawwar - Regional Director (Middle East)

Doc McKerr - CED Associate

The need for online development is not new; it has been part of our offering for the last two decades. Yet the uptake by our clients has been slow, with technology primarily providing a way of staying connected in between face-to-face modules.

In 2020, the pandemic created the burning platform that escalated the need for online development solutions from a supporting technology to a primary method of delivery.

Often, when we think about digital delivery there is a common assumption that participants cannot be engaged in online development for the same periods of time as they might be in a classroom setting. Imran and Doc questioned this assumption: **“If people can play online games, binge watch Netflix and YouTube and chat with friends online for hours on end then the technology isn't the issue, it's the way we use it which is causing fatigue.”**

Using this belief as their start point, together they developed an interactive learning process that blends the strengths of face-to-face with the safety of digital. Where technology is still clunky, such as the use of digital whiteboards, Imran and Doc have discarded it in favour of a live online studio (created at home) with real flipcharts and a green screen background. They also stand through their delivery to generate energy, rather than sit down and talk to PowerPoint slides: **“PowerPoint isn't engaging in face-to-face, so why would it work online?”**

Imran and Doc explain that one of the difficulties with digital is reading the audience **“You can still do this by asking people lots of questions, using the reaction functions on Zoom and by monitoring how quickly people respond to requests such as to enter break out rooms. You know when you are getting it right because at the end of the session there is the same buzz as there is at the end of a physical delivery.”**

Imran and Doc deliver in partnership: one reads the audience and keeps on top of the chat feed, while the other presents. The learning journey is carefully curated so that a story unfolds which helps the participants focus. Having polished their approach for the last 12 months, they are both keen to keep this new way of delivering going.

But there is a word of caution **“just because the technology is there it doesn't mean we have to use it. If you are going to run a poll for example, ask why? What are you going to do with the results?”** The rules for digital are no different to working with a face-to-face audience; if what you are doing lacks purpose it is a distraction rather than an aid.

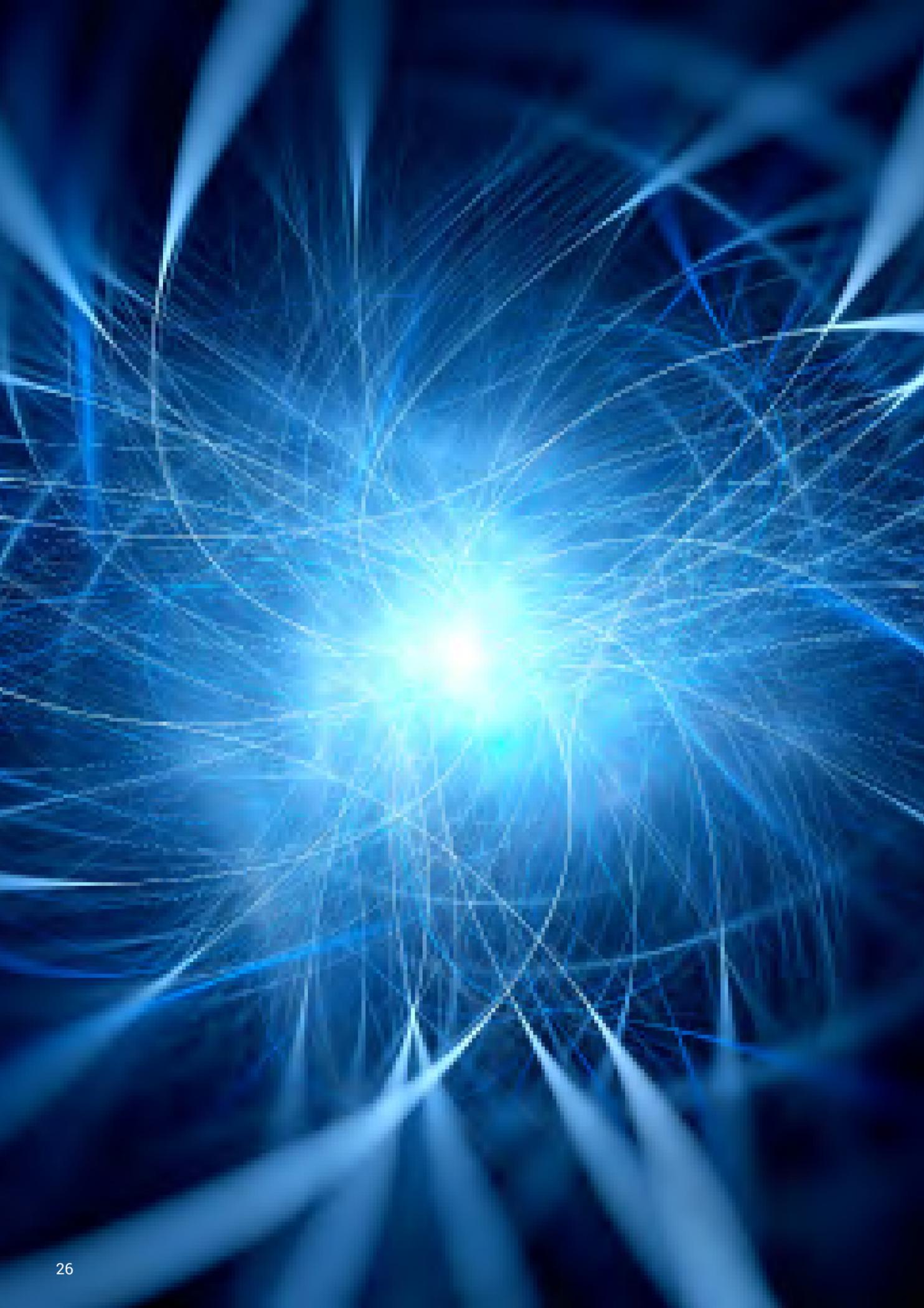
According to participant feedback, the transition from face-to-face to digital has been a success, but this has not been an easy transition. It has required a clear focus on what the Cranfield brand is about, a replication of what has worked in face-to-face, with the ability to test out, review and adjust our approach as we learn more about the engagement of participants in the digital setting.

“We are here to engage the participants with the topic – that is no different for digital than it is for face-to-face. People can consume content anywhere, we want them to be active in the learning process, engaging with content which is specific to their context and helps resolve the challenges that they are facing.”

Looking forward, many of our clients are thinking about the new normal and hybrid working. Without a doubt, this will impact the way we design and deliver development processes in the future. Short sharp webinars have become more commonly used as a replacement for more in-depth development processes. What Imran and Doc have demonstrated is that technology does not need to be limited to short bursts of development, but can replicate the strengths of the classroom if we raise the bar beyond seated PowerPoint inputs.

“What I have learnt has helped me secure new contracts worth £170k despite the difficult economic situation due to Covid.”

Nisreen Abu Al-Hassan
HRDF Leadership Development Programme



How Covid-19 changed the way we work

Impact of Covid-19 on operations

In March 2020 we found ourselves presented with an alien question that no doubt was being debated in the same way all over the world.

How will we move an entirely officed-based operation, that has no history of ever working remotely, into our homes, and still manage to service our business – which in the main involves ensuring our teams get where they need to go, with the stuff they need to have, to be physically present to do the things they need to do. We did what nearly every other team around the world has done, and we're still living the altered reality that resulted.

Our Learning Delivery & Operations Team, and the service we provide as a direct result of the Covid-19 related shift, has become much more personal. Instead of getting people to places and preparing rooms and then leaving everyone to get on with it, the team are now in the (virtual) room. Called upon initially for technical expertise that they didn't have (and ultimately didn't need but were fearless enough to take on responsibility for anyway) the support team quickly became integral to the apex of the 'delivery' element – they were needed in the room where it all happens. This need has continued despite all of our growing command of the virtual experience, and the result is much better relationships. They have really got to know the faculty and tutor teams, and moved on from the transactional experiences that had become the norm.

More importantly, they have become real people for our participants. Rather than being a name at the bottom of an email, they are now able to bring much more value to the supporting role, and a greater level of authenticity to the 'we're here to help' message. It is an odd juxtaposition, that we had to go remote to get closer. In the physical world, the support team would always be on the fringes of the real activity. Going virtual has allowed them to be part of the main event, which for our team is a great outcome.

The EFMD silver award case study



Delivering long-term success through customisation and collaboration.

IT multinational Atos is the global leader in secure and decarbonised digital, with a range of market-leading digital solutions. It employs 105,000 people across its worldwide network of offices, who together bring in annual revenue in the region of €11 billion.

Rapid growth through mergers and acquisitions had resulted in a large and multi-faceted business working in 71 countries around the world with a core mission of delivering digital transformations to its clients, but differing internal standards and ways of working derived from the separate businesses that had been brought together under the Atos brand.

The company came to Cranfield for help in devising a development programme for its aspiring programme managers. Our brief was to help senior project managers progress to programme managers, so the company could retain its best talent in a competitive marketplace. We were to set global standards, complete career pathways, and improve customer retention by reducing project failures.

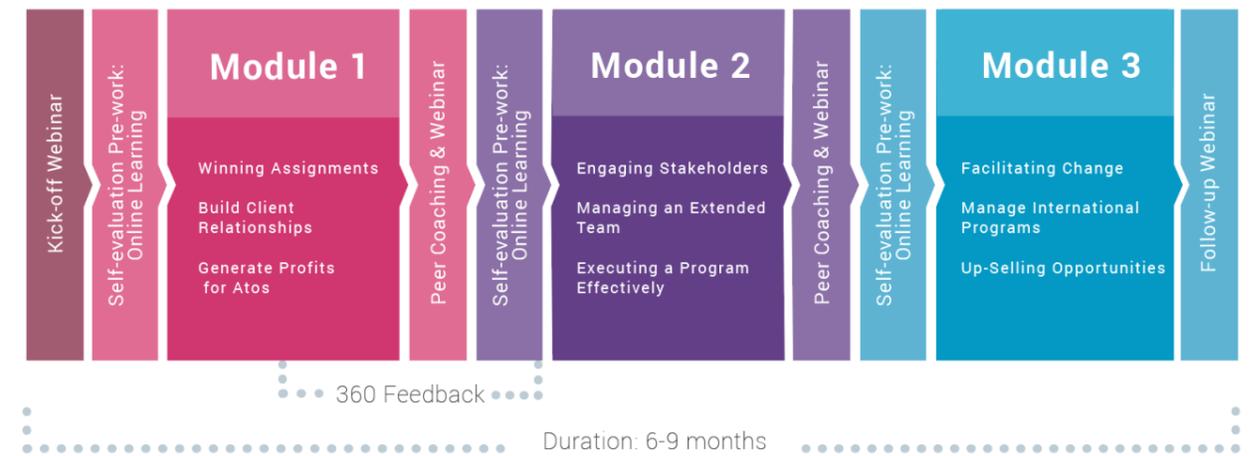
A 'career-defining' programme

The programme we designed and developed for Atos – PRM Masterclass – has, in the past six years, been undertaken by 284 participants in 26 different countries. Recognised Atos-wide as a mark of proficiency and credibility, participation in the programme is considered career-defining.

A survey of Atos employees undertaken this year revealed nearly half of respondents were promoted after completing the course. Of the remainder, nearly half considered their career positively impacted by an increased range and level of responsibility.

If an individual has been through the PRM Masterclass, I feel very confident that s/he will be successful in delivering high quality programs for our customers.

Estelle Higgins, Head of Program & Project Management, GPM



Every respondent gave examples of how they had saved projects from failure using what they had learned on the course, improving customer retention and protecting hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of revenue.

Our clients' projects and programmes are often complex and complicated. [The course] has produced great people who are well equipped to handle that level of complexity.

Carol Dickson, Global Head of Projects and Programmes, Business & Platforms Solutions, Atos

The PRM Masterclass takes Atos employees on a nine-month learning journey grounded in Atos business reality, including Atos-specific methods, processes and competencies. Combining face-to-face learning, webinars, online learning, 360 feedback and coaching, the course includes innovative Grounded Experiential Learning approaches, whereby participants take part in bespoke business simulations role played with Cranfield faculty as a means of helping them transfer their learning to their work. At the end, participants receive a project management qualification that is recognised worldwide.

Of past PRM Masterclass participants who responded to the Atos employee survey, 84% said completing the course had enhanced their communication skills, making them more willing to step up to difficult conversations and into politically-sensitive situations, and more confident in working with diverse cultures and bringing their unconscious behaviours into consciousness. Some 78% said it had helped them solve problems by encouraging more innovative, out-of-the-box thinking, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of issues and helping them to resolve and reduce project escalations.

Effective client partnerships lead to repeat business, and the people who come back from the PRM Masterclass create exactly those kind of partnerships.

Prasanna Shivakamat, Group Head, Learning & Development, Atos

The EFMD silver award case study cont...



Adapting to a global pandemic

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, the PRM Masterclass had been running successfully at Atos for five years. The interactive nature of the delivery, along with the real-life feel of the Grounded Experiential Learning simulations, were being described as two key reasons for its success. Moving to an online-only format as a result of the global shutdown, we faced a huge challenge to replicate that level of interaction and successfully provide a complex business simulation in a way that would feel real and keep participants engaged throughout. Thankfully, we were able to do that, and were highly commended for our efforts by Atos's Global Learning Services Manager.

Indeed, there is ongoing recognition at executive level within the organisation of the positive impact of learning and development, and Cranfield's input in particular. This is matched by the esteem in which the course is held by the workforce in general. The PRM Masterclass has taken participants from every major business unit of the company, and every continent of the world. Cohorts are consistently full, and there is always a waiting list for places.

Every applicant I interview already knows the programme content, and what is expected of them, because their managers rave about it!

Magdalena Pastor, Global Head of Learning & Development, Financial Services & Insurance

We are delighted with the success of the Atos programme so far, and look forward to hopefully many more years of continued partnership in the years to come.

Client impact interview

Client snapshot of their experience at Cranfield

Philip Gibson - Reverberate PR
Business Growth Programme
September 2019 cohort

Years ago, when I worked in-house, I did the General Management Programme, so I was familiar with Cranfield and the way they work and had found that course beneficial. We'd started our own business back in 2007 and I guess we had just got to that point where I felt I needed some space and external input to focus on what we were going to do with it. It had been growing steadily and I felt I was a bit trapped in working in the business rather than being able to focus on the business and move it forward. It had got too big for that to be the case. We're still only a small business, but I was neither doing the leadership role nor the 'doing' role properly really, so I felt that we needed to have a bit of a review. I went on the Cranfield website, came across BGP and thought: 'That's pretty much exactly what I need right at the moment'. As I say, I knew Cranfield, so I knew that the output would be good. I was lucky enough to get a bursary from the Worshipful Company of Farmers, which covered a proportion of the fees.

It met my expectations – exceeded them probably. The teaching was great and exactly what I thought Cranfield would deliver. It was useful and stimulated a lot of thought, and the counselling groups give the opportunity to apply that learning to your own business straight away in a really meaningful way. Getting to know the others in your counselling group also meant that you could be challenged and indeed challenge others in a very safe, supportive way and I think that leads you to look at your business in a way that was much more objective than you would do otherwise, because you're too close to it.

I think the format works well. You come out of it with a) a huge amount more knowledge, b) having created the space to step back and really look at your business and what you want from it and where it fits in the market, and where the opportunities are, and c) then an actionable plan saying 'having learned X and applied X, I can now do X'.

The common golden thread from all the people on the course was that we were all running our own businesses. So, you found that not only in the counselling groups but also in informal conversations over a beer in the evening or over lunch you would speak to people who would be talking about something in their business, and you would realise you have the same issue and that you're not alone. I think sometimes it can be quite lonely running your own business. Knowing that all those things that you worry about, other business owners are worrying about too, does help. It's very easy to get imposter syndrome a little bit and think: 'Everyone else appears to be doing this without any hassle and I'm here fretting about it'. You realise quite quickly that it doesn't matter what the business is; business is business, and people are people, and some of those challenges and opportunities are the same for everybody and you can learn from others' experiences and equally they can learn from yours because we've all come at it from a different place.

From a personal point of view, the main thing it gave me was the space to stop and think about the business and the challenge to really think about what we want out of it. It was beginning to feel a little bit like – and this is something that others echoed – that you had almost got over the initial few years of proving you could do it and then it had grown, but you felt a bit like you were almost running the business for other people. You sort of lost direction a little bit. I think what I gained most from BGP, personally, was just that space to actually sit back and really explore what we want from the business in the future, what I enjoy about my role and what I don't enjoy about my role, what I'm good at and what I'm perhaps not so good at, and really think about what is the best thing for the business but also what is the best thing for us and where I fit in that space in the future. That was useful.

I run the business with my wife and most contacts that I might speak to about the business are too close – either a family member or a friend – so they are always going to have a perspective that's skewed by that relationship. What was really good about BGP from a personal point of view was that it was other people in the same boat. You were able to ask why they were doing or thinking something and any comments they made were impartial.

“I came out of it with much more clarity about what I want out of the business.”

Philip Gibson
Reverberate PR

Client impact interview... continued

I came out of it with much more clarity about what I want out of the business – I don't mean financially, I mean in the round – what do I want to spend my time doing? Where do we want the business to go? What do we stand for, even? I also have more motivation, having had the time to stand back and take a breather – not that BGP is a breather by any means – away from the day job you were able to think. It reinvigorated me.

We're a service business, ultimately, in consultancy and we're deadline-driven. In PR and marketing, it's always: 'We need this now'. I think in that environment it is always really difficult to justify, in my head anyway, booking time out to work on the business in business hours. So, inevitably, the kind of discussions we had about the business were sat in the evening with a cup of tea when really you don't want to think about work at all, or when we were on holiday. I never gave myself permission to let the leadership of the business and direction of the business have a space I guess, because we were busy and I never felt I could turn around to the team and say: 'Look, I can't help you with that deadline. I know you're under pressure, but I've got something else to do and it's important'. A big thing for me was realising that the value I add to the business now, and the security I provide to my employees, is in driving the business on. My contribution is beyond simply doing client work and, when I do client work, I need to be picking and choosing where I can add the most value over and above someone else in the team. So, while I will still 'do the doing' – write that press release or whatever – really, if there's someone else in the team that can do that more efficiently, that's not where I can add the most value to client accounts. It should be helping them set their strategy and all those sorts of things. With newer clients we've taken on since BGP, we are changing the way the relationship is structured with members of the team, and so my relationship with new clients is different to how it is with long-standing clients, where I'm perhaps a bit more involved.

I think the main thing was having real clarity over what we stand for, what we do and what we don't do, and having a clear plan for the next five years that can underpin our decision-making.

I feel more empowered now to get on and make decisions. We did our business plan review in December 2019, and three months later we were dealing with Covid-19 and lockdowns, and I think it gave me the confidence to make decisions faster than I probably would have done in the past, which meant that we were able to adapt and recover quicker.

From a business point of view, it's given us clarity of purpose and clarity of what we're here to do. We had a business plan before, but it was a bit rough and ready. We always budgeted annually, but we didn't take it out to three or five years so while in the back of our mind there was always that feeling that we want to grow, we didn't have clarity on it. Now we have a five-year plan; we know where we want to be in five years, and I think that has helped us in our decision-making and in just having a bit more energy in the business and moving it forward.



I remember when we started BGP and they challenged us to save the cost of the BGP programme by the end of it. Certainly, within a couple of months, we had paid for it just in terms of focusing more on costs and charge out rates and getting a bit more financial discipline into the business. I wouldn't say we were bad before, but it definitely sharpened us up. I think the main benefit financially has been that we have a clear plan. With Covid-19, it's been hard to quantify, but we kept moving forwards and because we had a plan, and we knew what we needed to achieve and had perhaps got more confidence and decisiveness, we were able to adapt to what came at us in Covid-19 and work round it. I'm confident we reacted to that in a way that was much better for the business than we would have done previously. I'm very confident that if we hadn't done the BGP at that point, we wouldn't be in as healthy a position today having been through the last 12 months of Covid-19.

We did a growth accelerator programme a few years ago, which was a Government-funded local mentor scheme to help encourage growth. It was good but, in hindsight, we didn't deliver follow through on some elements of it in the way that we perhaps should have. So, I think there was a little bit of scepticism in the team when I said I was doing the Cranfield course. But the reality is that it has given us a clear focus and we're delivering on our plan. I think the team has realised that we're serious about it and I think it's changed their views a bit in terms of how we communicate, because we refer back to the plan, we're delivering the plan, and some of the things we've put in place I think they will see a benefit from.

I'm certainly more confident about the future. Particularly after the year we've been through, I'm confident we can navigate what may come along, both positive and negative. I'm pretty optimistic. We've got a much clearer picture of where we fit, what our customer base will be in the future, what we offer them and equally what we don't do and where we don't fit. That's been useful, and I think has resulted in, certainly personally and I think across the team as well, more motivation because we've got that clarity of purpose. I think having a clear plan and knowing what that means for the business and for us individually has been great because we have something to aim at and we're not going to be deviating from it. If something happens, we'll find a way around it.

I'd definitely recommend the BGP. I had been to Cranfield before, knew Cranfield was great, and this programme was exactly what I was looking for. I would say that anyone running their own business ought to be doing it at some point.

Client impact interview

Client snapshot of their experience at Cranfield

Katie Burgum

Operations Manager

EBS Automation Ltd

Impact and Influence

I joined the company around three years ago and my role changed quite significantly during that time, from being one of the senior leadership team to becoming operations manager, the most senior manager in the company. My goal was to transition from being part of the team to being the leader of the team and consider how I am seen by the team, how I come across to the team, and how I show leadership and put that across in myself every day in work. So that was my reason for going on Impact and Influence.

The course was very different in terms of how it was delivered to what I was used to. I'm used to being behind a laptop and, all of a sudden, I'm walking into a room where we're acting out role play, and there's meditation and talking. It was so different from what I was used to, and out of my comfort zone, but I was blown away.

I came away almost not realising what I learned – I couldn't write down what I learned – but knowing that it entirely changed me. It took a few weeks and months of being in meeting rooms and in groups with my team to realise what had changed. I've learned to put myself across in a more managerial, leadership way. It allowed me to focus myself and think about how I came across to the team and how they were receiving the information that I was giving them. It taught me how to stop being one

of the group and how to make it clear in how I handled myself, how I gave direction, and how I relayed information that I was speaking from a leadership view rather than a team view. It gave me a lot of focus and allowed me to take out the noise and concentrate on exactly what it is I'm trying to deliver, whether that's to a room of people, to one person, to my CEO, or to my team.

I've got a number of people that report into me – the project management team, the production team, the quality team – and a lot of them requested courses with Cranfield based on the change they saw in me after doing Impact and Influence. I was able to put myself across better to people. It changed me a lot and had massive value for me, without me even understanding how in an odd way.

We spend every day in technical meetings, within the business, and it gave me the opportunity to think about sometimes stepping out of that. It was very encouraged on the course that if you've got a problem, or if you need a break, sometimes that five minutes on your own to regroup and regather yourself is what you need to move on to the next thing. It definitely taught me to leave things in boxes. So, if I'm dealing with 10 problems at once, instead of going into a meeting lasting six hours and trying to deal with all 10 problems at once, I'll choose to deal with one, take the information required, feedback very clearly, take five minutes to regroup and then move onto the next. It's definitely allowed me to focus better in that way.

It's very much pulled us together as a team and showed me my role in getting the information from everyone and essentially being the voice of the team, rather than being part of it. It's kick-started a massive change. We've just started my leadership team on a two-year programme with Cranfield with the aim of progressing them as a leadership team. We're growing quite significantly as a business, and that's really driven off the back of the improvements that started with me going on Impact and Influence. It gave my CEO the confidence to put me on BGP and promote me to the operations manager role, which has allowed me to look at our business growth plan, which I've been working on with Cranfield for the past six months. Had I not gone on Impact and Influence, I don't think I would have felt as prepared or had that confidence in myself or focus to move into BGP. It definitely gave me the groundwork and grounding in terms of how I need to portray myself as a leader. It really helped.

Client impact interview... continued

We started 28 years ago as a family business with two people in what was a small shed. Now we own three businesses across the UK, we've got 50 people in Llanelli, and we are growing significantly. A lot of our workforce have been here 27 years, and then you have another half who are new people who are essentially management roles that have been brought in to grow the business as it's moving from a small family business to essentially a corporate business and transitioning into a Group.

My background is in the MOD and British Steel, so both military and corporate project management, whereas EBS is a small business of people that have been here for a very long time. When I started, one of the hardest things, coming from the outside, was to integrate myself and make strategic decisions and change things for a team of people that had been doing this for 20 years. This business feels like it's theirs; it's their baby. They've watched it grow. When you have a new person coming in, and that person is a woman as well – you don't see a lot of female managers in the manufacturing industry, particularly in Wales – and you're a business full of male engineers, that can be a bit of a shock and you can get a bit of a reaction. It was a big transition for me coming into the business, to be able to make my voice heard and to put aside the fact that it takes people time to accept and get to know you. The Impact and Influence course allowed me to deal with that directly head-on.

I spent a lot of time in the first six months trying to make friends, in the hope that if I could get people on board, we could start moving forward. Doing the course allowed me to focus myself and understand that I was in a leadership role and my responsibility was in driving the business forward. It helped me to charge through a lot of the noise and remove the worries off myself. I realised it's not my job to make friends or keep the peace; my job is to grow this business. And it's worked. Those bonds that I was looking to create have been built now because people have confidence in me. If I'm willing to charge through groups of people that don't want to follow, they become willing to follow, because I took the reins and went with it. Impact and Influence allowed me to consider my relationships and my part in allowing negativity to fester and in allowing myself to not be seen as the leader and the person that's there to give direction. It definitely changed me. It put me into that leadership role in my mind.

The people who led the course were amazing – I found them absolutely inspiring in their confidence and just in the way they held themselves. That's where I want to be. Regardless of whether you're a man or woman, standing there with absolute confidence in your ability to move forward and what you're saying. They were fantastic.

My background is in projects and programme management, but Impact and Influence was the trigger for me to move into an operations management role. I manage everything at EBS at our site in Llanelli – our budget, sales, the growth of the business. Had I not gone on the course, I wouldn't have moved in that direction – and moving in that direction has meant that I've gone on to do the BGP, which is really part of the succession plan for me to take the MD role when our CEO steps down. I'm also looking to do my MBA with Cranfield this year. I'm moving into the entrepreneur side of things, and that's not necessarily a path that is the same route I would have been traveling had I not been on the Cranfield Impact and Influence course. It's really moved my path entirely.

I have so much more belief in myself. I came away understanding myself better and understanding other people around me better. I notice other people now. So, if I'm in a meeting room or meeting with a customer – and it might be a difficult conversation – I will watch the other person in a way I never did before, and I'll come away and think: 'They were good at that, I need to think about that, that's what I want in a room, I like how that person's presence was, how they would take control!' It's learning sometimes to not speak, and to think about how others around you come across and being able to read people in a far better way. I feel much more comfortable going into any situation since Impact and Influence. I'll be called on when someone wants to scream and shout at somebody because I'm very comfortable walking into a meeting with little information very much on the basis of what I learned at Cranfield.

As a business, we're EBS Automation and we tend to do engineering solutions and special purpose machinery in Wales. We have just acquired a new automation business in Worcester and we're looking at going to EBS Group and moving into medical and into the food industry this year. We have big growth plans, which is what we've been working on through BGP. Our leadership team are on a two-year growth program with Cranfield. The aim is that over the next two years, we're going to go from a £2 million to £20 million business and grow significantly in terms of people. By doing that, when I step up, the leadership team will be there in place to drive operations and plan the business, as we plan it at group level.

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