



Maximise your ROI in executive development

Part I: Value destroyers

Maximising the impact of your executive development spend is an evergreen challenge for talent leaders globally.

Fortunately, we are better placed than ever to achieve just that.

Bad practices that undermine impact

The first phase of maximising your executive development ROI is to identify and weed out bad practices – the common value destroyers present in all too many executive education initiatives:

01 Out of context

The unique context surrounding your organisation and faced by leaders should factor above all else – there is no one approach suited to all contexts. Fixating on design, mode of delivery and provider is not enough. The development process needs to be relevant and authentic, recognising the realities of leading within the organisation at this specific point in time.

03 Poor configuration

Programme design should guide the participants through a development journey delivered by a team, rather than be bolted together content delivered by individual experts or tutors. The development journey will be far easier for participants to follow where there is a common thread connecting inputs, and builds towards a holistic vision of what leadership means within the participants' context.

05 Packing in too much content

It is natural to want to pack in as much content as you can to get value from your supplier. But beware: for development to be successful participants need the time to reflect, ask questions and share their thoughts on what they are learning. Time needs to be set aside for these activities, otherwise new insights will be lost and the development will not 'stick.'

07 One size fits all

In large organisations a centralised programme can help break down organisational silos and encourage development of new networks across geographies and functions. But as leadership is context specific, larger and more complex organisations may have more diverse and locally specific development needs – national culture will always trump organisational culture when it comes to leadership behaviours.



02 Failure to prepare

For executive development to have a positive impact it needs to land on fertile ground. This means connecting with and involving all those who will have a role to play in its success (not just its delivery). Line managers and other senior leaders within the participants' community can inadvertently undermine progress by not demonstrating or supporting changes that are advocated by the programme.

04 Forcing value through action learning

Action Learning that focuses on specific organisational challenges or opportunities can help facilitate learning transfer. But try to avoid relying upon the output of Action Learning to demonstrate the value of the development. Action Learning should first and foremost be an opportunity for the participants to learn in a safe environment, not an opportunity for them to take on extra responsibility to deliver under-resourced and under-funded projects.

06 Initiating change through development

If the aim of the development is to transform the culture or leadership practice, it is essential that the change process is supported by senior leaders and is already in progress before the development begins. Development activities can help build the skills and commitment of participants, but organisational change is complex and needs to be properly owned and managed by senior sponsors, not outsourced to learning and development.