

DevelopingLeaders

Big picture leadership, **fine-tuned** Quarterly

Innovation and the Learning Journey

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Secrets of Sustainable Leadership

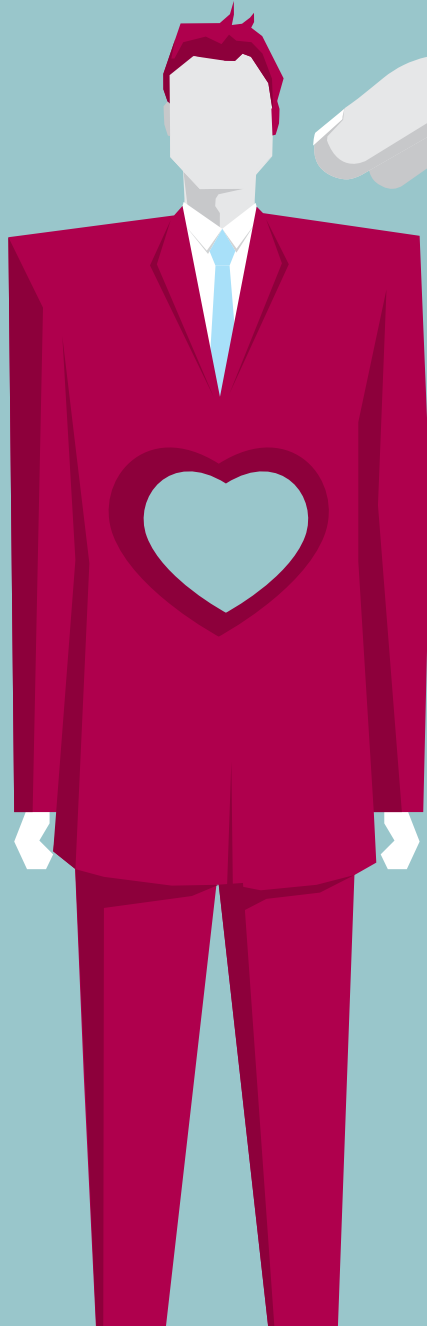
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NUS, Sandhurst, Schulich,
Vlerick and others**



Developing Leadership Outside the Comfort Zone

EMLYON Custom Program with Airbus Group

By Daniel Lentell

“**T**rain people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to.” On one hand, Richard Branson's much shared social media garnered a certain amount of derision from former employees at his airline. On the other, Sir Richard succinctly expressed the ideal of executive education in the aviation sector, one in which the individual is empowered to make best use of their training and experience.

Flying you and me, our good and chattels from A to B involves a mind boggling array of corporate processes, distinct yet interdependent. Organizations on such a scale rely on established systems and protocols, yet these are dependent on the professional capacity of executives both individually and collectively. That capacity must in turn be developed before it can be deployed. So how does a multinational aerospace and defence corporation go about maximising professional capacity and the human capital required to keep the group airborne?

Airbus Group, headquartered in Toulouse, France is made up of three business divisions: the commercial aircraft manufacturer Airbus Group (formerly EADS) generates around 70% of total revenue; Airbus Defence and Space, formed in January 2014, represents around 20% of group revenues; while Airbus Helicopters (formerly Eurocopter) accounts for around 10%. In total the group has approximately 140,000 employees worldwide.

This diversity of activity is matched by a diversity of people. There are more than 130 nationalities represented in the Group and the company is present in around 35 countries. Rather than attempting to impose a centralized homogeneity, Airbus Group's top flight of leaders seeks to embrace and support variation within the corporate mosaic.

“Airbus is built on cultural Diversity and as we move forward, it is about managing and harnessing the advantages this diversity can bring – not only culturally but diversity in all its forms – the open-mindedness to embrace other thoughts, opinions, cultures, points of view etc. and how to take this into consideration both in the workplace and in our product strategy ... One should never forget just how diverse people can be – if we put cultural norms together with this, we have a real melting pot – full of opportunities!”

Suzanne Lewis, Head of leadership Learning at Airbus Group

Supporting the Group's diversity of activities and people means supporting individuals' uptake of the diverse range of career opportunities on offer. Following a major restructuring in 2014, more than 10,000 people changed jobs from EADS to the newly created Airbus Group, crossing functional, geographical and divisional boundaries. Every person making such a change found themselves challenged to open up to new functions, teams and ways of working.



Serving Leaders Through:

Leadership courses & programmes:

- 865 sessions
- 9000 participants

Talent programmes:

- over 400 participants

Individual & team development:

- 700 team starters, boosters, accelerators
- 650 coaching sessions
- 1500 facilitated 360° feedback sessions

More than 63,000 equivalent days of learning delivered.

In May 2015, to aid this personal development in a global context, Airbus Group broke ground for the construction of the main campus for its new multi-site Leadership University located in Blagnac, Toulouse, France. There leaders from across the Group, from all functions and at all levels will have access to a broad portfolio of development programs, courses, conferences and events provided by the University in both physical and digital formats to enhance their leadership skills.

A good example from the portfolio of products and services offered by the University is the SWITCH program. SWITCH was designed for senior managers with three broad aims in mind:

1. Developing the competences that experienced leaders have already demonstrated.
2. Providing leaders with an opportunity to grow further in their current role.
3. Supporting leaders to broaden the skills required to take on new and more challenging management roles.



Action learning is central to EMLYON's whole philosophy of developing executives as it offers real-life experiences to help embed core concepts

The program was first conceived in 2012 in collaboration with EMLYON Business School. At that time Airbus Group was discussing with several leading management education providers the scope for a new executive education program, and EMLYON's suggestion and focus on action learning architecture struck a chord with the company .

Action learning is central to EMLYON's whole philosophy of developing executives as it offers real-life experiences to help embed core concepts, so giving participants actual practice at implementing the theory which they can then benefit from when they return to their own workplaces.

The EMLYON program design for SWITCH also involved peer-coaching and support from faculty tutors between the modules, to facilitate and contextualise the learning theory and experiences.

The trial program, which appeared a year later, was limited to the Airbus civil division. However the 2014 and 2015 annual cohorts were selected from across the Group from all Divisions and all countries. One of those selected was Pascal Jaillet, Light Helicopters Programme Manager at Airbus Helicopters.

Jaillet's career progression helps demonstrate what "high potential" means in a company of high achievers. After finishing his engineering studies, Jaillet started as a project manager on real-time software with a major company. Three years later he joined a startup, acting as both an engineer and as a commercial manager. Upon joining Airbus Helicopters, he initially started in the Design Office before evolving towards a technical-commercial role supporting international sales. From there he pursued a career in manufacturing, eventually managing a team of 50 people, before moving into Programme Management.

"I have been working in this function for 12 years now, on different helicopter models. In this role, I manage international offers and contracts for various customers, for a turnover that can reach hundreds of millions of euros. I lead and coordinate the company's internal functions to fulfil Airbus Helicopters' obligations towards external customers (sales and services)."

Pascal Jaillet, SWITCH participant

The 5 Modules of SWITCH

Module 1 - Program Launch

- To present the programme and launch the Switch journey
- To clarify expectations
- To organise Action Learning Project (ALP) teams and to launch the action learning
- To begin the peer coaching and support process
- To develop a sense of community

Module 2 - Business Agility; Vision, mission, strategy, risk and opportunities

- To better deal with paradoxes and complexity
 - To clarify vision, mission and strategy
 - To develop network
 - To work on risks and opportunities
 - To deal with conflict
 - To improve decision making
- Vision, mission, strategy, risk and opportunities

Module 3 - My Agility; My roots, my drive, my authenticity

- To understand personal roots, drive, and authenticity
- To better deal with emotions
- To stimulate humility and simplicity
- To stimulate curiosity
- To better manage energy
- To improve flexibility and balance

Module 4 - Agility with People; Our team, our network, our influence

- To develop well-being, empathy and connection,
- To deal with empowerment
- To clarify rules, roles and responsibilities
- To improve observation skills
- To increase influence
- To unlock team potential Our team, our network, our influence

Module 5 - Programme closure

- To review the journey
- To learn best practices by sharing experiences
- Understanding narratives as a tool for inspiring leadership
- To rehearse a last time
- To assess personal improvement
- To establish a way forward
- To network Programme closure

SWITCH is premised on the notion that, "There can be no learning without action and no action without learning", an ethos that is embedded in the EMLYON approach. The program, lasting ten months, makes use of learning events organised with external academic organizations and other business firms. It invites participants to get out of their comfort zone and test themselves with new concepts and new experiences. The different modules cover the following topics:

1. The senior manager responsibilities and impact on the organization.
2. Leading across the entire organization.
3. Leading one's continuous growth and development in challenging roles.

"We want to ensure that leaders are prepared to pioneer the group through transformation and the different cycles of our industry. They need to be able to lead their teams in a VUCA (volatile/uncertain/complex/ambiguous) world, where things are not always certain and where things change rapidly."

Suzanne Lewis, Head of leadership Learning at Airbus Group

Action Learning is a core element of all five modules of SWITCH. This means engaging with participants outside their comfort zone, working in situations and environments remote from their day-to-day experience. Having been "thrown in at the deep end" participants will be able to implement what they have learnt and more confident to suggest and apply creative solutions to everyday problems.



When Andy Hayward – a key architect and manager of SWITCH from within Airbus Group – talks about stepping outside your comfort zone, he is not kidding around. Exercises on flight simulators, practice with a rugby coach, a day with a musician, storyteller or horse whisperer may at first appear nothing more than an eccentric bucket list. In fact, each activity was carefully selected for the challenge it set and the personal qualities needed to meet that challenge.

For example, the horse whisperer who appears in Module 4, Agility with People, encourages participants to examine their own reliance on nebulous concepts such as job titles, rather than definite skills (both personal and professional). “You’re standing there in a corral,” reflects Hayward, “with no support, just yourself. It’s a true test of character.” Another exercise to separate the ox heads from the Alexanders is undertaken in Module 2, Business Agility, with record-breaking former English rugby union player (and former RAF pilot) Rory Underwood.

“When we worked with an international rugby player, we had to go on the field and play rugby! We had to play in teams, define and test our game strategies, work on the shortfalls and develop appropriate solutions all together as a rugby team! This was a very surprising way of learning for us all, but the outcomes were eventually very powerful and could easily be translated into business related situations.”

Pascal Jaillet, SWITCH participant

The Action Learning Projects provide the overriding narrative arc of SWITCH. These real-world impacting, mini-business projects, undertaken in groups of 4-5, were arranged with external organizations by EMLYON Business School. Ranked by the Financial Times as the 14th best business school in Europe, and by Le Figaro as the 3rd best in France, EMLYON's extensive list of eminent alumni are in a position to provide all manner of projects well beyond the day-to-day experience of SWITCH participants. The school is well versed in delivering these initiatives, all EMLYON EMBA's participate in these external ‘nomadic learning’ experiences

Participants are invited to get out of their comfort zone and test themselves with new concepts and new experiences



where participants experience work with another organization as part of their learning, and the school has run them successfully for other clients too. Bouygues, the French telecoms provider and client of the school, for instance has a program where participants join other tech businesses for short periods – however the Airbus program differed in that the external work had to be done in a sector unconnected with the participants normal work, so that they could broaden their workplace horizons and bring their skills and insights to new areas.

Partners could be of any size, working in any sector. The only requirement being that the activities of the partner organization should not interact with those of Airbus. The *raison d'être* of the Action Learning Projects is to get participants far enough from the orbit of Airbus to allow them to go boldly where they may never have been before.

Magali Roy is the Business Development Manager at La Dépêche du Midi, the French-language regional daily newspaper, which has a daily print and digital readership of c.655,000 across several south-western départements. For Roy the business case for the paper's involvement with SWITCH was the prospect of outside eyes helping to identify a business strategy focused on innovation. In the hard-pressed newspaper sector this specifically meant creating value and encouraging income diversification.

The Dépêche du Midi Group also includes such titles as Le Petit Bleu, La Nouvelle République, and leading rugby title, Midi Olympique. Central to the drive towards diversification is an e-commerce investment program, “Bee Start Up”. Investments are made primarily by “Media for Equity”, meaning that the Group's titles provide a startup audience enabling entrepreneurs to reach consumers directly, in exchange for a minority stake in the capital of their company. It is a world away from memories of a smoke-filled newsroom in which all are deafened by the din of typewriters and the mutterings of jaded hacks. To complete her vision of the future Roy needed input and encouragement from a more innovative corporate culture.

The innovation of the SWITCH program is to marry theory and practice with an absolute commitment to push participants beyond their usual boundaries

Roy found the SWITCH participants to be “professional experts and experienced project managers. They were multicultural and with good listening skills. You felt that these people can transmit many skills.” Among the tools and skills transmitted from Airbus to La Dépêche du Midi via SWITCH was the use of the Business Model Canvas – the strategic management and entrepreneurial tool which enables users to describe, design, challenge, invent, and pivot their business model. Face-to-face meetings as well as phone conversations helped frame the project and content. The first deliverables are due in September.

For Christian Friedemann, a Professor at EMLYON and Academic Director for the SWITCH program, the hard benefit of the Action Learning Projects is that they increase the impact of theory-based learning. He is a realist when it comes to the on-going impact of executive education once participants are out of the seminar-room and back behind their desk.

“Whatever training program you do you’re (hopefully) going to be encouraged by the content. But then the return to work drags you back to reality. You struggle just to catch-up on the accumulated backlog of tasks, let alone implement anything you’ve learned. SWITCH effectively responds to that using action learning”

Christian Friedemann, Academic Director of the SWITCH program, EMLYON

The innovation of the SWITCH program is to marry theory and practice with an absolute commitment to push participants beyond their usual boundaries. Firstly participants are given insights through “extracurricular” experiences, guided by top quality experts. These are deeply personal moments which they are not likely to soon forget. Secondly, participants are exposed to life outside Airbus Group in places where their highly-valued specialist knowledge counts for less than their capacity to think, innovate and implement.

Does SWITCH pass the Sir Richard Branson test? Does the program make participants more confident about their role in (and future) within the Airbus Group?

“Definitively: yes. The training is performed in a way that it makes you feel more competent and capable of managing and creating business opportunities: a person who can be relied on... Since these training sessions, I feel that that I have improved my listening skills (which is very important in my daily job as a manager of various stakeholders). I also value even more the importance of modesty and respect at work as key factors of success in teams and business environment. The most important is that I have managed to learn in a very joyful and convivial environment!”

Pascal Jaillet, SWITCH participant

Despite much discussion about the need for leadership development in corporate and public organizations, and the considerable industry that surrounds it, this is the first authoritative periodical focused entirely on this area.

Developing Leaders looks at the critical confluence between the provision of executive education and the real everyday needs of organizations to strengthen their management teams, their corporate performance, and their leadership.

The publication presents the latest thinking and most recent developments in both academic and commercial executive education provision worldwide, what it is achieving and which are the best models for success, sharing the experience and expertise of top leaders and world class educators.

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