The Business School
In the last 50 years, Ashridge has helped many organisations and individuals address numerous management development and organisation development challenges. We understand that every client is different and that there is never one solution that fits all. We therefore design and deliver learning specifically for you to deliver value to your organisation and make a tangible difference.

We do this through a range of activities and different areas of expertise. We are world-renowned as a leading provider of executive education programmes for both organisations and individuals. Ashridge is one of the few business schools in the world to have its own organisation development consulting practice and leads the way in virtual learning. We are also truly international, with over 90 faculty members representing 20 nationalities, and clients in over 50 countries.

The majority of Ashridge’s work is with organisations (both public and private). This accounts for 55-60 per cent of our activity – unusual in the younger, student-heavy world of business schools. Our practical approach makes us an ideal choice for many clients as we provide the rigour of an academic institution, but have a deep understanding of the issues facing business today generated through our work with business leaders throughout the world. Add to this our expertise in designing programmes that really make a difference and our consultancy edge, we can offer something that is truly different. We look forward to discussing how we could work with you.

Kai Peters,
Chief Executive, Ashridge

“No-one matches our combination of client numbers, faculty, revenues and level of experience in the corporate field. Over 700 corporate clients a year use the services of Ashridge to make their organisations and people more effective.”
Virtual learning
Supporting our approach to learning is the Virtual Learning Resource Centre (VLRC) which offers online insights and resources that can be tailored to the individual or organisation. Working closely with clients and their competency frameworks, we design organisation specific versions of the VLRC to support executive education or consultancy activities.

Tailored executive education
Ashridge tailored programmes combine the development of individual competencies and organisation capability. We are specialists in the pragmatic application of the latest academic thinking to particular organisation challenges. We design and deliver for clients worldwide, using an approach that can include a mix of classroom sessions, facilitated workshops, work-based projects, coaching and virtual learning.

Organisation consulting
The philosophy of Ashridge Consulting is that organisations are not ‘things’ or machines that can simply be fixed, but social processes in which everyone, including consultants, are participants. Our participative approach helps mobilise an organisation’s collective potential to bring about strategic change.

Research
Our research is driven by the needs of organisations and business. It supports all areas of our client work and helps us to deliver programmes and consulting that make a tangible impact and have lasting value.
Using a combination of our areas of expertise, we excel at designing programmes and offering consultancy support that meet the specific issues and needs of each client, making a tangible difference and impact.

We offer a unique pathway for programme participants to gain a management qualification. Time spent on programmes counts towards the MSc in Management via a Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma. The qualification is built around a series of assignments, based on work issues, delivering tangible outputs to the organisation and learning for the individual manager.

Open executive education
Ashridge has a wide range of open programmes, each designed to develop effective managers through a deepening of knowledge, skills and confidence. Programmes are attended by a diverse range of individuals and are used by organisations as an important part of their management development activities.

Qualification programmes
Our qualifications portfolio consists of full and part-time MBAs and specialist Masters programmes in Management, Sustainability and Responsibility, Organisation Consulting and Executive Coaching. All are designed for experienced managers and have a practical focus to deliver value both to the individual and the sponsoring organisation.
We are one of the few business schools in the world to be triple accredited by the main executive education bodies: AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business); EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System) and AMBA (Association of MBAs).

“Our participants value the expertise, direct managerial experience and pragmatic approach of our faculty. We are driven by a desire to equip you with the ideas, tools, confidence and self-belief to make a real difference in your organisation.”

Barbara Banda, Programme Director
Barbara’s work covers strategic marketing, business strategy, and the transfer of learning back into the workplace. She has many years’ experience in international marketing and business development.

“If you can’t apply what you learn, then the lessons from a business school programme float away. Ashridge is very strong in practical application – not all business schools are.”

Tim Calow, Head of Learning and Development, Skanska

“Ashridge faculty have always put clients and participants at the heart of what they do. Today, more than ever, international organisations need a business school that is 100% focused on their complex global needs – leading edge thinking delivered in a learning process that develops their people and their organisation.”

Dr Mark Pegg, Director of Tailored Education
Mark specialises in leadership and coaching for clients in the public and voluntary sectors in the UK and internationally, particularly the Middle East. He builds on many years’ experience advising senior government officials and the leaders of blue-chip organisations.
what makes Ashridge different

Making an impact
Strategic change is one of the most difficult challenges facing any organisation. At Ashridge we understand this and work closely with clients to ensure that they derive maximum value from their learning and development investments. Through our specialist Centre for Research in Executive Development, we provide a deep understanding of the assessment and measurement of learning outcomes. Our work in this area adds to our ability to design and deliver solutions that consistently achieve the highest levels of quality and impact.

A genuine balance between academic theory and practical application
You would not want to be treated by a surgeon who had never been in an operating theatre, or represented by a lawyer who had never stood up in court. The same should be true of working with business and management issues. Our philosophy is that to work effectively with clients, faculty and consultants need to have worked in business and grappled with similar issues. Ashridge faculty are not traditional academics, but have extensive international business experience alongside significant academic credentials.

True tailoring and flexibility
We start work with every client in the same way – by listening. We strongly believe that each organisation and its people are different and that a standard solution is rarely the best way to meet specific requirements. We do not begin with pre-determined ideas, but work in partnership with each client to fully understand the issues and only then design a series of activities tailored to their needs.

Focus on learning not teaching
The people who best understand an organisation are its employees, not external consultants or business schools. Ashridge’s expertise lies not in standing on high and delivering the five steps to your perfect strategic or marketing plan, but in working with you to design learning that builds on the knowledge already present in your organisation, adding new and challenging ideas. Encouraging participants to view opportunities from many perspectives helps to develop robust and sustainable change within your organisation.

Worldwide recognition
The diversity and impact of our work is praised through our customer experiences but also through acknowledgement in global rankings and by industry bodies. Ashridge is consistently highly placed in major business school rankings including Business Week, Financial Times and The Economist.

over 60% of our clients are headquartered outside the UK

over 60% of our clients are headquartered outside the UK
“We believe that sustainable change can only be achieved through a genuine understanding of the real issues facing organisations. We consult by working collaboratively with our clients, involving them in creating and developing a participative process to bring about real change.”

Ina Smith, Managing Director, Ashridge Consulting

Ina has a broad experience in consulting on large scale organisational change and transition projects. She has worked internationally within the telecommunications, financial services, pharmaceuticals and manufacturing industries.
Throughout all of our work, it is very important that we develop genuine partnerships with clients where both parties are fully involved in the process of achieving practical and sustainable learning and development, that makes a tangible impact to the organisation.

We start by investing time in fully understanding your situation, challenges, objectives and your desired learning or organisational outcomes. It is important that there are clear mutual expectations, a commitment to feedback and flexibility on both sides to address changing needs and priorities. Only once we have an in-depth understanding will we start on the detailed design phase of any work. This is done in partnership with you – working closely with key stakeholders, the thinking and ideas are tested thoroughly prior to implementation.

This is a crucial aspect to ensure that any work delivers what was agreed, makes an impact and most importantly, brings value to your organisation and to the individuals within it. Relationships are important to us, and from design through to delivery and then evaluation, you will be working with a core team.

“We have worked closely with Ashridge for many years and it has always been very adaptable. As our needs have evolved, the different areas of Ashridge expertise have been used to design programmes that help us to address the latest issues and challenges.”

Peter Weidig, Managing Director, Haniel Academy

“Ashridge works in partnership with us to design learning and development that is relevant and makes a tangible impact on the organisation.”

Katarina Morger Wargsjo, Programme Director, Tetra Pak
“Ashridge offers practical sessions facilitated by tutors with broad experience. I feel fulfilled with the blend of hard and soft skills I have taken away from the programme.”

Lekan Asuni, General Manager, Anglophone West Africa, GlaxoSmithKline

“Ashridge provides managers with a highly practical and innovative learning environment. It offers the additional benefit of fully connecting their personal leadership learning to their specific working environment – enabling them to make an immediate business impact.”

Dr Laurence Williams, Programme Director
Laurence has worked extensively in international sales and marketing. He consults with clients in the private and public sectors in developing business, marketing and commercial strategies.
Our approach is to support and facilitate the development of new skills and build self awareness, to introduce different thinking, to challenge current ways of working and to create situations where colleagues can work together to make a real difference to their organisation. With Ashridge there is no passive learning and development. People learn and develop most effectively when they are in situations that are absolutely authentic and reflect their own reality and organisation context, so all development from us is delivered and tailored exactly to the culture and needs of the client. Dependent on specific requirements and the outcomes upon which we focus, we use a diverse range of activities and different approaches to deliver learning.

This ranges from large group interventions to one-to-one executive coaching; from traditional tutor-led input sessions to facilitation using our consultancy expertise; and from business-specific ‘live’ projects to business simulations. Programme or consultancy projects will often combine sessions here at Ashridge and virtually – using the latest technology and understanding of the dynamics of online working – and with time at client sites around the world.

“Ashridge offered me a unique experience – challenging, refreshing and inspiring. These are difficult times for us all in senior leadership roles and I believe that Ashridge is exactly the right place to spend some time preparing for the realities of the new era.”

Graham Turner, Chief Executive, North Somerset Council
The time I have spent at Ashridge has had a clear impact on my career. It is a learning environment that is geared towards applying new thinking and skills back in the workplace.

Britta Bomhard, General Manager Spain and Portugal, Energizer

“The three weeks I spent at Ashridge were a pivotal moment in my professional life. My 30 year career with my highly creative business partner would never have happened if I hadn’t walked into Ashridge in 1971. What I learnt has stayed with me ever since.”

Bob Swandells, Ashridge participant from 1971
It is of paramount importance to us that every client derives maximum value and sustainable long-term benefit from their learning and development investments. Through our specialist Centre for Research in Executive Development, Ashridge is leading the way in looking at the impact of learning and development and what measures are most useful for organisations and individuals.

Our return on investment research has identified two major trends. Fundamentally, clients want to be assured that as a result of any programme, they now have people who are better equipped to lead in their organisation. Second, clients want a clear understanding of the factors inside their own organisation that influence how well employees transfer learning back to the workplace.

With every client, evaluation and measurement is considered at the very start of the development process. Relevant methodologies and approaches are adopted which are most useful to the organisation in question. Throughout the course of any work, continuous evaluation takes place to allow for the refinement of both content and style.

“In all of our evaluation work, we aim to identify those critical factors that help participants to apply learning back in the workplace and that produce significant organisational impact.”

Dr Ellen Pruyne, Learning Consultant

Ellen’s strengths lie in designing, assessing and evaluating effective learning experiences. She has consulted to a number of UK and US organisations on leadership development and strategy.
“The Ashridge Virtual Learning Resource Centre helps drive the success of Kellogg’s by being aligned to our business goals and competencies.”

Andy Constable, European Organisation Effectiveness Trainer, Kellogg UK

“It is a pleasant feeling when things surpass your expectations, especially when you always demand the best.”

Ibrahim Zeinelabdin, Brand Manager Gulf Countries, Pepsi Cola International

“At Ashridge you discover that knowledge is less about books and more about people, places and perspectives. Ashridge is about learning to apply knowledge.”

Killian O’Flynn, Senior Manager, Allied Irish Bank

Organisations shown here represent a small selection of our client base.
Over 6,000 people come through Ashridge’s doors each year, with over 200,000 more connected through our virtual space. Whether you are the CEO of a multinational corporation or an individual looking to fulfil a specific development need, our personal and flexible approach remains the same. This, together with our focus on delivering tangible results, is why Ashridge maintains its position as a world-class business school and why our clients return to us year after year.

We have a diverse portfolio of clients spanning every continent, and a breadth of expertise and experience working with large global organisations, SMEs, central and local government and the voluntary sector.

Public sector expertise
Ashridge has unique experience working with the UK and international public sector. We are currently working with 11 out of 24 UK Ministerial departments, the City of London, the Bank of England, the NHS, and a number of public bodies in the Middle East. In 2006, we launched the Ashridge Public Leadership Centre to reflect our growing presence in the public sector.

Helping create sustainable value
In today’s global community, collaboration and unity are key to ensuring that business is sustainable and for the common good. We are proud to work in partnership with influential and pioneering organisations including the United Nations, InterfaceFLOR and the World Wildlife Fund on a variety of research, consultancy and learning projects around sustainable leadership and business practice.
Global marketing with Bayer CropScience

With annual sales of €6.5 billion, Bayer CropScience is one of the world’s leading cropscience companies in the area of crop protection, seed treatment, plant biotechnology and non-agricultural pest-control. Headquartered in Monheim, Germany, the organisation has 18,300 employees and is represented in more than 120 countries.

**the challenge**

As an organisation with a strong science base, Bayer CropScience had a tradition of being very focused on both products and technology, with its employees having very strong technical backgrounds. While this was a clear strength, it was recognised by senior management that to flourish in an increasingly competitive marketplace, there needed to be greater emphasis put on the customer through both sales and research and development. The mindset, approach and value proposition of the organisation needed to evolve, putting marketing at the heart of the business. To do this, Bayer wanted to work with an international business school that could help to develop its global community of more than 1,000 marketing personnel from over 40 countries, within a two to three year timescale.

**the design**

In June 2007, we began working with Bayer CropScience to design a programme that would reach out to its dispersed marketing community. The first step was to truly understand the unique characteristics of the organisation, its culture and how its international business operated. This was done through a series of intensive briefings with Friedrich Gruber and his team from Marketing and Business Excellence, who shared documents, case histories and internal reports with the Ashridge team. A seven-person international steering group, which met regularly, comprising members from Bayer CropScience and Ashridge, was established to oversee the diagnostic steps and design of the programme. The diagnostic process involved a team of four Ashridge tutors who interviewed more than 40 Bayer CropScience managers. Face to face interviews took place at the Bayer CropScience head office in Germany and telephone interviews were carried out with executives from North America, South America and Asia. The pilot took place in December 2007 to test the teaching material and methodologies. The pilot participants were selected under two criteria. Half were senior executives, including Rüdiger Scheitza, Head of Portfolio Development and a Board Member. It was essential that senior executives were aware of the detail of the experience that their teams would undergo – their role was also to advise and help us to focus on business priorities. The remainder were marketing and sales managers from Argentina, Canada, India, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, UK and USA. Their responses to the sessions, exercises, discussion themes and action planning guided us in refining the first Global Marketing Academy (GMA) which took place in January 2008.

**the delivery**

The GMA is an interactive experience taking around 30 participants through the development of marketing strategy. Participants review their business context,
“Ashridge’s understanding of our business and industry has made the GMA truly outstanding. The impact is far reaching – changing internal perceptions of marketing, increasing our commercial effectiveness and skills in capturing value, and supporting the evolution of a common marketing culture in Bayer CropScience.”

Friedrich Gruber
Global Head of Marketing and Business Excellence

The programme has been highly effective in translating marketing best practice and applying it specifically to the issues and challenges facing Bayer CropScience. It has enabled big groups to learn and develop the organisation’s marketing leadership, with 450 personnel having gone through the programme since 2007. From the outset, all participants have completed a feedback form for each session of every programme, ensuring the learning is always up to date and relevant to the participants and delivers maximum value to the organisation.

participants say…

“The GMA really was a very good training opportunity to improve and build on current marketing knowhow, but its real value can only be realised once it is applied in the workplace. A great experience.”

“I am very happy to have participated in this training - and to work in a company that invests in it.”

“The GMA is an excellent training course to update knowledge on various aspects of marketing. It is a very valuable programme to revise certain marketing activities.”

the difference

2010 marks the third year of the partnership. The GMA uses a blend of learning approaches including marketing syllabus input, external business examples, company case histories, best practice sharing and interactive exercises. Action planning is a key component of the programme and relationships are established with the line managers of all participants to ensure effective follow up.

There are typically 8-10 nationalities on each programme, which has been delivered at locations around the world including Ashridge, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Singapore and Tokyo. Each programme is tailored to take account of the diverse global needs of the organisation through regional case studies and examples, multi-language exercises and simultaneous translation where necessary. The programme has been delivered in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese.

One of the aims of the GMA is to spread the use of marketing best practice. To encourage participants to find and apply this after the programme, Bayer CropScience has an online database of best practice. We have worked closely with them to provide additional online content, with the case studies from other industries being researched by the Ashridge Library. The cases and other resources help to reinforce the learning and development of Bayer’s marketing professionals, prompting them to consider how they might apply the practices to their own business areas.
Helping to improve patient care with the NHS

The National Health Service (NHS) is one of the largest employers in the world with a workforce of around 1.3 million people. In addition to protecting the UK’s health and treating its ailments, it also undertakes ground-breaking research to ensure the advancement of medicine. The result? Its customer numbers exponentially increase, with ever higher expectations.

the challenge
There is a strong desire among the NHS workforce and Government to improve the quality of patient care, and a growing realisation that different communities have different needs. Consequently many initiatives are underway that are facilitating a shift from central control to delivery of services at a more local level. This has meant a shift away from a provider-led service to one that is user-led: where the voice of the people, at a local level, is heard and responded to.

Amidst change, complexity and uncertainty, many NHS Trusts and health care agencies draw on support and development from Ashridge. We have a track record of working to improve levels of care in many parts of the NHS, through development relating to individual skills, devising and helping to implement strategy, helping teams work better together internally. In collaboration with other agencies, we support and enable leaders to be the best they can be.

the process/design
Both Government and professionals in the NHS are keen to promote best practice and to learn as many lessons as they can from the private sector about how to lead, manage and deliver service. Recognising that organisations with a strong will to improve and change must have the right people, with the right skills, in place, the Department of Health commissioned Ashridge to explore how to identify, retain and develop top talent – in particular within the senior executive level. The key research findings, entitled Talent management – a strategic imperative, were published in 2007.

Development provided by Ashridge, whether for NHS leaders, managers, teams or individuals, focuses on the context: the specific issues, challenges and barriers to achieving change. In the context of the NHS, the objective is always the development of people and organisations to achieve real improvements in services for patients and all of our work is geared towards supporting this.

the delivery
There are many instances when individuals are perhaps preparing to move up to a new level of management, or switch from a functional role to a management role, in which individual development programmes are appropriate. Consequently, the NHS is the fifth biggest purchaser of Ashridge Open Programmes. NHS executives learn alongside participants from a range of private, public and not for profit organisations, on programmes such as Future Leaders Experience and Accelerating Management Effectiveness. Some programmes are tailored specifically for groups of participants from the NHS. For example, we now run four two-day programmes for the Central Strategy teams at the Department of Health, developing their ability to manage and implement strategy projects. All programmes are supported by Ashridge’s virtual learning resources, enabling development to continue outside the classroom.
“Learning continues way beyond the Ashridge programme – not least because of the excellent e-learning facilities that support Ashridge programmes which can be accessed 24/7 once participants are back at work.”

Vera Byfield, Head of Learning and Development Service, Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust

Another way that we support and develop leaders in the NHS is through executive coaching, either on an individual basis or as part of the design of more wide ranging development interventions. This can be an ideal route for busy senior managers who find it difficult to justify absence from work in order to attend executive development programmes.

In September 2008, we began work with the National Institute for Health Research, developing senior research leaders. This includes personal learning – Ashridge consultants shadow the professors and provide feedback, but the emphasis is on enabling them to lead their organisations in developing a new national system of research. Two cohorts, each of some 40 participants, will benefit from the programme each year for the next three years.

Developing internal capability to manage change is an important feature of our work with many clients, not least the NHS. Many change agents or internal consultants within the NHS have benefited from our consulting programmes – most notably the Ashridge Masters in Organisation Consulting.

Ashridge Consulting, with its track record and expertise in the transfer of strategy into action, was approached by Sheffield Teaching Hospitals (STH) to review their strategy for leadership and organisation development; to move from ‘good to great’, in order to improve patient care and safety. The initiative included inquiry meetings (one-on-one and focus groups) with STH leaders at all levels, patients and/or their representatives, key stakeholders and a cross section of staff. Through these meetings, we discovered stories of excellent patient care, what it meant to staff and what it would take to lead and nurture a leadership culture of excellence so that ‘great’ was everywhere.

Employee engagement was the most significant outcome of the work. Staff at all levels, including senior leaders, felt listened to and able to contribute. The work produced a shared and written strategy for leadership and organisation development that has the understanding of the Board and represents a commitment to sustained action over the long-term.

Action Learning, where participants discuss issues with peers, facilitated by a consultant – a method of which Ashridge is a pioneer – is proving ideal for individual and group development for the NHS. Since 2006, we have been providing an action learning network for senior NHS leaders and healthcare providers. This initiative is in partnership with the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement.

An evaluation of the initiative by Manchester Business School reported that the programme had enabled participants to reflect upon their current behaviour and assumptions, allowing them to recognise barriers to change and action to overcome these barriers. The evaluation states that it was “a transformational programme which appears to have fulfilled its goals of challenging and supporting participants to facilitate improvement.”

It is the positive impact on levels of care, as a result of those improvements, that delivers real benefit to patients and motivates us to continue to make a difference in the healthcare sector.

Next Generation Directors Programme

In partnership with the Unipart Group and Manchester Business School we have secured a contract with NHS London to deliver a unique leadership programme for top talent across London which includes both clinicians and managers. The focus is on recognising and giving voice to the complexity and challenges in the NHS and helping individuals understand what leadership means in their immediate and wider organisational environment.

Selected from hospitals, trusts and health care services across NHS London, the participants will attend a series of residential modules with the aim of increasing understanding of NHS health policy/context and creating stronger connections across organisational boundaries. Central to the programme is peer learning, which means that participants are encouraged to take actions at the work place and share the learning with each other.
Sinopec, China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation, is one of the major petroleum companies in the world, and with annual revenues of around $207bn is China's top revenue-earning company. Its business spans oil and gas exploration and refinement, research and development of petrochemicals and the import/export of these products. In 2009, it was ranked 9th by Fortune Global 500, becoming the first Chinese corporation to make the top ten.

**Developing international leaders at Sinopec**

**the challenge**

Sinopec realised that under World Trade Organisation regulations, China had to open its markets, and so it has been expanding its international business, embarking on a globalisation strategy. Therefore it needed the culture and approach of the whole organisation, some 700,000 employees, to change radically.

Sinopec wanted to work with a development partner that could help it to develop its senior leadership to lead in a global environment by being skilled in and having an understanding of a wide range of business disciplines and international ways of working.

After visiting a number of business schools in Europe and North America, Sinopec recognised that our ability to customise programmes and our picturesque location were a combination that would create an unforgettable experience for the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of their strategic business units.

The challenge was how to make ‘Western’ business and management concepts understandable and approachable to executives who were deeply steeped in Chinese culture and politics – and the majority of whom did not speak any English. In addition, Sinopec is a state owned enterprise with its own particular perspective on world affairs and business enterprises, so presenting free market principles, as practised in Western countries, posed a number of issues.

**the design**

A special project team was put together to create a Western-style development programme in an environment that took into account Chinese culture and preferences. The eight-week programme focuses on the management principles of leading an international oil company, at the same time acquainting participants with systematic knowledge in disciplines such as strategy, human resources, finance, operations, business innovation and marketing.

How to influence the participants was a major design and delivery issue. In the Chinese educational system, the predominant method of learning is didactic – the polar opposite of the experiential approach embraced by us. A range of blended learning techniques were therefore incorporated into the programme to enhance the participants’ curiosity to learn and stimulate debate.

Special requirements were needed in the teaching rooms. Computers were equipped with Chinese characters and all teaching materials were translated into Chinese. Booths were installed and headsets provided to enable simultaneous translation of all the learning and development sessions. Anxious to provide the best possible blend of Western and Asian hospitality, we also despatched our Head Chef to Hong Kong to learn authentic Chinese cuisine, and Chinese satellite television was provided in the bedrooms.

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“Sinopec’s experience proves that there is more to learn than tools and techniques: with the right learning partner such as Ashridge, companies can develop a combination of local and Western knowledge and behaviours that will give them a unique competitive advantage in global markets.”

Barbara Wang, Ashridge’s representative in China

the delivery
To enhance their understanding of leadership and management concepts, great emphasis was placed on the use of psychometric instruments to stimulate the participants’ interest as well as to challenge their leadership styles and encourage thinking. The participants would have been most comfortable with a familiar ‘chalk and talk’ experience, such as many of them had experienced on MBA programmes already. They simply weren’t used to contributing openly during teaching sessions, in syndicates and in plenary sessions. However, we were able to help them learn to think and behave in new ways: not just here, but most importantly, back in the workplace. As well as customising Ashridge’s teaching materials to the oil and gas industry, with both a Chinese and international context, we used industry speakers with global and specialist knowledge. A live case study was organised over five days at the London headquarters of British Petroleum (BP). This enabled learning around current business issues and was combined with a session on the oil industry from experts at Goldman Sachs. Initially the idea of spending time at BP was met with some resistance, as working openly and sharing information with other organisations, especially with competitors, is not usual Chinese practice. However, later feedback showed that in terms of practical learning, this live case study was the highpoint of the programme for many. The continuous eight-week programme was something which had never been tried before at Ashridge and presented additional motivational challenges for Ashridge tutors and participants. In addition to novel learning experiences, participants who were accustomed to working a 14–16 hour day in the office were given the time to reflect while strolling through the Ashridge gardens or during their programme of cultural activities, which included sailing and visits to Edinburgh, Cambridge, Stonehenge and Stratford.

the difference
Since the first cohort in 2005, over 250 senior leaders from Sinopec have been through the programme. For the majority of participants, it was their first time using diagnostic tools in executive development and they found that the Ashridge approach enlightened their awareness of themselves as leaders. The programme improved the collective understanding of the many business and leadership problems of operating globally. As leaders in China, the Sinopec Presidents and Vice Presidents are rarely challenged, but we challenged them vigorously – not only did they find this stimulating but they learned a great deal about some of the ‘softer’ skills needed to become a great leader. The Ashridge programme is now perceived within Sinopec as a rite of passage for senior managers.
Culture change at the National Trust

The National Trust is a UK charity that maintains over 350 historic houses, gardens and ancient monuments in England and Wales. It has 3.6 million members and each year over 65 million people visit its properties. It is completely independent of government and relies for its income from membership fees, donations, legacies and revenue raised from its commercial operations.

Since 2007, Ashridge has worked with the National Trust on a number of activities. We have delivered a development programme for the organisation’s General Managers, have carried out consulting work with the organisation’s functional advisors, coaching with the National Trust Regional Directors and a number of managers have attended open programmes. Supporting all of this is an online learning portal, designed specifically for the organisation.

the challenge
Conservation is at the heart of the National Trust and informs all of the organisation’s activities and culture. At the same time, there is a recognition from senior management and trustees, many of whom are drawn from the business world, that the organisation needs to possess more business acumen and be far more commercially minded, with the various departments working effectively together. Consumers are ever more demanding and discerning and there are many competing pressures on their leisure time, so it was clear that a cultural change was needed to ensure that the organisation continued to be successful, attracting more members and customers.

the design
The National Trust’s Property Managers, who have overall responsibility for individual properties and contact with the general public, were identified as a key group who could play a major part in influencing organisational change. The top 40 properties were identified in the Trust, with the aim that managers of these properties were to move to the higher senior manager post of General Manager.

In keeping with the intentions of the National Trust’s senior team, we designed a participative, self guided process to encourage leaders to take personal responsibility for shaping their own learning and development. An important aim of the process was to help the development of individuals to the next level of General Manager – these are the managers responsible for the most complex properties or collections of properties in a locality.

Functional advisors such as personnel from Conservation, Marketing, Finance and HR play a crucial role in supporting Property and General Managers. Advisors needed to develop a consulting capability to better understand the clients’ requirements, and ensure that appropriate, relevant and timely advice was offered as well as building relationships that facilitated effective decision making.

To complement the processes with the Property Managers and functional advisors, we have also worked with nine Regional Directors – individuals who are responsible for large parts of the UK, such as Devon and Cornwall. Here an individual coaching approach was adopted to enable the specific challenges of each Director to be examined and addressed.

A fundamental element of our work with the National Trust has been the design and development of an online learning portal. Based on the organisation’s values and key competencies, the Virtual Learning Resource Centre (VLRC) hosts a range of relevant learning materials that can be accessed on
“Working with Ashridge has enabled the Trust to realise its ambition to shift the performance of its leaders in ways we’ve previously not achieved. In turn this has supported the delivery of the Trust’s strategy including performance against a range of measures, both financial and other.”

Paul Boniface, Director of People and Governance, National Trust

“The VLRC is a fantastic resource which I’m using both with my team and as an aid to my MBA studies.”

Iain Shaw, Head of Risk and Compliance, National Trust

“At the tender stage, Ashridge had the best approach of the providers we were talking to. Importantly, they asked lots of questions and went out of their way to properly understand our issues and challenges, in order to design development that was right for us.”

Shona Dagless, Training Programmes Manager, National Trust

“Working with Ashridge has enabled the Trust to realise its ambition to shift the performance of its leaders in ways we’ve previously not achieved. In turn this has supported the delivery of the Trust’s strategy including performance against a range of measures, both financial and other.”

Paul Boniface, Director of People and Governance, National Trust

The delivery
Prospective General Managers work in small groups of between nine to sixteen participants, for three days at a time. As part of this process, they complete two personality instruments – MBTI and Firo B together with the Ashridge Inventory of Management Skills (AIMS). AIMS is a database of managerial competences and behaviours developed by Ashridge into a 360° psychometric questionnaire which enables participants to identify their strengths and development needs. The questionnaire was developed using the National Trust competency framework and was therefore tailored to the learning needs of the organisation as well as the individual. Other development activities include sessions on team working, interpersonal relations and a day’s simulation in which critical management incidents are experienced and explored. Each participant has a coaching session before and after the development.

The internal consulting capability development process has to date involved over 120 functional advisors. They spend three days at Ashridge, where they use a mixture of relational consulting theory, consulting practice and action learning to explore ways of building better relationships and working across teams, departments and the whole organisation. A number of action learning groups are held over the subsequent nine months to further explore some of the issues and provide the necessary support and challenge to facilitate change. Evaluation is rigorous and has helped to refine the process and ensure it is relevant to the organisational context and informs the design of other activities.

Each Regional Director is assigned an Ashridge coach. An extensive 360° assessment of each individual is carried out. This then feeds into a development plan produced jointly by the Director and the coach.

Ongoing support – the VLRC is customised to support the key topics covered in the face to face learning and development. In particular, learning guides, which provide concise summaries of key subjects, and Management Pocketbooks, are used extensively. In addition, the VLRC allows managers to assess their strengths and areas for development and create a personalised learning plan, drawing on different resources to suit individual learning styles and time commitments.

The feedback to our work with the National Trust has been very positive and a number of beneficial impacts have been made, contributing to the change initiative within the organisation. The majority of the top 40 properties now have a General Manager in place. The evaluation carried out amongst the functional advisors has produced a number of success stories, with participants noting in particular how the process has helped foster more consultative relationships and ways of working across the organisation. Following on from the coaching with the Regional Directors, Ashridge is working on a similar process with the senior board of the National Trust.
Virtual strategy process at Alfa Laval

Alfa Laval products and solutions are used in areas of vital importance for humanity such as food and water supply, energy production and environmental protection. Established 125 years ago, the company now employs almost 12,000 people in 55 countries.

the challenge

Alfa Laval’s bi-annual Top Management Conference (TMC), for some 120 senior leaders, considers the future strategic direction of the company and focuses on the most pressing business initiatives. In 2009, the prevailing economic crisis was adding an unprecedented sense of urgency and importance to the organisation’s strategic drive for ‘Prime Performance’ – the focal business initiative for that year’s conference.

In preparation for the conference, we were asked, as a longstanding development partner, to design and deliver a programme to help find solutions to a number of critical Prime Performance issues, and their implementation. It also demanded efficiency in the use of senior leaders’ time and financial budget. In addition, the challenge for both Alfa Laval and Ashridge was that the programme needed to be completed in just four months from inception to completion. It was therefore agreed that a virtual approach made most sense.

the design

Based on extensive research, we have developed highly interactive and flexible learning approaches to working virtually. These enable people to not only work on the task at hand, but also to concentrate on the relationships at play, to be aware of emerging conflicts and to develop trust. All of this, which is proving to be different from existing virtual learning methods, enables teams to think strategically and learn together, through a sharper awareness of virtual team dynamics and a better understanding of the specific psychological aspects of virtual working.

Drawing on this approach and taking Alfa Laval’s specific factors into account, 30 managing directors and vice presidents and four executive board members were chosen to participate in the Ashridge-Alfa Laval Virtual Strategy Development Process between November 2008 and March 2009. The Prime Performance initiative was articulated around five key strategic themes. The participants were divided into five project teams – each assigned with one of the key themes to develop. Beginning with a two-day conference at Ashridge, the purpose of the work was discussed and we provided input from internal and external experts on aspects of the Prime Performance initiative. In the virtual team coaching sessions that followed, each project team, together with their Ashridge facilitator, ‘met’ via WebEx virtual meeting technology, five or six times during a four month period. They focused on developing business solutions that they would present at a Virtual Conference, before taking the solutions forward to the TMC in May 2009.
The programme has enabled strategy development and delivered tangible strategic outcomes for Alfa Laval. The virtual-working approach produced results and maximised the time of senior executives.”

Peter Bailliere, Vice President Human Resources, Alfa Laval

The virtual strategy process saved:
- 95 tonnes of CO₂ in terms of carbon footprint which were the result of at least 95 European and international return flights NOT being made.
- Direct costs between €60,000 – €65,000 in flight and accommodation costs.
- The time spent NOT travelling equates to more than 0.6 FTEs (full-time equivalent).

80% of the participants said they would choose to work on future projects using this form of virtual team working.

the delivery
The virtual sessions involved all of the participants working individually in front of a computer, each equipped with a headset. Even though there were only six individuals in the virtual teams, breakout rooms were also utilised within WebEx. This allows more focused work on specific aspects, generates a change in group dynamics, encourages a range of different activities and allows a change in pace (all key aspects for maximising the potential to retain information and encourage deeper learning). We felt it was imperative that each Alfa Laval project team understood that whilst the five issues being considered may have seemed disparate at first, they appreciated the connectivity between them. Therefore there were cross-project team workshops, during which each group was represented by an individual who was responsible for demonstrating how their own project team’s insights could be connected to other projects. The project sponsor and further senior key stakeholders also attended these workshops and potential overlaps and/or gaps in the work across the project teams were identified and explored in-depth.

The overall direction of the Prime Performance initiative as a whole was reviewed and re-assessed on a regular basis. This in turn ensured a deeper level of strategic thinking and learning in the virtual space. The virtual conference was attended by 45 people, which included all the project teams plus eight board members and Alfa Laval’s CEO. It comprised many of the elements of a traditional conference: opening address, a scheduled agenda with group presentations, breaks for coffee and interactive feedback processes. Less traditional was the fact that the conference was completely virtual and ran for four hours, using WebEx. The discipline required was exceptional – it demanded the highest level of focused concentration and structure, every minute of time was maximised and there needed to be a high level of clarity around each agenda item’s objectives and format.

the difference
As a result of the Virtual Strategy Development Process, the participants involved were in a position, after just four months’ focused work, to present their strategy implementation plans back to senior leaders at the TMC. A business-critical set of project implementation plans had been agreed, with the changes being championed by members of the senior team who had developed skills in key issues. In addition, all participants had developed expertise in working virtually, leading virtually, and delivering on business-critical projects via a virtual environment: skills that will stay rooted within Alfa Laval.
Practical and robust research is at the core of what we do and is driven primarily by organisational issues. It feeds into all our programmes and consultancy work to ensure that we are able to identify current and future business challenges to help organisations and individual managers anticipate and more effectively deal with them.

Research is carried out across Ashridge and within our various specialist centres, which look at the areas of executive development, strategic management, sustainability, coaching and leadership respectively.

Recent research reports have included a study on the impact of Generation Y and what it means for organisations; the annual Ashridge Management Index which looks at the opportunities and challenges for managers and leaders; and work carried out with the United Nations to examine the skills that managers will need to tackle difficult issues such as the shift to a low carbon economy.

Ashridge itself is a forum for thinking, bringing people and intellectual capital together to benefit both business and broader society. Our research is published in international business titles such as the Harvard Business Review and Financial Times and respected management journals including the Journal of Management Development.

We regularly organise conferences, one-day events, seminars and awards to give voice to thought leaders, highlight new thinking and raise awareness of the challenges ahead.

We also undertake specific research for organisations and individuals and are able to act in a consultancy capacity advising on the best research approach. The services offered vary from small scale questionnaires and focus groups to large global research projects.

“Through conducting highly relevant yet rigorous research, faculty are able to generate knowledge, insights and distinctive points of view which translate into delivery of a superior client experience.”

Dr Vicki Culpin, Research Director

Vicki works with clients from the private, public and cultural sectors on a variety of psychological topics. Her research interests include the link between memory, sleep and learning.
ASHRIDGE RESEARCH

RESEARCH FEEDS BACK INTO CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE, CONSULTING, PROGRAMME DESIGN, PUBLICATIONS, EVENTS AND LEARNING RESOURCES

OUR CLIENTS
Ashridge has a unique place in the management development market, combining a world leading business school with a consultancy, which together support management teams with the process of change and improvement.

Margaret de Latre, Director of Tailored Education
Margaret’s interest is in organisation culture, corporate branding and leadership behaviour. She has coached many organisations to implement significant changes to their operations, performance and culture.

“Our approach is all about learning for individuals and organisations who want to engage as equals, with an experience that responds flexibly to their needs and enables them to really stretch themselves in a supportive and challenging environment.”

Angela Whelan, Client and Programme Director
Angela designs and delivers interactive learning interventions that enable behaviour change, for an international client base. Her background is in the creative and cultural industries.

“A collaborative relationship with clients is fundamental to us, so we can work with them to jointly develop ways to address their specific issues and challenges.”

Billy Desmond, Organisation Development Consultant
Billy is passionate about developing robust interventions to unlock the potential of individuals and teams, to develop their capability to respond in times of complex change.
What is it that sets apart the experience that you enjoy with Ashridge?
Most clients respond that it is the faculty you meet and work with. Their experience and expertise is continuously refreshed by the insights they gain from their work around the globe with organisations and individuals from the private and public sectors.
With around one-third of faculty having origins outside the UK, they provide a global perspective of organisation trends and developments. They understand the challenges that you face and share the latest management thinking and learning processes in programmes and learning interventions that are tailored to your learning style and grounded in reality.
It is the combination of intellectual rigour and practical hands on experience that typifies Ashridge faculty. They help you to approach operational and strategic issues in a way that makes a real impact, enabling you to meet current challenges and develop your capacity for future sustainable improvement.

“Ashridge makes you stop and think – and that’s when our clients get the chance to look at their skills today, what they need to do differently in the future and how we can support them through this transition.”

Shadi Kelly, Consultant
Shadi is experienced in developing multi-cultural teams in a variety of industry sectors. She has worked in both SMEs and global organisations, including film production, pharmaceuticals and telecommunications.

Ashridge faculty regularly serve on the councils of international educational and advisory bodies, including GMAC, EFMD and AMBA. They also share their expertise as visiting professors at many international universities and business schools, such as the University of Cape Town and Mount Eliza, Melbourne.
They engage with the academic and management community through the publication of academic journal articles, research reports and conference presentations.
While we work with clients all over the world and virtually, many of our programmes and activities are run at Ashridge – a perfect environment for learning and innovation. Our site is a magnificent Grade 1 country house built in the early 1800s. Set in over 190 acres of parkland and historic gardens, it is secluded without being isolated – it is, after all, only 30 miles from London, close to air, rail and motorway connections. It imparts a tranquil atmosphere where participants can focus without distraction, with space to develop, be creative and reflect on their learning. In addition to our management and organisation development activities, Ashridge is a world class conference centre, used by many organisations for meetings, conferences and exhibitions.

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**Accommodation**

Since our inception as a business school in 1959, we have carried out sympathetic restoration and extensive modernisation, including the addition of 190 ensuite bedrooms and executive suites, furnished and equipped to high standards.

**Conference facilities**

Fifteen main meeting rooms are available, the largest with a capacity of up to 250, all readily configured to clients’ requirements. They are supported by 50 adjacent syndicate rooms, with easy access to coffee lounges and garden areas, ideal for breaks and continuing discussions.

**Surroundings**

The spacious grounds provide the ideal environment for extending inside learning to combine with outdoor team-building and experiential learning activities.

**Award-winning cuisine**

Ashridge’s bar and dining areas offer the perfect place to relax, network with other participants and meet with faculty. The quality of the food, catering for all dietary requirements, is matched by the friendly and efficient service.

**Leisure and relaxation**

Ashridge recognises the benefits of making time for leisure activities and relaxation. It has a fully-equipped Lifestyle Centre, with swimming pool, jacuzzi, steam room, exercise equipment and squash courts. Outdoor facilities include tennis courts, putting green and croquet lawn, football and cricket pitches, mountain bikes and a jogging trail.

**Information resources**

The Ashridge Library provides an extensive range of publications, technical journals, learning materials and databases to cater for all learning styles and to fulfil the information requirements of clients. It is staffed by a team who provide specialist knowledge and support.

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"The Ashridge surroundings are beautiful and inspiring – and conducive to the learning environment."

Gillian Caudwell,
Senior Partnership Development Manager,
Schering Plough
Ashridge was the first organisation in the UK to be accredited by Food for the Brain, the educational foundation that promotes awareness between diet and learning.