

Excellence in Practice 2018



Daimler and Wolff Olins

Leadership 2020 Live: A Massive, Open, Online Conversation for Daimler

Faced with unique and unprecedented challenges and opportunities redefining the boundaries of its industry, Daimler – the inventor of the automobile – embarked on a journey to lead the reinvention of mobility once more. Through a learning and development intervention that transcended barriers of hierarchy, continents, divisions and functions, Daimler entered a learning journey of cultural self-renewal.

Shaping change from a leading position

By 2016, the world of trendsetting technologies, outstanding products, and made-to-measure services was changing fast. This change, although brought on in large part by technological developments, went beyond the purely technical domain. Increasing connectivity, autonomous driving, shared ownership and electrification of propulsion systems were trends that required a re-conceptualisation of the industry.

In a market where both incumbents and disruptive entrants jostle to take a leading position in new technological paradigms, a strong market position was not sufficient to predict future success. Changing consumer behaviour and demand in combination with shifting industry dynamics called for an increase in speed and flexibility with which Daimler could introduce new products, services and business models. To shape this change from a leading position, Daimler embarked on a dual strategy of strengthening its core business and responding to disruptive changes in the industry. Such a transformation, it was clear to all, would require leadership of a different kind.

Ground-breaking, open, agile learning

It was clear that all these requirements would pose challenges to long-established, large organisations, particularly those that were not only capital intensive but also focused on scale, standardisation and maximum precision in a particular area, such as Daimler.

In response to this challenge, an invitation was sent to leaders at Daimler, to engage in a community of pioneers and innovators that would contribute to an open-ended process, unlock organisational potential and challenge dominant thinking. “Leadership 2020”, an open and agile process, began in early 2016 when a group of approximately 150 line managers from all levels, regions and divisions of the organisation started a journey to examine every aspect of the company to better equip Daimler to shape a future at least as successful as its history. Unusually experimental and open-ended for an engineering-driven company striving for perfection, this ground-up approach led to:

- Eight new “Leadership Principles” that would create a supportive corporate culture to keep Daimler ahead of the increasingly complex, changing environment
- Eight “Game Changers” that represented areas with significant potential impact across the organisation (including innovation, decision making, performance management, organisational agility, digitalisation, feedback culture, how positions are filled, and the role of leaders themselves and how they learn).





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However, instilling these in a large global organisation was a challenging task, in particular if a viral approach was preferred to a classic roll-out. What was needed was an approach to scale the conversation that would bring the essence of Leadership2020 into the organisation: an interactive and empowering experience that would not just evangelise, but would educate and engage.

In order to bring the project to life and devise a learning intervention that would ensure a common understanding of the purpose, nature and reach of Leadership 2020, Daimler Corporate Academy partnered with London-based brand consultancy Wolff Olins. This company brought 50 years' experience in helping major global businesses navigate complex transformations at pivotal moments – with a particular talent for keeping messages simple and to the point.

The learning experience that was created was a massive open online course (MOOC), tailored to Daimler's learning requirements emerging from the Leadership 2020 initiative.

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Creating a transformative experience for thousands of leaders

"Leadership2020 Live" was a bespoke, four-week social learning experience. A key guiding principle behind this initiative was the decision to make the course open to all Daimler leaders, irrespective of hierarchical position, and specifically including the *meister*/technical supervisors. As a result, in September 2017, the online learning platform Leadership 2020 Live was introduced to a group of 27,500 Daimler leaders worldwide.

Leadership 2020 Live was guided by four key design principles:

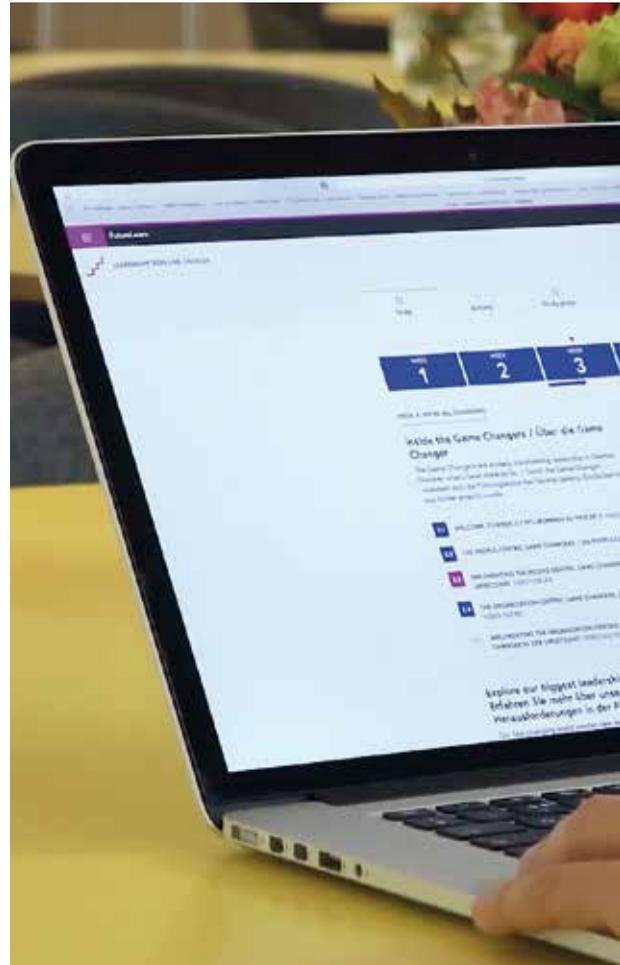
- **Be Social** by engaging leaders in an open conversation around leadership and by welcoming their personal perspectives and experiences. Participants were not told how to be better leaders, but instead learned from each other through sharing their stories. Each step of the course asked participants to submit their thoughts in response to a provocation, a challenge, or a reflection.
- **Be Useful** by supporting participants' daily work, not getting in the way. Each week was designed to span across all days of the week, requiring very limited time commitments. Across the four weeks participants were guided on a journey of progressively bigger missions that gave them easy-to-implement ideas that they could try within their teams. Leaders felt supported by knowing that their own managers would be doing the same.
- **Be Collaborative** through the platform FutureLearn's "peer review" function that captured leaders' individual leadership challenges and then connected them to a randomly assigned colleague for detailed feedback. Throughout the course, similar opportunities for collaboration between colleagues were designed.
- **Be Holistic** by designing a single shared journey that aimed to appeal to everyone rather than design pathways or "walled gardens" between different organisational levels.

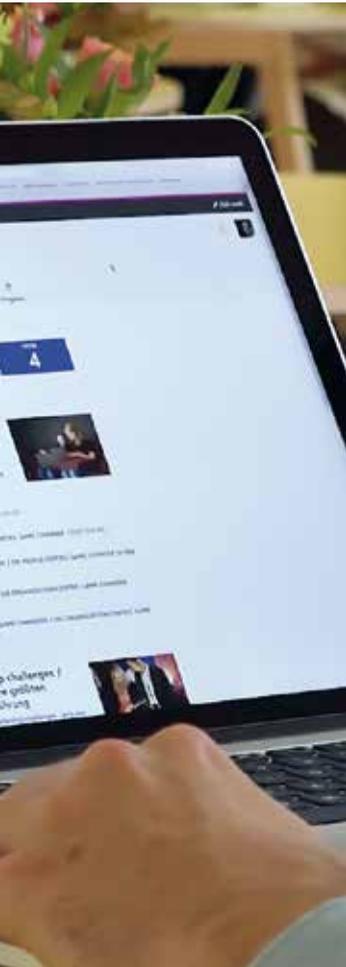
61.2%

Overall, participants were very positive about both their experience of the learning format and the impact it had on their work, with 61.2% stated it had a positive impact on their understanding of the leadership principles

70.3%

And additionally, 70.3% would recommend the experience to a colleague if it was repeated





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Leadership 2020 Live brought a culture changing initiative to all leaders at Daimler. Even more importantly, by inviting participants to make their contribution to a global community of learners, it established a new understanding of collaborative learning enabled by digital technology

Beyond just delivering content in a multi-modal and engaging way, the programme triggered a global conversation where participants from across the world and all levels and divisions shared their experiences, challenged their assumptions and put forward their suggestions to further develop leadership.

Following the principles of action learning, the leaders who participated also practised the new principles, gaining a hands-on understanding of the implications of what they had learned for their immediate working environment. The programme used a wide range of tools (including short videos, articles, discussion questions and peer review tasks) that allowed participants to share their experience concerning team dynamics, trust, empowerment and co-operation with the rest of the community.

Leading change through learning

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Despite the programme’s voluntary character, 13,143 leaders - more than half of all the company’s managers from all levels – registered for the programme; 63% of social connections spanned

leadership levels and 44.1% of participants actively engaged with the content creating collaborative practices of learning. This high level of participation exceeded all initial expectations as well as benchmarks from other corporate MOOCs.

Overall, participants were very positive about both their experience of the learning format and the impact it had on their work:

- 61.2% stated it had a positive impact on their understanding of the leadership principles
- 70.3% would recommend the experience to a colleague if it was repeated

Leadership 2020 Live introduced the MOOC concept to Daimler, adding momentum to the spread of new and digital modes of learning, and leading to further discussions of future learning opportunities that will equip Daimler for the challenges ahead.

By embedding the new principles to support a deep and sustainable mindset and behavioural change, Leadership 2020 Live created a learning experience that enabled all leaders to turn theory to action. Daimler was once again in position to lead change, through transformative and ground-breaking learning for all.

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