

Excellence in Practice 2019



ING Bank, London Business School
/ Core Leadership Institute

Accelerating leadership development at scale

It's a substantial undertaking to strengthen an entire global organisation's performance culture. ING, a Dutch multinational banking and financial services corporation, can attest to this.

In 2014, ING created its Think Forward Strategy under the leadership of CEO Ralph Hamers. The strategy communicates priorities to create a differentiated customer experience. Related to the strategy, ING established its "Orange Code", a set of company values and behaviours. Through this process, ING knew that its thousands of people across the world needed to lead and behave differently. ING's Global HR department used the McKinsey's Organisational Health Index (OHI), an indicator of sustained organisational performance, to articulate four important leadership behaviours:

1. Self-awareness and personal purpose so leaders can unleash their full potential.
2. Personal ownership that fosters a more caring and consultative style of leadership that gives employees autonomy to make decisions.
3. Collaboration so solutions come from unexpected sources.
4. Experimentation that encourages employees to take responsibility so they can continuously improve and contribute ideas.

A unique learning initiative

To address the four behaviours, the innovative Think Forward Leadership Experience (TFLE) was created. The initial faculty-led iteration was designed for the top 300 leaders in the company. In addition, a 16-week TFLE journey needed be rolled out to cohorts of 96 employees with the goal of impacting an astounding number of managers – 4,000 in total.

"We aimed to deliver a valuable experience at scale. Our goal was for ING leaders and managers to come out thinking and acting differently, producing real results. We needed this to happen extremely fast," said Hein Knaapen, ING's Chief HR Officer.

To deliver on TFLE's goals, ING sought partners that had academic rigour, top faculty and brand reputation. This is, in part, what led the ING team to select London Business School (LBS) as a learning partner. A faculty team of Costas Markides, Kathleen O'Connor and Andrew MacLennan was chosen to address the behaviours of personal ownership, collaboration and experimentation.

ING also partnered with the Core Leadership Institute (CLI), a global leadership development firm. CLI helps ING leaders and managers discover and define their individual deeper purpose, and then align it to the bank's organisational purpose.

It is not the norm for two learning partners to collaborate on such a programme. Mark Bleackley, LBS Programme Director, said: "From the outset, this was a true partnership in which both LBS and CLI wanted the best outcome for ING."

"We were deliberate in creating an integrated participant experience that would feel connected as opposed to two separate programmes," added Nick Craig, CLI President.

The initial faculty-led programme for the top 300 launched in 2016 and was very well received. CLI covered the first two days and focused on purpose, while LBS' content on personal ownership, collaboration and experimentation followed in the next two days.

"The faculty were in their element leading sessions in front of a full auditorium," said





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Bertrand Sereno, an L&D leader at ING. "I found they were solid and very effective in generating conversations and excitement."

The major challenge was replicating this faculty-led journey to 4,000 managers.

"It kept me up at night thinking about how to digitally replicate the excitement of a live session with faculty like Costas," admitted Rob Robertson, ING's Global Head of L&D.

To deliver a transformative experience at scale, the learning partners aligned on the design shown in Figure 1, and featured the elements shown in Figure 2.

"This is unlike anything we had ever done before," said Mieke Nan, ING's International Talent Programme Manager. "TFLE focuses on ING's behavioural experimentation. We wanted to exemplify this in the way we brought a completely new experience to managers."

Craig guides participants through the emotional journey of identifying and sharing their difficult life-challenging 'crucible stories'.

"Essentially, our most challenging experiences strip us down to the core of who we are. By identifying the pattern across several challenging experiences, we can uncover the purpose that is leading us," said Craig.

Highlighting one example, ING's Head of Strategy Marco Eijssacker detailed his life-altering crucible story. In 2000, Marco suffered a heart attack and doctors couldn't identify the underlying issues. Relying on his network, Marco learned he had an aneurysm close to his brain. It required an innovative surgery that had been unsuccessful to date. Marco was the eighth person to undergo the procedure and miraculously survived. The crucible story exercise helped him realise how his purpose is tied to staying positive, striving for clarity and bringing in the right talent, all attributes that helped him endure a life-altering medical scare.

Individual facilitation for thousands of managers was a challenge for a firm of CLI's size. To address this, a number of alumni from the faculty-led experience felt inspired to take on this facilitation



Figure 1: Learning Journey



Figure 2: Digital Learning



Figure 3: The ING Experimentation Loop



role. This has enhanced the experience for both the alumni and participants, according to Craig.

LBS Professor O'Connor helps participants gain insight into what collaboration means for ING by understanding the importance of building empathy.

Participants go through a number of activities to put personal ownership and collaboration into practice, guided by Markides. One example of this is an exercise in which participants present a story on how to gain a colleague's commitment for an assignment that needs to be delegated.

Key to effective collaboration is building psychological safety. The participants are presented with different ways to create a safe environment throughout the experience.

MacLennan introduces participants to the ING experimentation loop, shown in Figure 3. Participants put this and other new frameworks into practice by developing their own leadership experiments.

For TFLE, faculty needed to step outside their comfort zone by delivering their content via video and then handing over the experience

96

To date, 34 cohorts of 96 participants have gone through TFLE

4k

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to facilitators who are ultimately responsible for delivering, enhancing and embedding the learning. Bleackley led this team of facilitators and ensured they speak the same leadership language and can deliver on TFLE's objectives. This is a daunting challenge, especially when you consider that TFLE is provided in multiple languages.

Impact

To date, 34 cohorts of 96 participants have gone through TFLE. It runs every two weeks and is on pace to impact 4,000 managers.

Since the launch of the experience, ING has transitioned from the second to first quartile in the OHI from 2015 to 2017 across all four of the learning objective areas.

Based on OHI results, there was a six-percentage point increase in self-awareness and purpose.

"The transformation of the individual has in turn transformed the way we work," said Knaapen.

ING saw an eight-percentage point increase in personal ownership and experimentation.

"Before, personal ownership and experimentation were theoretical principles. Now, thanks in part to TFLE, these terms have become realistic in my daily life," said Claude Lambrechts, ING's Head of Client Services and Business Organisation in Luxembourg.

In terms of collaboration, ING experienced a 12-percentage point increase.

Summarising the overall impact, Knaapen concluded: "The impact generated and the speed at which TFLE has been delivered is substantial. Learning was ultimately driven by the participant; it was not imposed, but instead unleashed."