Excellence in Practice 2019

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SILVER Oracle, IESE Business School
/ University of Michigan, Ross School of Business

Improved customer focused agility to better navigate disruptive forces

"In a digital world, analog is more important than ever." This was the comment from an Oracle executive after participating in the company's first global, cross-function leadership development programme, Accelerate Executive Insight or AEI. As business catapults ahead with increased complexity, the opportunity to meet colleagues from around the world and build relationships to advance the business remains incredibly valuable. What makes AEI so unique is that Oracle designed the programme in partnership with two world-class business schools: IESE Business School and University of Michigan's Ross School of Business. There is no other programme like it. Here is the story:

The challenge

Oracle develops top-selling technological solutions that address complex business processes in a vast range of industries. The company reigns as industry leader in numerous sectors, including banking, education, finance, healthcare, manufacturing and retail.

In recent years, technological advances have dramatically altered how these sectors are defined and how companies compete and create value. Although the company had been operating within a vortex of change for decades, as a large, decentralized organization, it needed to respond to its customers' evolving needs with greater agility.

The company and its immense client base were faced with ongoing digital transformation that was disrupting industries worldwide. In this context, the challenge for Oracle was to ensure its leadership learned faster and better to navigate a world in constant flux.

Partnering with Two Top Business Schools

Oracle's Organization & Talent Development leadership team sought to foster a common vision and nomenclature among its top performers and provide a platform to enhance their leadership potential in benefit of themselves, their teams and the organization as a whole. In keeping with Oracle's holistic outlook, they envisioned an innovative learning solution that spanned the globe.

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The Accelerate Executive Insight (AEI), programme was launched in 2014. AEI, now in its 21st edition, is the outcome of this forward-thinking approach. Designed by Oracle, IESE Business School and University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, AEI gathers participants from diverse business lines, regions, functions and cultures to learn together across two global venues and a virtual learning platform.

As Jo Tilson, Global Head of Oracle's Top Talent Development Centre explains, "Developing a programme with two learning providers is uncommon, yet we at Oracle are big believers in the power of collaboration. We felt this team would work exceptionally well together and bring in unique perspectives to the benefit of our participants. In a sense, our AEI development team mirrored the type of collaborative energy we hoped to inspire through the programme."

On an organizational level, the learning solution aspired to stimulate networking, collaboration and knowledge flows and serve as a means to retain top talent and prepare them to lead Oracle into the future:

• To foster communication, collaboration and networking across functions, lines of business, geographies and cultures
• To create a common nomenclature and a unified vision with regard to strategic and technological change
• To facilitate knowledge flows between senior-level and top-level management
• To boost the leadership potential of directors and senior directors and to catalyze their career progression

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Overview of the Programme

The Top Talent Development Team decided the new offering should specifically target a strategic selection of top-performing directors and senior directors from a cross-section of lines of business and functions including sales, consulting, customer support product development, engineering, finance, marketing, communications, legal HR and accounting. Each edition gathers 40 to 45 top-talent directors and senior directors for a multifaceted learning experience to help them elevate their leadership competencies and inspire their teams to innovate and execute with greater speed and agility.

Given its strong emphasis on teamwork, the programme's success relies on a strategically selected cohort. The programme is an equal-opportunity initiative to benefit the top-performing male and female employees in Oracle's senior leadership pool.

The programme aims to trigger positive outcomes for both participants and the organization by serving as a catalyst for personal and professional growth. To this end, one of the programme's core components is the business initiatives (BIs) project. Defined by the cohort, BIs entail a team-based methodology that inspires participants to envision diverse corporate scenarios, articulate what could generate the highest benefit for Oracle and formulate strategies to make it happen.

In an immersive and Oracle-focused learning environment, the programme prepares participants for the future by teaching positive practices to hone their strategic mindset, as well as boosts their ability to lead and inspire their teams – especially critical in a context of uncertainty and flux.

The programme begins with a virtual introductory session, followed by a residential module run by IESE Business School at its global campus in Barcelona or in Hong Kong. Module I is then followed by virtual teamwork on the various business initiative projects. The second residential module takes place at the University of Michigan's

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Stephen M. Ross School of Business in Ann Arbor, MI.

The week-long Module I at IESE seeks to expand participants' strategic vision and customer-centric focus. It capitalizes on the school's expertise in strategic management and digital transformation by examining how companies compete in the face of digital disruption.

The BI projects challenge participants to apply the learning to relevant, meaningful Oracle priorities. Participants work in cross-geography, cross-functional teams to unlock meaningful value for the company.

Module II at the University of Michigan's Stephen M. Ross School of Business takes advantage of the school's pioneering work on positive leadership through in-depth examinations of participants' unique leadership styles. It also integrates Ross's trademark action-oriented learning to heighten their ability to inspire, engage and align their teams.

Special supplement | *Excellence in Practice 2019* | Oracle, IESE Business School / University of Michigan, Ross School of Business

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AEI outcomes include:
Organisational Benefits:
 • Elevated strategic insight through business initiatives project
 • Improved capacity to leverage knowledge flows to spur ongoing innovation and improvement

Team Benefits:
 • Accelerated development and higher retention among Oracle's top talent
 • Greater collaboration and networking across the organization to increase engagement

Individual Benefits:
 • Evolved mindset from transactional to strategic and skillset to lead change processes
 • Ability to lead with greater clarity and a renewed sense of purpose
 • Deeper awareness into one's own leadership style
 • Increased exposure to Oracle senior leadership

What has made this programme unique?
 • A dynamic blend of learning methodologies:
  - Action-based learning
  - Experiential learning
  - Case method
  - Interactive lectures
  - Oracle-specific team-based projects
 • Two schools working together in a unique and complementary partnership – modeling a successful collaboration as a lesson for Oracle participants
 • On-going faculty involvement and guidance for business initiatives
 • Oracle's senior leaders featured as speakers
 • Tours, sports activities and wellness boot camps
 • "Break the ice" networking activities
 • Blended format to optimize face-to-face modules
 • AEI alumni reunions to nurture connect

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