Building a customized learning & development program for companies

Training and transforming skills and behaviors within the organization

em
lyon
business
school

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Introduction

emlyon business school designs custom programs to support businesses in their needs for the adaptation and transformation of their organizations, for the rejuvenation of their managerial practices, and the adaptation of individuals and organizations to the emerging ruptures and models. Acting as real transformation accelerators, these programs draw on the innovative early makers pedagogy and on the expertise of the School's Faculty to guarantee a genuine and long-lasting impact.

With this handbook, **emlyon** business school provides advice and good practices to implement a custom program for your staff and explains the perks for your organization.

Custom programs at emlyon business school

- **6,900 participants** in executive education programs per year, including **4,500** in custom programs (campuses in France and abroad)

- Available in face-to-face courses on **3 campuses** (Ecully, Paris, and Shanghai) or directly in companies, **in blended learning or e-learning**.

Come and join the fun!

1 Why develop a custom program?

Reconnect staff members with transformation issues

Today's ruptures, be them geopolitical, technological, ecological sociological or economical, have an impact on the world's order. They generate in organizations, an increased complexity and make it necessary to accelerate decision making, and individual and collective transformations. Such ruptures also open new territories to explore and provide opportunities to create new sources of value.

In this race for transformation, the development of managers and directors, both individually and collectively, is the precondition for success. It all depends on them, to directly conduct the required mutations to wisely design and implement the answers addressing this fast succession of changes. Managers and directors are the ones who, when rising up and regularly remodeling their way of thinking, are preparing the breeding ground for fluid organizational transformations, a condition for future successful achievements.

Today, custom programs constitute an essential lever to address business transformation issues as they allow staff members to make the change process their own, and to become one of its efficient actors. Beyond the managerial skills they need to better apprehend mutations in their daily work and that of their staff, custom programs reinforce other core capacities for change management: their relational and political intelligence, their vision abilities, their capacity to continuously learn and unlearn in ambiguous and volatile environments. Custom programs thus serve as a steppingstone to turn companies into learning organizations.

The specifics of a custom program

IThere is now a wide range of standardized custom programs which meet many of the existing needs. However, in some cases, you may need more than off-the-shelf solutions. When choosing a custom program, you want to find both an individual and a collective impact, adjusted to the specific operational, strategic and identity context of your company. You want to go beyond acquiring knowledge and know-hows, usually well provided for in standardized programs. Opting for a custom program, it's making a statement: you are targeting the acquisition of new capacities of thinking and creating, more multidimensional, more systematic, more integrative, naturally leading actors towards laying more elaborate visions onto complex realities. Under such circumstances, opting for a custom program, it's giving your organization the chance to successfully manage the shift toward transformation.

As implied in their name, custom programs are tailor-made and designed to specifically fit a company. Your custom program will not be replicated as such for other companies and will need to be adapted for the most part, to tackle every need identified.

The track and pedagogical features of an off-the-shelf program are determined ahead based on a topic addressing market needs. In so doing, it targets a large audience looking to develop their competences on a specific topic regardless of the individual context.

For custom programs, we have an opposite logic, starting from the analysis of the company's statement of needs followed by the construction, step by step, of a dedicated pedagogical track, in close collaboration with the organization. In any case, custom programs are designed from contextualized and shared issues to achieve goals with a clearly defined impact, favoring the transformation of individuals and their organization.

Just like for any other training program, they can be considered for funding if eligible via the Personal Education Account (Compte Personnel de Formation - CPF). To do so, the pedagogical goals will need to be broken into acquisition goals of specific skills identifiable in an existing professional certification.

The PEA will then be initiated by the employee upon invitation from his/her company as part of his/her participation to a custom program. The PEA can thus potentially be the main or complementary means of funding.

A validation process of acquired experience would allow to positively recognize such competences acquired through experiential learning. The employee thus obtains partial or total certification of a title registered on the French RNCP registry.

Frédéric Dutertre / Head of Professional and Managerial Competence Development at CA IDF

"Lines are shifting and behaviors are changing. The custom program designed by **emlyon** business school drives participants to question and revamp their way of doing things. This human approach also answers a strong expectation new generation managers have in banking. emlyon business school was able to understand us and address our aspirations."

2 The project's stakeholders

When building a custom program, many stakeholders will need to be involved and committed within the company. The eventual success of a custom project and its actual impact directly depend on a tripartite commitment from the organization: the General Management, meaning the decision makers, the human resources and managerial development experts (Learning and Development), and ground managers.

The expressed need to build a custom program most generally stem from the HRD, the person in charge of training, talents or HR development. Increasingly aware that the success of transformation depends on the commitment of collaborators, general management is more often than not its sponsor. They even tend to become the driving force for the construction of the custom program project.

Other corporate key actors such as transformation or innovation directors, or support function directors who wish to address an issue in relation with their activities, can also be the ones to initiate a custom project.

As the project grows, other functions will start stepping into the game to provide their input: dedicated project managers, purchase directors, managers etc. Depending on the size of the company and the way it is organized.

Who should you ask and how?

Starting a custom program project requires a human force and financial investment from the company. It means that you need to find the right partner able to:

1. **Establish an in-depth diagnosis of the actual needs**, beyond the initial requirement assigned by the sponsors. In this respect, it is essential to distinguish the request expressed and the actual needs, which are often identified and explained jointly.

2. **Design a program offer truly adapted**, which will both build a collective learning project and involve the change and evolution approach. The pedagogy will thus be designed ad hoc, and will, in addition, take into account the request, the strategic elements and the organizational culture at stake. A custom program relies on context elements to cover the actual needs in terms of transformation.

3. **Assemble the appropriate pedagogical means and resources** to meet with the company's expectations. The choice of pedagogical support providers (guest speakers, coaches, experts, facilitators...) is decisive. Conducting a custom program requires multi-skilled people with: plural technical skills allowing to make the right diagnosis, relational and managerial competences, and political and cultural competences.

Olivier Leclerc / Head of
Intrapreneurship / Safran

"The reputation of **emlyon** business school as a
pioneering institution in intrapreneurship brought
legitimacy to our internal project. The way they
understand the economic issues of major groups,
associated with the new methods start-ups are
using, was a decisive asset for the success of the
program."

Today, business schools such as **emlyon** business school have the key competences and resources to build and
implement programs of skills' development for staff, entirely tailor-made from beginning to end, for and with the
company.

They actually have recognized international labels and rankings as evidence of the quality of the training programs
delivered (EQUIS, AMBA, AACSB, Financial Times rankings...).

When choosing a business school, you will want to go for its capacity to mix pragmatism and higher perspective
to deal with the root of the issue at stake, its academic excellence, its customer-oriented quality culture, its reco-
gnized accreditations promoting external funding, its capacity as a broad-based institution to tackle a wide range
of domains, subjects and situations, its independence of opinion with less profitability and volume pressure, and the
quality of its pedagogical resources.

There are several tracks you may take to start a collaboration with a business school: direct contact, calls for tender
or mission statements. In all cases, you should carefully draft your project ahead and prepare a mission statement as
clear as possible to start your approach efficiently with the chosen provider. When mission of statements remain too
vague or too ambitious, the provider will need to take the necessary precautions to properly identify, in agreement
with the customers, the actual needs and issues and the appropriate pedagogical solutions.

3 The construction phases of a custom program

A custom program cannot be designed without engaging a real approach of co-construction and proximity with the company ahead of the project. It is the guarantee for success required for an efficient designing and rolling out of the training program.

Certain phases remain indispensable to develop a program in line with the issues and expectations of the company.

Phase 1: Identify the actual needs

The first phase consists in establishing a diagnosis of the issue provided by the company. This phase leads up to the confirmation or the modification of the needs expressed in terms of impact goals for the company and change goals for the target audiences.

More often than not, you won't be able to see the forest for the trees: the needs expressed are symptomatic of a more global need at a systemic level. In other cases, the identified need may be out of step with the actual issues and the expected deliverable.

During this identification and validation process, a dialog needs to be instituted between the people in charge of sponsoring the training within the company, and the chosen training provider who shall establish such prior diagnosis of the actual needs.

Understanding the key issue

During this diagnosis phase, the elements of external context and those born from the strategy, the organization, and the culture of the company are integrated on a systemic level. In so doing, issues common to all shareholders and specific issues are identified (transformational from a General Management's point of view and of competence development from a participant's point of view).

Each of these issues will be used to set a framework and a perimeter for the custom program. This approach relies on the ability to journey from symptoms to the core issue.

Taking the constraints into account and providing the corresponding features

The perfect training solution does not exist! Companies have their own constraints and requirements which need to be integrated and must co-exist with a satisfying and inspiring promise of learning experience.

As soon as the designing of the program starts, the most adapted pedagogical features are provided to tackle the participants' schedules which are often intense and rarely compatible with real-time training programs, with seasonal events, recurring rituals, including budgetary rituals, which punctuate trimesters and semesters.

In this manner, the program will need to provide flexible features such as blended learning or virtual classes with the possibility to take different modules asynchronously. This strong trend started to evolve over the past few years, into a two-fold solution: one single program, with several features. The main issue of the program designer is therefore to guarantee the learning experience as best as possible regardless of the feature opted for.

Phase 2: Identify the tipping point

Most of the time, the first objective of a reflection phase is to distinguish the expressed needs from those identified post-diagnosis, and from the actual needs. For instance, minor issues do not need to be addressed at the same time as more major ones. That is why it is crucial that the different issues and problems to be addressed are categorized and ranked.
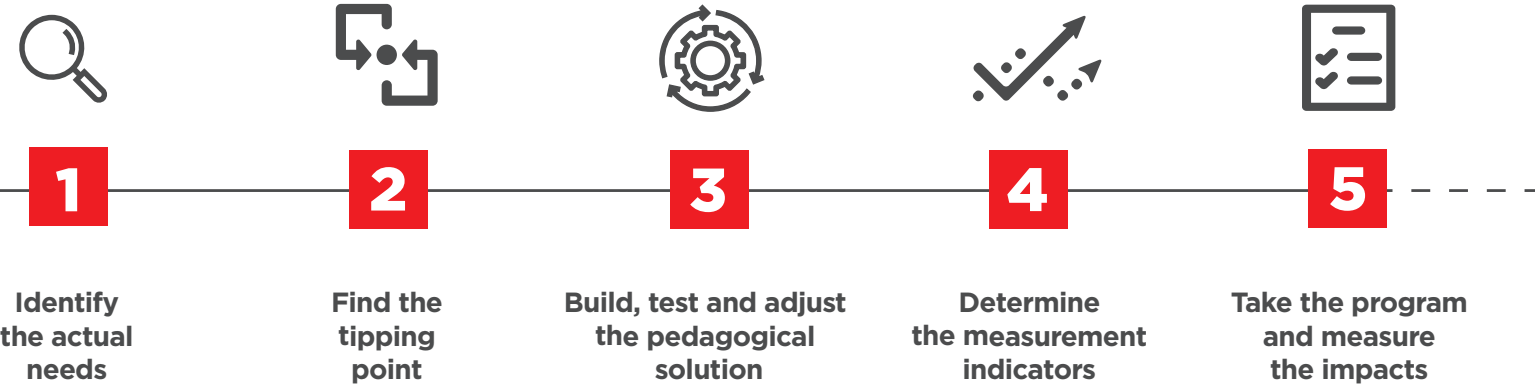
When dealing with change, the tipping point lies in finding where actions must be taken, so that staff and system start walking into the desired direction. It can be understanding the environment, the strategy or even the culture, but rarely just acquiring competences. It generally involves a change in behavior or practice to operate in the company on a collective level.

For instance, the tipping point may lie in being more digital, more agile, more collective, more community-driven, more visionary, more strategic, more efficient, more rapid, less operational, less individualist, more cooperative etc. The list of potential tipping points goes on.

Once the tipping point has been identified, the pedagogical objectives must be clearly established. At that stage, it is not unusual to see new needs or issues arise. If so, it is necessary to go back to the diagnosis phase.

The first and second phases of the construction of a custom program are an iterative approach. They also allow to introduce a contractual relation between the training sponsor within the company, and the training provider, for instance when it comes to allocating the responsibilities within the project. This phase also allows to build on the solid foundations of a trusting partnership. An estimation of the required work time and investments of stakeholders is then possible.

"Do we agree on the diagnosis, do we agree on the costs, does the pedagogy provided address the issues and tackle expectations", are some of the questions that must be answered positively at the end of these two phases.

1 Identify the actual needs

2 Find the tipping point

3 Build, test and adjust the pedagogical solution

4 Determine the measurement indicators

5 Take the program and measure the impacts

Phase 3: Build, test and adjust the pedagogical solution

This phase is dedicated to designing the final pedagogy, validating the required resources for the project in terms of guest speakers, pedagogical features and tools, additional e-learning contents, and learning digital platforms (LMS/LXP).

This phase needs to be built with multiple actors from the training organization (project managers, guest speakers, solution suppliers, coordination teams etc.) and with all the company's stakeholders. Choosing guest speakers is an essential brick to guarantee the quality of the program content and the reporting conditions for the participants' experience.

Building a custom program is a collaborative process, from the diagnosis to the implementation of the operating module. Carrying out a pilot phase allows to test the training program under real conditions, with participants, to check if contents are appropriate, if the program is feasible and its capacity to achieve the expected objectives. It also allows, if need be, to modify some of the design elements (features, content...). Reference is often made today to the "Proof of Concept", or PoC.

As for International organizations, they need to ensure that the program can be rolled out for the populations targeted by the training, on all of the company's locations. The custom program may be readjusted and adapted following the first feedbacks.

The organization of the logistic aspects by the training staff is crucial to give reality to what the contract promises (planning the sessions, booking adapted spaces, tool access, communicating practical information etc.). How carefully planned this part is, shall ensure that the target level of commitment from the Departments is achieved.

The training provider is also a stakeholder of the communication which needs to be forwarded ahead to participants. Often found to be insufficient by participants, decision makers and training providers need to improve information distribution and multiply communication channels and opportunities. For instance, the importance of a Kick-off (digital or not) launch: using emails to forward information materials (such as a learning handbook providing explanations about the program and its objectives). Effective communication helps increase participants' commitment level.

Phase 4: Establish the impact indicators & metrics

One thing that all decision makers in companies want to assess with a custom program, is to measure the impact of the project or its actions. The French law about training of September 06th 2018, has even reinforced expectations on how to measure competence acquisitions and impact of the training program on individuals. For quite some time now, the issues at stake and the investments involved in custom programs have compelled stakeholders, decision makers and training providers to ask how to measure the individual and collective impact.

We are collaboratively looking into implementing and having indicators on behavior changes and on the actual results of the program. This needs to be organized before the project is launched in order to know what we will be able to actually do in terms of collecting information.

Phase 5: take the program and measure the impacts

Once the program starts, most of the time after a dedicated kick-off, it is important to continue to follow the program as close as possible to make sure that the impact on participants is met. This follow up is commonly call steering and needs to be organized so that advancement, validation and adjustment reporting can be monitored in collaboration between the company and the training provider.

In this manner, we highly recommend implementing a mixed committee to follow and make decisions. Depending on how important the project is, this committee may need to meet several times a year. As custom projects cover strategic transformation issues, it is necessary, in a VUCA world, to take into consideration both the external and internal elements of the vision, the priorities and the choices the company has made.

Understandably, indicators measuring the impact as per decided during the designing of the pedagogical solution, need to be followed continuously. Individual satisfaction, collective and individual changes in terms of competence and behavior can be monitored via different formulas and tools (questionnaires of impact measurement, coaching, assessment...) to ensure that objectives are met. The potential long-term transformation of individuals can then operate on the company's ability to change.

Obviously, the subject of long-lasting and in-depth transformation do not arise from the custom program alone but also very much depends on the company's will to make a whole range of elements evolve: structural and organizational process, managerial culture, communication etc.

Chrys Argyris / business theorist

"Only organizations able to modify the values guiding their action plans can be qualified as learning organizations"

What's next?

A custom program, whose core issue is quite often to trigger behavior changes, directly influences the possibility to transform the company into a more learning organization durably.

According to Chris Argyris, business theorist, "*Only organizations able to modify the values guiding their action plans can be qualified as learning organizations*".

Following the custom program, the whole of participants forms a learning community inside the organization.

The company's interest is then to anticipate features which will prolong and boost the learning effects of the program: working in groups to solve problems, experimenting and creating learning opportunities, learning from others and other ways to learn, sharing visions and practices, challenging them and drawing conclusions, transferring knowledge etc.

4 8 focal points

1 - The will and capacity to build a real collaborative partnership

Between partners, that is between the customer and the provider, the relationship needs to be based on a co-responsibility rather than on just a customer-supplier relation. This co-responsibility needs to exist at all levels, not only for the successful achievements abut also for the failures. This relationship requires transparency, based on an open dialog. Co-construction and feedback are key elements for a productive relationship.

2 - Convergence of visions

Multiple vision levels need to converge: the vision on the diagnosis, the shared constrains, the impact, the collaboration and shared responsibility. This convergence of visions is fundamental to guarantee the success of the project.

3 - The commitment of the executive committee

The company's executive committee must be an active stakeholder right from the start. Its involvement in the program is essential to give it a real jump-start and assert its credibility internally.

4 - There is no magic wand!

The magic wand is the obvious dissonance between resources and constrains on the one hand, and the desired impact on the other. Having everything in no time and a minimum budget, is unrealistic. To surpass such unreal expectations, the dialog phase and co-thinking when assessing the diagnosis, and that of the determination of the tipping point, allow to redefine realistic objectives adapted to the actual needs. The objective is to achieve a systemic vision of the issues rather than a symptom-solution approach.

5 - Tools are no magical answer

Focusing on the tools is a problem. Many companies today, think tools before they think impact. In fact, the issues at stake today in companies are generally not tool related, but are rather practice, posture or culture related issues. We need to see beyond the illusion that a single tool will revolutionize the company and generate the expected changes.

6 - The illusion of the digital format

Answering systemic issues with a series of e-learning modules with no real follow up and guidance for the learners is an unsuitable solution, in the face of certain issues requiring an in-depth customized approach. The integration of e-learning sessions in a program is quite common today, but it needs to be supervised by the instructors, the coaches or experts, and integrated to the pedagogy as a whole. If not, the training program is likely to fail to achieve the desired objectives, not to mention to generate the expected impacts individually and collectively.

7 - The quality of speakers

Who you choose as speakers can make a huge difference. Some work in silos within their disciplines and cannot conform to programs aiming at transforming individuals. They need to be able to offer contents and methods with impact; and to develop a global approach integrating hard and soft skills as part of the training program. It is also essential that speakers have a strong close bond with the business world to better understand their expectations and adapt their interventions accordingly.

8 - The design quality

The whole of custom programs requires particular care on the quality of their pedagogical design. Offering "standard" training modules with one single objective of knowledge transfer is not enough; we need to build a strong learning track with impact over competences and behavioral transformation. The pedagogical design or pedagogical architecture reflects on the ability to take into account the specific context of the company, to determine and cover the issues and clear objectives, and to integrate a variety of pedagogical resources. The quality of pedagogical design will then generate learning situations reinforcing the commitment and implication of the learners. Learning situations need to be, when possible, in keeping with behavioral conduct encompassing knowledge sharing, such as knowledge transmission, accepting new methods and new ways of thinking.

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41,700 alumni
in **130** countries

9,050
students

166
professors
51%
of whom
come from
abroad

›125 nationalities

1,013
students involved

in **45** student associations
and actions

6,900+
executives directors
& managers in continued
education programs

200
academic
partners

in **50** countries

📍 **Visit our campuses on google street view**

Key figures 2023

emlyon business school campuses

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