
Business Acumen: Value Creation, Financial Drivers and Commercial Decisions Course

25 January – 5 February 2027
New York





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Programme Summary

Business acumen for value creation and commercial decisions is a two-week training course for functional directors and heads of department working at strategic level, culminating in an enterprise value case for a decision they will take in their own organisation. Leaders promoted for functional expertise often optimise their own area while the organisation as a whole loses margin, cash or competitive position. The approach traces how markets, business models, value drivers and investment choices connect, so that each decision is judged by its effect on the whole enterprise. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in business acumen.

The Business Case

Senior leaders shape revenue, cost and capital through daily decisions on pricing, staffing, suppliers and projects, yet many cannot trace those choices to profit, cash or return on capital. The result is functional targets met at the expense of enterprise value. Leaders with business acumen weigh trade-offs across functions, challenge proposals on their economics and allocate resources to where value is created.

- Return on Capital: Improves as leaders link operational and investment choices to profit and capital employed.
- Cash Conversion: Strengthens when working capital and payment terms are treated as commercial decisions, not administrative ones.
- Decision Quality: Rises when proposals are tested against value drivers, customer economics and risk before approval.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Business Model Canvas: Structures the analysis of how the organisation creates, delivers and captures value in Session 2.
- Porter's Five Forces: Frames industry structure and competitive pressure on margins in Session 3.
- DuPont Analysis and Value Driver Trees: Connect operational levers to return on capital employed ROCE in Sessions 4 and 5.
- Net Present Value and Time Value of Money: Underpin investment appraisal and trade-off decisions in Session 7.



Intended Participants

- Leaders moving from functional responsibility to general management of a business unit.
- Directors who propose budgets, projects and investments to executive committees.
- Heads of department whose decisions shape pricing, cost, inventory or capital spending.
- Senior specialists who represent their function in cross-functional leadership teams.
- Public sector leaders managing commercial operations or revenue-generating entities.

The programme serves operations, engineering, sales, human resources and technology functions across manufacturing, energy, retail, healthcare and government-owned enterprises.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose how their organisation creates and captures value using its business model.
2. Participants will be able to evaluate competitive pressures and their effect on pricing power and margins.
3. Participants will be able to construct a value driver tree linking operational levers to profit, cash and return on capital.
4. Participants will be able to analyse customer, product and pricing economics to prioritise where to grow.
5. Participants will be able to appraise investment and trade-off decisions using net present value and risk analysis.
6. Participants will be able to justify an enterprise value case for a commercial decision to an executive committee.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Business Acumen and the Enterprise View

What separates an enterprise perspective from a functional one?

- Business Acumen as a Leadership Capability
- Functional Optimisation Versus Enterprise Value
- How Value Flows From Customers to Shareholders and Stakeholders
- Reading an Annual Report as a General Manager
- Business Acumen Self-Assessment

Day 2: Business Models and Value Creation

How does the organisation make money, and what could disrupt it?

- Business Model Canvas Mapping
- Revenue Models and Cost Structures
- Platform, Subscription and Asset-Light Models
- Value Proposition Testing



- Business Model Comparison Across Sectors

Day 3: Markets and Competitive Dynamics

Which forces set the limits on growth and margin?

- Porter's Five Forces Analysis
- Market Segmentation and Share Economics
- Competitive Positioning and Differentiation
- Regulatory and Macroeconomic Drivers
- Competitor Response Scenarios

Day 4: Financial Language of the Business

How do the financial statements reveal performance, position and cash?

- Income Statement Through a Commercial Lens
- Balance Sheet and Capital Employed
- Cash Flow and Working Capital Cycle
- Margin Structure and Operating Leverage
- Benchmarking Ratios Against Peers

Day 5: Value Drivers and Return on Capital

Which operational levers move profit, cash and return on capital?

- DuPont Analysis of Return on Capital
- Value Driver Tree Construction
- Sensitivity of Value to Price, Volume and Cost
- Asset Efficiency and Capital Intensity
- Linking KPIs to Value Drivers

Day 6: Customer, Product and Pricing Economics

Where does the organisation actually make and lose money?

- Customer Profitability Analysis
- Product and Service Contribution Margins
- Value-Based Pricing Decisions
- Discounting and Payment Terms Trade-Offs
- Portfolio Pruning and Growth Choices



Day 7: Investment Decisions and Trade-Offs

How are competing proposals compared and capital allocated?

- Net Present Value and Payback
- Cost of Capital in Plain Terms
- Build, Buy or Partner Decisions
- Capital Allocation Across Business Units
- Challenging Business Case Assumptions

Day 8: Risk and Uncertainty in Commercial Decisions

How is risk weighed alongside return?

- Scenario and Sensitivity Analysis
- Downside Exposure and Break-Even Points
- Supplier and Customer Concentration Risk
- Currency, Commodity and Interest Exposure
- Decision Trees for Uncertain Outcomes

Day 9: Enterprise Decision-Making and Execution

How are commercial decisions made and carried through across functions?

- Cross-Functional Trade-Off Frameworks
- Resource Allocation Governance
- Translating Decisions Into Budgets and Targets
- Influencing Executive Committees With Economic Evidence
- Post-Decision Reviews and Value Tracking

Day 10: Applying Business Acumen to a Live Decision

How are the tools combined into a decision the executive committee can approve?

- Applying Business Model Analysis to a Participant Organisation
- Building the Value Driver Case for the Decision
- Stress-Testing the Case Against Risk Scenarios
- Peer Challenge as a Simulated Investment Committee
- Enterprise Value Case Presentation



Methodology

The programme relies on case analysis and a business simulation in which teams run a company over several rounds, making pricing, investment and operational decisions and seeing the effect on profit, cash and return on capital. Cases come from manufacturing, energy, retail and healthcare, and each session ends with application to the participant's own organisation.

- Suggested activity: Mapping the business model of a regional airline on the Business Model Canvas.
- Suggested activity: Building a value driver tree for a hospital group's outpatient service.
- Suggested activity: Appraising competing capital requests from two divisions of a manufacturer.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes an enterprise value case for a real decision. It contains a business model summary, a competitive assessment, a value driver tree, customer and pricing analysis, an investment appraisal with risk scenarios and an implementation and tracking plan, ready to present to an executive committee.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the business acumen programme suitable for functional directors moving into general management?

Yes. It is designed for senior leaders with deep functional experience who now carry enterprise responsibility. It assumes management experience but no prior finance or strategy qualification.

Which models does the business acumen and value creation programme rest on?

It draws on the Business Model Canvas, Porter's Five Forces, DuPont analysis and value driver trees for return on capital, and net present value for investment decisions.

How is the enterprise value case from business acumen training used at work?

You leave with a structured case for a decision you face, covering market, value drivers, economics and risk. It can go to your executive committee as the basis for approval and later tracking.

How does business acumen training differ from a finance for non-finance managers course?

It uses financial measures as one tool among several, alongside business models, competition, customer economics and decision-making, to judge choices by their effect on enterprise value.