
Middle Manager Leadership: Managing Managers and Translating Strategy into Results Course

3 – 7 May 2027
Amsterdam





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Programme Summary

Middle manager leadership, the work of managing managers and translating strategy into results, is the subject of this five-day training course for department heads at intermediate to advanced level, culminating in a departmental leadership plan. Strong first-line managers are often promoted into the middle layer unprepared for leading through others, so strategy stalls before reaching the front line. The approach moves from the leadership transition to strategy translation, decision rights, coaching, influence and change. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in middle manager leadership.

The Business Case

The middle layer decides whether executive priorities become frontline action. When managers of managers keep doing their old jobs, decisions bottleneck at their desks, team leaders stay underdeveloped and cross-unit work stalls. Developing this layer deliberately turns it into the organisation's execution channel and a source of future senior leaders.

- Strategy Execution Rate: Rises as departmental objectives are traced to executive priorities and reviewed on a fixed cadence.
- Decision Lead Time: Shortens as decision rights are clarified and delegated to team leaders.
- Team Leader Bench Strength: Grows as middle managers coach first-line managers rather than doing their work for them.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Leadership Pipeline: The manager of managers passage, with its shift in skills, time applications and work values, frames the self-diagnosis in Session 1.
- RACI Matrix: Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed roles structure the decision rights redesign in Session 3.
- GROW Coaching Model: Goal, Reality, Options and Will guide the coaching conversations with team leaders in Session 3.
- Strategy Cascading: Linking executive priorities to departmental objectives and measures shapes the translation work in Session 2.

Intended Participants

- Managers who lead other managers or team leaders rather than individual contributors.
- Department heads who convert executive priorities into plans, budgets and targets.
- Managers recently promoted into a role with several teams beneath them.
- Leaders who coordinate work across units and negotiate with peers for shared resources.



The programme serves operations, engineering, finance and customer service functions in energy, banking, healthcare and government entities.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose which tasks, time habits and values they must drop or adopt as managers of managers.
2. Participants will be able to construct departmental objectives and measures traced to executive priorities.
3. Participants will be able to design decision rights and delegation arrangements for their team leaders.
4. Participants will be able to coach first-line managers using a structured conversation model.
5. Participants will be able to plan influence strategies for managing upward and across peer units.
6. Participants will be able to justify a departmental leadership plan to their own executive.

Programme Structure

Day 1: The Middle Manager Leadership Transition

What changes when a manager starts leading other managers?

- Leadership Pipeline: The Manager of Managers Passage
- Skills, Time Applications and Work Values Self-Diagnosis
- The Middle Management Squeeze: Pressure From Above and Below
- Span of Control and Layer Design
- Personal Transition Map: What to Stop, Start and Keep

Day 2: Translating Strategy into Departmental Results

How do executive priorities become departmental plans people can act on?

- Reading the Corporate Strategy for Departmental Implications
- Strategy Cascading: Objectives, Measures and Targets
- Resource Allocation Across Teams and Trade-Off Decisions
- Communicating the Why to Team Leaders and Staff
- Monthly Performance Review Cadence

Day 3: Decision Rights, Delegation and Coaching Team Leaders

Which decisions belong to team leaders, and how are they developed to take them?

- RACI Matrix for Departmental Decisions
- Delegation Levels and Escalation Rules
- GROW Coaching Model for First-Line Managers
- Assessing Team Leader Capability and Readiness
- Holding Managers to Account for How They Manage



Day 4: Managing Upward, Across and Through Change

How does a middle manager influence executives and peers and lead change?

- Managing Upward: Framing Proposals and Bad News for Executives
- Peer Negotiation and Cross-Unit Interfaces
- Stakeholder Mapping for Departmental Initiatives
- Leading Change From the Middle: Sensemaking and Resistance
- Protecting Team Capacity During Competing Demands

Day 5: Applying Middle Manager Leadership

Is the departmental leadership plan coherent and ready to implement?

- Linking the Day 1 Transition Map to Weekly Time Allocation
- Testing Day 2 Objectives Against Day 3 Decision Rights
- Embedding Day 4 Influence Plans in the Review Cadence
- Peer Challenge of Draft Plans
- Completing the Departmental Leadership Plan

Methodology

The programme uses case analysis and structured practice. Participants work through cases from utilities, banking and public services, then apply each tool to their own department. Coaching and upward-influence conversations are rehearsed in trios with observer feedback.

- Suggested activity: Building a RACI matrix for ten recurring departmental decisions.
- Suggested activity: Running a GROW coaching conversation with a team leader in a trio.
- Suggested activity: Presenting a resource request to a simulated executive panel.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a departmental leadership plan. It contains a personal transition map, departmental objectives traced to strategy, a decision rights matrix, a development plan for each team leader, a stakeholder and influence plan and a review calendar. It is presented to the participant's own executive to agree priorities for the coming quarter.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is middle manager leadership training suitable for newly promoted department heads?

Yes. It suits managers at intermediate to advanced level who now lead other managers, and assumes experience of supervising a team directly.



Which models does the middle manager leadership programme rest on?

It rests on the Leadership Pipeline, the RACI matrix, the GROW coaching model and the practice of cascading strategy into departmental objectives.

How is the plan from middle manager leadership training used at work?

You can use it to agree priorities with your executive, clarify decisions with team leaders and run a monthly review of departmental results.