
Demand Planner Leadership Course: Baseline Forecasts, Bias Control and Exception Review

18 – 22 October 2027
Cape town





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Programme Summary

Demand planner leadership, covering baseline forecasts, bias control and exception review, is the subject of this one-week training course for supply chain and planning leaders at applied level, ending in a demand planning control pack for one product family. Forecast errors flow into stock, service and cost across the chain. The approach moves from forecast measurement and baseline methods, through bias control and consensus input, to exception review and planning governance. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in demand planning and forecasting.

The Business Case

Every forecast error becomes either excess stock or a missed order, and the error is often hidden by averages. Leaders who measure forecast quality by product, customer and horizon can see where planner effort adds value and where it does not. Demand planning that is measured and governed lets supply, sales and finance work from one number.

- Forecast Accuracy and Bias: Improves as error metrics are tracked by segment and horizon rather than in aggregate.
- Inventory and Service Balance: Stabilises as safety stock and supply plans follow a trusted demand signal.
- Planning Cycle Effort: Falls as exception review replaces line-by-line adjustment of every forecast.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Forecast Value Added Analysis: Its test of whether each planning step improves on a naive forecast shapes the review of overrides in Sessions 3 and 4.
- Sales and Operations Planning: Its monthly cycle linking demand, supply and finance frames the consensus work in Sessions 4 and 5.
- Institute of Business Forecasting KPI and Metrics Guidance: Its error and bias measures structure the measurement work in Session 1.

Intended Participants

- Leaders accountable for forecast quality and the demand signal that drives supply plans.
- Planning managers who run the statistical forecast and review planner adjustments.
- Supply chain managers who set inventory and capacity from demand plans.
- Commercial and finance partners who contribute market input to the consensus forecast.
- Heads of continuous improvement who audit planning processes and tools.

The programme serves retail, manufacturing, distribution and healthcare supply chains.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate forecast error, bias and value added by product, customer and horizon.
2. Participants will be able to construct baseline statistical forecasts suited to stable, seasonal and intermittent demand.
3. Participants will be able to diagnose sources of planner and sales bias in the forecast.
4. Participants will be able to prioritise exceptions for review using materiality and error thresholds.
5. Participants will be able to justify a consensus demand plan and its governance to supply and finance colleagues.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Measuring Demand Planning Performance

How good is the current forecast, and against what yardstick?

- Forecast Error and Bias Metrics Selection
- Segmentation of Products by Volume and Variability
- Naive Forecast Benchmark
- Forecast Horizon and Lag Definition
- Planning Accuracy Dashboard

Day 2: Baseline Forecasting Methods

Which method suits each demand pattern?

- Moving Average and Exponential Smoothing
- Seasonal and Trend Decomposition
- Intermittent Demand Methods
- Hierarchy and Aggregation Choices
- Method Selection Decision Tree

Day 3: Bias Control and Forecast Value Added

Where do human adjustments help, and where do they harm?

- Forecast Value Added Step Analysis
- Override Log and Reason Codes
- Sales Optimism and Sandbagging Patterns
- Bias Tracking Signals
- Planner Feedback Protocol



Day 4: Consensus Demand and Sales and Operations Planning

How do commercial, supply and finance agree one demand number?

- Demand Review Meeting Agenda
- Promotion and New Product Input Templates
- Reconciliation of Volume and Revenue Plans
- Supply Constraint Feedback Loop
- Consensus Sign-Off Rules

Day 5: Exception Review and Planning Governance

Which forecasts need attention, and who owns the decision?

- Exception Threshold Design
- Planner Roles and Decision Rights
- Applying Session 1 Metrics to Exception Lists
- Applying Session 3 Value Added Findings to Override Policy
- Completing the Demand Planning Control Pack

Methodology

The programme is built around data workshops and case analysis. Participants work with sample sales histories to build baseline forecasts, measure error and test planner overrides, then present a consensus plan to a simulated demand review. Cases draw on retail, manufacturing and healthcare supply chains.

- Suggested activity: Calculating error and bias for three product segments and ranking them.
- Suggested activity: Testing whether a set of sales overrides improved on the statistical baseline.
- Suggested activity: Chairing a simulated demand review with conflicting commercial and supply views.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a demand planning control pack for one product family. It holds a segmentation, baseline method choices, error and bias results, an override policy, a consensus meeting design and exception thresholds. It is used to run the next planning cycle and to brief supply and finance leaders on forecast quality.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is demand planning training suitable for leaders without a statistics background?

Yes. It is set at applied level for planning and supply chain leaders, and assumes familiarity with sales data and planning cycles. Methods are applied through spreadsheets rather than derived mathematically.



Which methods does the demand planning programme rest on?

It rests on forecast value added analysis, the sales and operations planning cycle and forecasting error and bias metrics, applied to baseline statistical forecasts.

How is the demand planning control pack used at work?

You can use it to run the next planning cycle, agree override rules with sales and brief supply and finance leaders on forecast quality for one product family.

How does demand planning differ from inventory management training?

Demand planning concerns estimating and agreeing future demand, while inventory management concerns setting stock levels, locations and replenishment once demand is known.