
Executive Business Simulation Course: Strategic Decisions Under Competitive Pressure

11 – 15 January 2027
Rome





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Programme Summary

Executive business simulation is the subject of this one-week training course for directors, vice presidents and heads of business units, ending in a simulation decision brief for one live business. Leaders seldom practise strategic choices where rivals respond, information is incomplete and results arrive in rounds. The programme moves from the logic of simulated markets, through diagnosis of decisions and their results, to the design of better choices, and then to application. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this executive business simulation programme for leaders from mixed sectors.

The Business Case

Strategic decisions on price, investment, capacity and people are normally judged long after they are taken, so leaders gain few chances to see how choices interact or how competitors respond. A simulated market compresses that feedback into rounds. Teams can test pricing against rivals, see cash and service effects together and debrief each result before the next round, at no risk to the real business.

- Decision Quality: Improves as choices are tested against rival responses and explained in debriefs.
- Cross-Functional Alignment: Strengthens as teams see how finance, operations and people decisions interact.
- Learning Speed: Increases as feedback arrives in rounds, not years.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Kolb's experiential learning cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation: It shapes the order of each round in Sessions 1 to 4.
- Structured debriefing such as the after-action review: It frames the review of every round.
- Decision rounds with competing teams, the learning design found in executive simulation programmes: It structures Sessions 2 to 4.

Intended Participants

- Directors who set strategy and answer for the results of several functions.
- Business unit heads who decide price, investment and capacity under competition.
- Heads of function who must weigh their choices against those of other functions.
- Strategy and performance leads who sponsor management development.

Typical participants come from banking, manufacturing, retail, healthcare and logistics.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate how a simulated market links price, investment, capacity and people decisions.
2. Participants will be able to diagnose the causes of a team's results using round data.
3. Participants will be able to construct decision options and compare them against competitor responses.
4. Participants will be able to prioritise choices under limited cash and incomplete information.
5. Participants will be able to design a debrief that turns round results into lessons.
6. Participants will be able to justify a simulation decision brief to executive colleagues.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Executive Business Simulation and Competitive Markets

How does a simulated market reproduce the choices and rivals of a real one?

- Simulated Market Briefing Pack
- Team Company Starting Position Sheet
- Competitive Dynamics Map
- Decision Rounds Rules Card
- Team Operating Agreement

Day 2: Diagnosing Decisions and Results

What do the first rounds reveal about the quality of the team's choices?

- Round Results Dashboard
- Cash and Margin Driver Review
- Rival Move Tracking Table
- Assumption Test Log
- After-Action Review Template

Day 3: Designing Pricing, Investment and Capacity Choices

Which combination of choices serves the strategy at acceptable risk?

- Pricing Response Scenarios
- Investment Staging Options Table
- Capacity and Service Trade-Off Chart
- People and Skills Budget Sheet
- Risk and Contingency Register



Day 4: Competing Under Pressure and Learning from Rounds

How do teams adjust their strategy when rivals respond and information is incomplete?

- Late-Round Strategy Reset Canvas
- Rival Response Playbook
- Information Gap Checklist
- Team Decision Rights Chart
- Kolb Cycle Reflection Sheet

Day 5: Applying Simulation Lessons to One Business

Which lessons from the rounds should change decisions in the live business?

- Applying the Session 2 Diagnosis to the Live Business
- Testing Session 3 Choices Against Real Constraints
- Carrying Session 4 Rival Playbook Into Planning
- Rehearsing the Executive Decision Defence
- Completing the Simulation Decision Brief

Methodology

The programme uses a simulation method in which teams run a simulated company through several decision rounds against competing teams. After each round, facilitators lead a structured debrief of results, reasoning and rival moves. Participants record their reasoning on shared templates, challenge one another's assumptions, and receive facilitator feedback on each work product before it enters the simulation decision brief.

- Suggested activity: Setting a pricing move for one round and predicting how rival teams will respond.
- Suggested activity: Running a short after-action review on a round that went worse than planned.
- Suggested activity: Rewriting one live business decision after comparing it with the simulation results.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a simulation decision brief for one live business. It holds a results diagnosis, a set of decision options with rival responses, a risk register and a list of lessons carried from the rounds. The brief is used at work to open an executive discussion on a pending strategic decision and to agree how it will be tested.



Frequently Asked Questions

Is an executive business simulation suitable for leaders who have not used simulations before?

Yes. An executive business simulation is taught from first principles and assumes responsibility for a unit or function, not prior simulation experience.

Which models does an executive business simulation rest on in this programme?

An executive business simulation here rests on Kolb's experiential learning cycle and on structured debriefing such as the after-action review.

How is the decision brief from an executive business simulation used at work?

You use the simulation decision brief to open an executive discussion on a pending decision, agree how to test it and record the lessons from the rounds.

How does an executive business simulation differ from a programme on strategic planning?

An executive business simulation centres on practising decisions against rivals in rounds, while strategic planning centres on setting goals, targets and annual plans.