
Leading the Operations Function: Performance, Capability and Delivery Training Course

18 – 29 January 2027
Milan





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Programme Summary

Operations leadership is the subject of this two-week training course for operations directors, heads of operations, general managers and senior operational leaders, ending in an operations leadership plan for one function. Many operations heads inherit targets, routines and teams without a deliberate design for how the function is led. The programme moves from the leader's role, through diagnosis of performance and capability, to design of the operating rhythm, leader development, cross-functional delivery and improvement. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this operations leadership programme for leaders from mixed organisations.

The Business Case

When expectations are unclear, reviews are irregular and the leaders below are stretched, the operations function relies on a few individuals and reacts to each shortfall as it appears. Colleagues in finance, sales and engineering then receive uneven delivery and conflicting messages. Leaders who set clear expectations, review them on a steady cycle and build the next level of leaders find problems earlier and keep improvement in place.

- Performance Consistency: Improves as expectations are cascaded and reviewed on a fixed cycle.
- Leader Retention and Depth: Strengthens as capability is assessed and developed before vacancies arise.
- Delivery Reliability: Rises as hand-offs with other functions are agreed and tracked.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Balanced scorecard: It structures performance expectations and measure cascades in Sessions 2 and 9.
- Tiered daily management: It shapes the operating rhythm of daily, weekly and monthly reviews in Sessions 5 and 9.
- Lean continuous improvement with PDCA: It guides the improvement pipeline built in Session 8.
- Kotter's eight-step model: It frames the change roadmap and sustainment checks in Sessions 8 and 10.

Intended Participants

- Operations directors who answer for the results of a whole function.
- Heads of operations who set expectations for managers across several sites or teams.
- General managers who combine operations with commercial and financial duties.
- Senior operational leaders who are preparing for wider responsibility.



Typical sectors include energy, manufacturing, logistics and utilities.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to distinguish the leadership tasks of an operations head from those of a manager.
2. Participants will be able to construct performance expectations and a measure cascade for an operations function.
3. Participants will be able to diagnose gaps in performance and in leader capability.
4. Participants will be able to design an operating rhythm of daily, weekly and monthly reviews.
5. Participants will be able to evaluate options for developing leaders and agreeing cross-functional delivery.
6. Participants will be able to justify an operations leadership plan, including improvement and change, to executive colleagues.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Operations Leadership and the Role of the Operations Head

What does leading an operations function ask of a senior leader?

- Operations Leader Role Map
- Span of Control Chart
- Situational Leadership Fit Table
- Stakeholder Expectation Grid
- Personal Leadership Baseline Review

Day 2: Performance Expectations and the Balanced Scorecard

How are expectations set so every level knows what good looks like?

- Balanced Scorecard Perspectives Map
- Measure Definition Sheet
- Target-Setting Rules
- Leading and Lagging Indicator Pairs
- Cascade Alignment Chart

Day 3: Diagnosing Operating Performance

Where does performance fall short, and why?

- Performance Gap Analysis
- Variance Review Pack
- Root Cause Tree
- Loss and Delay Pareto Chart
- Management Attention Audit



Day 4: Diagnosing Leader Capability

How deep is the leadership below the head of operations?

- Capability Matrix
- Succession Cover Chart
- Supervisor Practice Observation Sheet
- Skills Gap Heat Map
- Leadership Behaviour Survey Summary

Day 5: Designing the Operating Rhythm

How do review cycles keep performance in view?

- Tiered Daily Management Layout
- Weekly Performance Review Format
- Monthly Business Review Agenda
- Escalation Path Chart
- Meeting Cadence Audit

Day 6: Designing Leader Development

How are operational leaders built and kept?

- Development Plan Template
- Coaching Conversation Guide
- Delegation Ladder
- Role Rotation Plan
- Leader Standard Work Sheet

Day 7: Designing Cross-Functional Delivery

How do operations, finance, sales and engineering deliver together?

- Cross-Functional Interface Map
- Joint Delivery Plan
- Handover Agreement Template
- Conflict Resolution Protocol
- Shared Priority Ranking Table

Day 8: Designing Improvement and Change Leadership

How does improvement stay in place after a project ends?



- PDCA Cycle Plan
- Improvement Pipeline Board
- Eight-Step Change Roadmap
- Resistance and Support Map
- Sustainment Audit Checklist

Day 9: Applying Expectations, Rhythm and Capability to One Function

Does the leadership design hold when tested on one function?

- Applying the Session 2 Scorecard to the Function
- Testing the Session 3 Gap Analysis on Live Data
- Calibrating the Session 4 Capability Matrix
- Rehearsing the Session 5 Review Cycle
- Comparing the Session 6 Development Options by Cost

Day 10: Applying Delivery and Change Leadership to One Function

Is the operations leadership plan ready for executive colleagues?

- Negotiating the Session 7 Handover Agreement
- Stress-Testing the Session 8 Improvement Roadmap
- Presenting the Draft Plan to a Peer Panel
- Revising the Plan after Peer Feedback
- Completing the Operations Leadership Plan

Methodology

The programme uses a case analysis method built on anonymised performance packs, capability records, review agendas and short written cases from energy, manufacturing and logistics operations. Participants work in small groups on one function, defend choices to peers who act as finance, sales and engineering colleagues, and receive facilitator feedback on each work product.

- Suggested activity: Rebuilding a scorecard from a set of conflicting targets.
- Suggested activity: Running a mock weekly performance review.
- Suggested activity: Negotiating a handover agreement between two functions.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes an operations leadership plan for one function. It holds a scorecard, a capability assessment, an operating rhythm, a leader development plan, a cross-functional delivery agreement and an improvement roadmap. The plan is used at work to brief executive colleagues, agree priorities with other functions and guide the first months of leading the function.



Frequently Asked Questions

Is operations leadership suitable for leaders who have not headed a whole function before?

Yes. Operations leadership is taught from first principles and assumes responsibility for managers or teams, not earlier experience as head of a function.

Which models does operations leadership rest on in this programme?

Operations leadership here rests on the balanced scorecard, tiered daily management, Lean continuous improvement with PDCA and Kotter's eight-step model.

How is the operations leadership plan used at work?

You use the plan to brief executive colleagues, agree priorities with other functions and guide how the function is led.

How does operations leadership differ from a programme on operations strategy?

Operations leadership centres on how a function is led, reviewed and developed, while operations strategy centres on capacity, network and sourcing choices.