
Leading Under Information Overload Training Course: Signal, Focus and Time

20 – 24 September 2027
Amsterdam





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Programme Summary

Leading under information overload is the subject of this one-week training course for directors, vice presidents and heads of function, ending in a team information protocol and a personal attention plan. Senior leaders now receive reports, messages and dashboards faster than anyone can read them, and important signals are missed or answered late. The programme moves from how attention and judgement behave under load, through audit of information flows, to the design of filters, team rules and decision routines, then applies them to one team. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this information overload programme for leaders from mixed organisations.

The Business Case

When every message looks urgent, leaders react to the loudest item rather than the most important one. Decisions slow down, key risks sit unread in crowded inboxes and teams copy each other into everything for safety. A leader who knows which information is needed, from whom and by when can cut volume without losing awareness. Information overload then becomes a design problem with practical answers rather than a personal failing.

- Decision Cycle Time: Shortens as leaders receive only the information a decision needs.
- Risk Visibility: Improves as early warning items are separated from routine traffic.
- Leader Capacity: Rises as unnecessary reading, copying and meetings are removed.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Cognitive load theory: It explains how limited working memory affects judgement and shapes the load audit in Sessions 1 and 2.
- Herbert Simon's bounded rationality and economics of attention: It frames attention as a scarce resource to be budgeted in Sessions 1 and 3.
- Signal detection theory: It guides the separation of signal and noise and the trade-off between missed signals and false alarms in Session 3.
- Pareto analysis: It ranks information sources by their value to decisions in Sessions 2 and 3.

Intended Participants

- Directors who make decisions from reports, dashboards and briefings drawn from several functions.
- Vice presidents who set the information expectations of the managers who report to them.
- Heads of function who handle high message volumes from teams, clients and executives.
- Senior leaders who chair meetings and decide what their teams must read and answer.

Typical functions include finance, operations, healthcare administration and legal services.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose the sources and effects of information overload in their own role.
2. Participants will be able to construct a map of information flows and rank each flow by its value to decisions.
3. Participants will be able to design filters that separate signal from noise without hiding early warnings.
4. Participants will be able to prioritise attention and time against decisions that matter most.
5. Participants will be able to evaluate team habits in email, meetings and reporting and set rules to replace them.
6. Participants will be able to justify an information protocol to colleagues and reporting managers.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Leading Under Information Overload and the Limits of Attention

How does high information volume change the quality of a leader's judgement?

- Cognitive Load Model
- Attention Budget Worksheet
- Overload Symptoms Checklist
- Decision Fatigue Diary
- Personal Overload Baseline Review

Day 2: Auditing Information Flows

Where does information come from, and which flows earn a leader's time?

- Information Source Inventory
- Inbound Volume Log
- Flow Mapping by Sender and Purpose
- Pareto Ranking of Sources
- Decision-to-Information Link Chart

Day 3: Separating Signal from Noise

How is useful information kept while the rest is reduced?

- Signal and Noise Test
- Early Warning Indicator Set
- Missed Signal and False Alarm Trade-Off Grid
- Summary and Digest Format
- Filtering Rule Sheet



Day 4: Designing Team Rules and Decision Routines

Which team habits create overload, and what replaces them?

- Email and Message Etiquette Charter
- Copy and Escalation Rules
- Meeting Purpose and Pre-Read Standard
- Report Length and Format Guide
- Focus Time Calendar Design

Day 5: Applying Filters and Rules to One Team

Does the information protocol hold when tested on a real team?

- Re-Running the Session 2 Source Inventory on the Team
- Testing the Session 3 Filtering Rules on Live Reports
- Rehearsing the Session 4 Meeting Standard
- Defending the Draft Protocol before a Peer Panel
- Completing the Team Information Protocol

Methodology

The programme uses a data workshop method built on anonymised inbox samples, dashboards, meeting agendas and short written cases from healthcare, banking and public services. Participants analyse their own information flows, test filters in small groups, defend choices to peers who act as busy executives, and receive facilitator feedback on every work product.

- Suggested activity: Cutting a weekly report pack to the items that change a decision.
- Suggested activity: Sorting a sample inbox into signal, routine and noise.
- Suggested activity: Redesigning a standing meeting with a clear purpose and pre-read.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a team information protocol and a personal attention plan. The protocol holds a source ranking, filtering rules, escalation and copy rules, a meeting standard and a reporting format. The attention plan sets protected time for priority decisions. Both are used at work to brief colleagues, agree expectations with reporting managers and guide daily information handling.



Frequently Asked Questions

Is leading under information overload suitable for leaders who have not redesigned team reporting before?

Yes. Leading under information overload is taught from first principles and assumes responsibility for decisions and teams, not earlier work on reporting design.

Which research does information overload training in this programme rest on?

Information overload training here rests on cognitive load theory, Herbert Simon's bounded rationality and economics of attention, signal detection theory and Pareto analysis.

How is the information overload team protocol used at work?

You use the protocol to brief colleagues, agree reading and reply expectations with managers and guide how your team copies, escalates and reports information.

How does an information overload programme differ from a programme on time management?

An information overload programme centres on filtering inputs, protecting attention and setting team rules, while a time management programme centres on planning tasks and scheduling work.