
Future-Focused Leadership Course for Directors: Scanning Trends, Setting Direction, Placing Bets

16 – 20 November 2026
Vienna





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Programme Summary

Future-focused leadership is the subject of this one-week training course for directors and senior leaders at a strategic level, ending in a personal leadership agenda for one unit. Leaders are often judged on this period's results, while the trends that shape the next decade go unread. The programme links trend scanning, a stated future direction, the balance between the current business and new growth bets, and an adaptive team culture, with each tool applied to the participant's own unit. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on future-focused leadership to mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Organisations that react only to current results find that new competitors, technologies and customer habits arrive faster than plans can change. Leaders who read emerging signals, state a direction others can follow and protect a small share of attention and funding for new options keep the organisation ready without neglecting today's customers. Teams that learn from small bets adjust early and at lower cost.

- Strategic Surprise Exposure: Falls as emerging trends are logged, ranked and reviewed on a fixed cycle.
- Growth Option Quality: Improves as new bets are funded in stages against what is learned.
- Team Adaptability: Improves as norms for challenge, learning and review are agreed openly.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Horizon scanning: Systematically logging early changes beyond the usual planning view feeds the trend work in Session 2.
- Strategic foresight: Building alternative pictures of the future tests the direction set in Session 3.
- Futures literacy: Noticing the assumptions a leader brings about the future frames the self-assessment in Session 1.

Intended Participants

- Directors who answer for the long-term position of a business or function.
- Senior leaders who must set direction for several teams.
- Heads of strategy who brief leadership on what is changing.
- Growth and innovation leaders who fund and review new options.

Typical functions include strategy, operations, technology, public administration and professional services organisations.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose the assumptions about the future that shape their current decisions.
2. Participants will be able to construct a scanning routine that logs and ranks emerging trends and weak signals.
3. Participants will be able to justify a future-facing direction to their own team and to senior colleagues.
4. Participants will be able to prioritise funding and attention between the current business and new growth bets.
5. Participants will be able to design team norms that support learning, challenge and adjustment.
6. Participants will be able to evaluate their own leadership practice against a long-term agenda.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Future-Focused Leadership and Futures Literacy

What does a leader need to see differently to lead for the long term rather than the next quarter?

- Futures Literacy Self-Assessment
- Time Horizon Map
- Leadership Stance Review
- Decision Regret Case Study
- Long-Term Direction Statement

Day 2: Scanning Trends and Weak Signals

Which emerging changes deserve the attention of this leadership team?

- Horizon Scanning Log
- Trend Impact Matrix
- Weak Signal Register
- Strategic Foresight Scenario Sketch
- Assumption Challenge Sheet

Day 3: Setting a Future Direction

How is a direction chosen and stated so that others can act on it?

- Direction Choice Criteria
- Vision Narrative Draft
- Strategic Priority Filter
- Stakeholder Reaction Grid
- Direction Communication Plan



Day 4: Balancing the Core Business and New Growth Bets

How much attention and money go to today's business and how much to uncertain new options?

- Core and New Allocation Table
- Growth Bet Portfolio Map
- Staged Investment Gates
- Bet Learning Plan
- Stop and Continue Rules

Day 5: Applying the Tools and Building an Adaptive Team

Do the scanning, direction and balance tools form one agenda that a team can carry?

- Applying the Session 2 Trend Impact Matrix
- Using the Session 3 Direction Communication Plan
- Testing the Session 4 Staged Investment Gates
- Adaptive Team Norms Charter
- Completing the Personal Leadership Agenda

Methodology

The programme uses a structured exercise method built on anonymised leadership cases, trend logs and investment records from several sectors. Participants work in peer groups on their own units, test each tool on a live question and receive written facilitator feedback on every exercise set.

- Suggested activity: Logging ten signals from outside the sector and ranking their possible effect on the unit.
- Suggested activity: Presenting a draft direction statement to peers who act as a sceptical team.
- Suggested activity: Dividing a mock budget between the core business and three uncertain bets.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a personal leadership agenda for one unit. It holds a ranked trend log, a direction statement, a core and new allocation table, a set of staged investment gates and a team norms charter. The agenda is used at work to open planning discussions, brief the team and review progress at fixed intervals.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is future-focused leadership suitable for directors with little foresight experience?

Yes. Future-focused leadership assumes senior management experience and builds scanning, direction and balance skills step by step, with no technical prerequisites.



Which models does future-focused leadership rest on in this programme?

Future-focused leadership here rests on horizon scanning, strategic foresight and futures literacy. Each model is applied to a real decision from your own unit.

How is the agenda from future-focused leadership used at work?

You use the personal leadership agenda to open planning talks, brief your team, set review points and decide where to place the next growth bet.

How does future-focused leadership differ from general strategic planning training?

Future-focused leadership centres on how a leader scans, decides and guides a team over the long term, while general strategic planning training centres on plan documents, targets and budgets.