Family Business Successor Leadership Course: Readiness, Credibility and Handover

10 – 14 October 2027
Kuala Lumpur

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Programme Summary

Family business successor leadership is the focus of this one-week training course for successors, heirs and incoming leaders preparing to take strategic charge of a family-owned enterprise, with a personal succession readiness and handover plan as the capstone output. Many family firms falter at transition, when authority and ownership expectations collide. The programme combines family business models, self-assessment and case analysis so that successors build legitimacy and lead change deliberately. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on family business successor leadership.

The Business Case

Leadership transition is among the most exposed moments for a family enterprise. A successor without credibility can stall decisions, unsettle key staff and weaken partner confidence. Structured preparation reduces that exposure by clarifying roles, decision rights and the timing of handover.

- Continuity of performance: a planned handover protects revenue, margins and customer relationships during the change of leader.
- Retention of key people: visible successor credibility lowers the risk of losing senior non-family managers.
- Ownership cohesion: agreed governance and communication reduce family conflict that delays strategic decisions.

Principles and Evidence Base

- The three-circle model of family, ownership and business is used to map the competing expectations a successor must reconcile.
- Stewardship thinking frames leadership of the firm as custodianship for future generations rather than personal entitlement.
- Stage models of succession are applied to sequence preparation, joint leadership and full handover.
- Leader legitimacy research guides how successors earn authority through competence, fairness and results rather than inheritance alone.

Intended Participants

- Family members expected to assume executive or board leadership of the family enterprise.
- Non-family executives being prepared to lead a family-owned group on behalf of the owners.
- Senior managers currently sharing leadership with an outgoing founder or chair.
- Family council and board members who sponsor, assess or mentor the incoming generation.

The programme suits family-owned groups in trading and distribution, manufacturing, real estate and hospitality.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose their own readiness for successor leadership against role, ownership and business expectations.
2. Participants will be able to evaluate the governance structures that separate family, ownership and management decisions.
3. Participants will be able to construct a credibility-building plan with senior managers, owners and external stakeholders.
4. Participants will be able to prioritise strategic choices for renewal while respecting the legacy of the founding generation.
5. Participants will be able to design a staged handover with clear decision rights and milestones.
6. Participants will be able to justify a personal succession readiness and handover plan to a board or family council.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Successor Leadership in the Family Business

What does the family business expect of its next leader?

- Three-Circle Model of Family, Ownership and Business
- Successor Role Expectations and Hidden Assumptions
- Founder Legacy and Organisational Culture
- Successor Readiness Self-Assessment
- Personal Leadership Profile and Development Gaps

Day 2: Governance and Decision Rights

How are family, ownership and management decisions separated?

- Family Constitution and Charter Principles
- Board Composition and Independent Directors
- Family Council Roles and Meeting Discipline
- Decision Rights Matrix for Owners and Managers
- Policies on Family Employment and Remuneration

Day 3: Building Credibility and Authority

How does a successor earn legitimacy beyond inheritance?

- Sources of Leader Legitimacy
- Stakeholder Map of Managers, Siblings and Minority Owners
- Working Relationship with the Outgoing Leader
- Managing Sibling and Cousin Dynamics
- Early Wins and Visible Commitments

Day 4: Strategy for the Next Generation

Which strategic choices renew the firm without eroding its legacy?

- Portfolio Review and Renewal Options
- Professionalising Management and Non-Family Talent
- Digital and Market Adaptation Priorities
- Capital Needs and Ownership Liquidity Expectations
- Stage Model of Handover and Joint Leadership

Day 5: Handover Planning and Capstone

How will the successor lead the transition from plan to practice?

- Applying Readiness Findings to Development Priorities
- Translating Governance Choices into Handover Milestones
- Communication Plan for Family, Staff and Partners
- Peer Challenge of Handover Assumptions
- Completing the Succession Readiness and Handover Plan

Methodology

The principal method is case analysis of family enterprise transitions from several sectors, with structured self-assessment and peer review. Each session moves from a model to a diagnosis of the participant's own situation, so that the capstone plan builds day by day.

- Suggested activity: a role-play of a first meeting between a successor and a sceptical long-serving general manager.
- Suggested activity: mapping decision rights in a case family group and redesigning them for joint leadership.
- Suggested activity: a peer panel that challenges each participant's handover timeline.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a succession readiness and handover plan covering a personal readiness profile, a governance and decision rights proposal, a stakeholder credibility plan, strategic priorities for the first years and a staged handover timeline. It is written for presentation to a board or family council.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is family business successor leadership training suitable for someone not yet in a senior role?

Yes. The programme assumes a working knowledge of the family enterprise and some management experience, but not an executive title. It suits successors at any stage of preparation.

Which models underpin this family business successor leadership programme?

It rests on the three-circle model of family, ownership and business, stewardship thinking, stage models of succession and research on leader legitimacy.

How is the family business successor handover plan used at work?

You present it to your board, family council or outgoing leader as a proposal for an agreed transition, then use its milestones to track the transfer of decision rights.

How does family business successor leadership differ from general family business strategy training?

Family business strategy training addresses the enterprise as a whole. This successor leadership programme centres on the individual taking over: readiness, credibility with stakeholders and a staged handover of authority.