

Strategic Decisions

an advanced five day programme
for corporate and divisional managers



ASHRIDGE

Strategic Decisions

In most businesses, a few decisions make the difference between superior performance and ordinary results. New product launches, market segment choices, major investments and skill building initiatives are strategic decisions that can make or break a company.

Strategic decisions are seldom easy. They call for high quality strategic thinking and analysis, in order to select the right decision from amongst the many possible options. They also depend on skills in managing the decision process, so that suitable options are defined and examined, and support for the chosen decision is built.

What are the objectives of Strategic Decisions?

Strategic Decisions has been designed to help senior executives improve the quality of their strategic decision-making.

The programme gives participants a good grasp of modern concepts of strategy analysis. In practice, however, the final decision is often heavily influenced by the process used to arrive at the decision, the way managers deal with uncertainty, and the internal politics and power groupings in the organisation. Strategic Decisions will therefore also help managers to handle the process of decision-making.

Who should attend?

The programme will be valuable to those in general management positions, in staff departments such as planning or finance, and in commercial functions such as marketing and operations. It is also appropriate for professionals who provide advice on strategic decisions. The programme will be particularly valuable to managers whose main experience has been in functional positions, but who now find themselves involved in multi-functional strategic issues.

The programme will appeal to participants with a range of backgrounds, and this mix will be an important element of the learning experience. For this reason, no more than three participants from any one organisation will be accepted on each programme.

"Outstanding programme - most informative I've been on, giving me the added advantage of meeting people and getting perspectives from across the private sector worldwide."

Pietro Cecchini,
National Manager: Hospitality, Travel & Catering, The National Trust for Scotland

Timetable

(www.ashridge.org.uk/stdc)

Monday

Strategy Tools Module

- 08.30 – 09.00 Registration
- 09.00 – 09.30 Introduction to Strategy
- 09.30 – 11.00 Analysing industry structure: The drivers of industry profitability and growth
- 11.00 – 13.00 Competitive advantage: The importance of being better rather than just good
- 14.00 – 15.30 Analysing the starting position: Mapping a company relative to its competitors
- 15.30 – 17.00 Application to own business: Understanding your strategic starting point

Tuesday

Strategy tools (contd.)

- 09.00 – 10.00 Generating strategy options: Identifying new opportunities and ways to build advantage
- 10.00 – 11.00 Generating new customer value propositions: Identifying unmet customer needs and designing a new product or service
- 11.00 – 12.00 Designing business models to enter new businesses
- 12.00 – 13.00 Creating the new value chain and competitive cost structure
- 14.00 – 16.00 Exercise in building a new business: health club case study
- 16.00 – 17.30 Application to own business: Identifying your strategic options

Wednesday

Strategy Process Module

- 09.00 – 10.30 Human decision making biases: Insights and toolkit from Ashridge research
- 10.30 – 12.30 Film (part I) – Viewing and initial discussion
- 13.30 – 14.45 Review of film
- 15.00 – 16.00 Framing and Options
- 16.00 – 16.30 Preparation for role play case
- 16.30 – 18.30 Film (Part 2 – optional)

Thursday

Strategy Process (contd.)

- 08.30 – 09.00 Finance session: Understanding Net Present Value
- 09.00 – 11.30 Exercise on real examples
- 11.30 – 13.00 Integrative role play case begins (consumer goods company investment decision)
- 14.00 – 19.00 Role play case continues
- 20.30 – 22.00 Role play continues

Friday

- 08.30 – 09.45 Role play conclusion: decision point
- 10.00 – 12.30 Debrief of role play
- 12.30 Programme ends

“Pace and content was exceptional.”

Charles Louis,
Business Manager, Barnet, Enfield & Haringey
Health Informatics Service

“Great content, enjoyable format and very practical learnings.”

Caroline Naylor-Renn,
Strategy Manager, Skandia UK

What topics does Strategic Decisions cover?

Evaluating Strategy

- Analysing industry attractiveness and profitability
- Identifying sources of competitive advantage
- Analysing the value chain and cost structure
- Understanding customer needs
- Evaluating competitors

Generating options

- Designing a strategy to build competitive advantage
- Identifying market opportunities
- Developing a unique customer proposition
- Building a competitive business model and value chain
- Generating creative options

Making decisions

- Characteristics of a good decision-making process
- Questioning assumptions to re-frame the problem
- Developing evaluation criteria
- Reaching closure and taking action
- Understanding human decision-making biases
- The roles that managers play in the decision-making process

Learning approach

Strategic Decisions is split into two modules. The first covers the analytical tools and approaches required to evaluate strategy and generate options. The second module addresses human decision-making biases, and designing the decision-making process.

The key concepts are put across using a mixture of lectures, discussions and exercises, sometimes based on the participants' own businesses. We also use video to draw out some fundamental points as this greatly improves participants' retention of the content.

We draw on research by Jo Whitehead, one of the programme tutors. This provides a diagnostic that participants can use to identify the biases that individuals bring to the decision-making process, and a toolkit of approaches which can reduce the impact of those biases on the decision. The full results of this research are published in the book "Think Again", published in 2009.

The programme culminates in a role play case study in which participants are given jobs in a company and work together to make a decision about launching a new product. This reconstruction of a real case gives the opportunity to integrate and apply all the learnings of the week in a way that mirrors reality by engaging the heart as well as the head.

"Really benefited me - some brilliant, applicable principles and models that I can take back and apply."

Amanda Flanagan,
Business Unit Director, Sanofi Aventis

Faculty

Stephen Bungay

Stephen Bungay was educated at St Catherine's College, Oxford, where he received an MA with First Class Honours. He studied for his doctorate at St Catherine's and the University of Tübingen, West Germany. Stephen worked in the London and Munich offices of The Boston Consulting Group for a total of seventeen years, eight of them as Vice President and Director. On leaving BCG, he became CEO of the commercial Division of a Lloyds-based insurance company, before leaving to concentrate on writing and teaching. He published

his first book in 2000, a second in 2002 and is a frequent contributor to television programmes. He is also the Programme Director for Making Strategy Happen.



Jo Whitehead

After gaining an MBA with High Distinction from Harvard Business School, Jo worked for the Boston Consulting Group in Asia, Europe and the United States for 20 years, five of them as a Vice President and Director. Jo was also an Assistant Professor at the London Business School from where he received his PhD in Strategic Decision Making. He became a director of the Ashridge Strategic Management Centre in 2005 and is also a Fellow of the Centre for Management Development at London Business School, where he teaches on a mix of executive and MBA courses. Jo's research into strategic decision-making was published by the Harvard Business Press in 2009, under the title "Think Again". This research is presented during the course of Strategic Decisions.



Booking information

Strategic Decisions is typically taken over the course of a week, as a five-day, residential programme which starts on Monday morning and ends on Friday afternoon. The programmes are held at Ashridge Business School, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 1NS.

Dates:

10 – 14 May 2010	8 – 12 November 2010
9 – 13 May 2011	7 – 11 November 2011

The fee for the five day programme in 2010 is £5,500 (+VAT) payable in advance which includes four nights' residential costs, tuition fees and learning materials.

We also offer the course in two modules – the first, on strategy tools, in March or September in Central London and the second, on the decision process (including the

role play exercise), in May or November at Ashridge. Alternatively, you may take only the strategy tools module.

Dates:

2 – 3 March 2010	22 – 23 September 2010
1 – 2 March 2011	21 – 22 September 2011

The fee for the two day non-residential strategy tools module only, in 2010, is £2,500 (+VAT) payable in advance which includes tuition fees, lunches and learning materials.

To reserve a place on this programme, please contact Melinda Pooley:

Tel: +44 (0)20 7404 0032

Email: melinda.pooley@ashridge.org.uk

Register directly on the internet at www.ashridge.org.uk/stdc

Selected other programmes at Ashridge

Group Level Strategy is a three day programme for line managers and functional specialists at group and division levels. It is a unique opportunity for managers to rethink their role in creating value. Based on the ground-breaking research of Andrew Campbell and Michael Goold, the programme is about the senior management jobs at their most visible; fundamental choices that affect business performance.

Advanced Organisation Design is a four day programme for experienced managers on designing organisations that fit the strategy and the people. It focuses on practical tools that provide a rigorous framework for making design choices.

Making Strategy Happen is an advanced four day programme for managers involved in turning plans into action. Building on research into business and military methods for

implementing strategy, this programme shows managers how to bridge the three gaps of planning, implementation and adaptation.

Strategic Human Resource Management is a five day highly interactive programme for senior human resource professionals or line managers responsible for strategy implementation through HR management. This popular programme will focus on the overall business strategy so that, in HR terms, more value can be created in areas that actually matter.

Influencing Strategies and Skills is a five day programme which builds a lively awareness of how influencing works, using a variety of experiential approaches to illustrate key techniques and classic situations. This programme provides the skills, confidence and self-awareness required to successfully influence others to achieve lasting results.

For more information

Visit www.ashridge.org.uk/open
or contact Melinda Pooley,
Ashridge Strategic Management Centre.
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Programmes are residential at Ashridge
Business School, near Berkhamsted,
Hertfordshire HP4 1NS.



"Very balanced and well prepared. Excellent trainers."

Achim Braun,
Director Human Resources Asia, Continental Automotive Systems