

Developing future leaders for a global oil and gas company

Developing the Leadership Pipeline

For one of Asia's largest oil and gas companies, regulatory changes in the country meant operating in a whole new way. Working in a de-regulated and competitive business environment called for a change in the mindset and orientation of the top leadership. The company chairman felt the need to develop a talent pool of senior executives for future board-level positions, who had the mindset and skills to operate not only in such a dynamic and global environment but also in upstream and downstream energy businesses in a complex and growing multinational enterprise.

ISB's in-depth experience in designing long-term customised learning solution for large organisations and its global pool of experienced faculties in specific domains made it a natural partner of choice for the organisation. The design team at the Centre for Executive Education (CEE) in consultation with its global faculty pool co-created the transformation programme while the company's executive team provided the business context.

A Customised Design and Delivery Approach

"To design the programme, extensive needs analysis was done in two stages," says Deepak Chandra, Deputy Dean, ISB. In the first stage we analysed the strategic challenges, competencies and training needs based on in-depth interviews with the chairman, board of directors and HR team. This was followed up with a focus group discussion with a representative sample of participants and a learning needs and expectation survey for all selected participants. In the second stage, we connected with global business schools and faculty having extensive experience in leadership development in oil and gas industry. Research was also done on business challenges of other global oil and gas corporations through in-depth interviews of past and present employees. It was very crucial to have both the inside and outside view to successfully design the programme".

Results of the two stages were then mapped to evolve the leadership and general management competencies needed for successful management of large oil and gas corporations. The entire programme was conducted by faculty selected from leading global business schools with relevant experience in research, executive education and consulting in oil and gas industry.

Confidential

CLIENT

A Fortune 500 oil and gas exploration and production company.

PROGRAMME CONTEXT

Develop the next level of global leadership for board positions with the right competencies and mindsets to operate in a growing multinational enterprise.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Senior functional heads from different operating units with more than 20 years of experience.

LEARNING SOLUTION

A 45-day programme delivered in three phases over 1 year, addressing 3 levels of competencies – general management competencies, strategy & leadership skills, and advanced management concepts for leadership in the oil and gas sector. Exposure to global best practices through international study tour and global industry visits.

IMPACT

The senior executives gained leadership and general management competencies. Action learning projects helped the organisation solve real-life business problems. High potential future leaders were identified and nurtured.

PRE-PROGRAMME RESEARCH

INTERNAL: Analysis of challenges, competencies, and training needs

EXTERNAL: Discussions with global faculty, industry leaders and domain experts

LEARNING INTERVENTION

Phase 1

Strategic Management and Personal Leadership

360 feedback, executive coaching and Individual Development Plans (IDP)

Phase 2

Functional Excellence and Industry Expert modules

Practical insights on the industry, managing PSU, environmental concerns, etc.

Phase 3

Global Industry Immersion

Visits to oil and gas industries in USA, Malaysia and Singapore

Phase 4

Business Leadership and Advanced Management modules

Repeat 360 feedback, review of IDP for measuring improvement in leadership behaviour

Phase 5

Post Programme Assessment

Preparation of individual dossiers and identification of high potential performers

ACTION LEARNING AND FACILITATION BY FACULTY

Action Learning: Individual and company excellence model building, cross-functional projects for strategic initiatives

Mile-stone based mid-term reviews for project monitoring

The Learning Experience

The programme was delivered in 5 phases, in batches of around 30 participants. The Strategic Management and Personal Leadership module in the first phase created a common and shared language and understanding among the senior executives. 360° feedbacks were taken in this stage along with extensive one-on-one coaching from senior HR professionals resulting in creation of Individual Development Plans (IDP) for each participant.

In the second phase, Functional Excellence and Industry Expert modules provided practical industry insights by bringing in domain experts. The third phase consisted of Global Industry Immersion, where participants visited oil and gas companies in other countries. The fourth phase was on Business Leadership and Advanced Management concepts in the oil and gas industry with issues like corporate governance, restructuring and geopolitics etc. It also involved a repeat of the 360° feedbacks as well review of IDP to measure improvement in leadership behaviour of the participants. The fifth and last phase involved preparation and assessment of individual dossiers wherein potential high performers were identified.

Three unique pedagogies were utilised in the programme: **Mix of theory and practice:** While academic framework and tools were provided by faculty, practical insights were provided through a 5-day specialised industry module delivered by a team of global industry experts, analysts and practitioners

Learning from global best practices: A nine-day global industry visit was organised to learn from best practices from fellow global organisations in Malaysia and United States. Details on the organisations and presentations were shared in advance for in-depth discussions and co-creation of knowledge during visits. The visit also included 2-day learning at a global institution specialising in oil and gas education

Action Learning: The design also incorporated “Action projects” at three levels:

- Individual, workplace-based excellence model building
- Cross-functional projects identified by the chairman based on organisational priorities
- Team projects to strategise for future scenarios and uncertainties. E.g. Energy scenario in 2020 and the corporation’s strategic response

“What was great was that the course was not entirely theoretical”, says a programme participant. “We got several practical insights through the specialized industry module as well as from the global industry tour. We understood how other global companies worked and learnt from their best practices.”

Impact and Evaluation

ISB also made recommendations to create cross-functional teams from the participants which would undertake strategic projects. This served three purposes:

- Solve organisation problems through internal consultants with an internal perspective
- Provide a platform for continuous strategic learning
- Identify and groom high performing leaders and teams in this process

“Very useful for developing people management attributes and finding solutions to strategic organisational challenges”

Programme Participant

The individuals and groups were assessed through their project preparation and presentations, peer reviews and personal interview with a panel of experts from and outside the organisation. The final assessment report was submitted to the company chairman. “The evaluation helped us to identify the high performers and define their career paths and further learning needs”, says the HR Director.

The custom programme team at CEE also helped participants translate the learning into action at the workplace. The transfer of learning was facilitated through web communities which provided access to ISB’s vast digital resources as well as global faculty resources. Project progress was monitored and facilitated through milestone-based mid-term reviews through mail, telephone and planned mid-term presentations.

Thus the learning process continued beyond the programme and delivered a strategic impact.