

SCENARIO PLANNING: Envisioning Futures

Overview

Uncertainty is the hallmark of strategy making and business thinking in the 21st century.

Currently, businesses face the prospect of an extended economic downturn. But consumer demand drivers are changing as well and technology is rendering obsolete traditional sources of competitive advantage. However, there are even more significant problems ahead for managers and business leaders. The world is under going a once in a decade metamorphosis in the global balance of political and economic power. No one knows with certainty which economies will shape the world in the coming decades.

These pressures mean that traditional business planning processes – that consider only one possible future – *are obsolete*. This programme aims to provide managers and leaders with the tools necessary to create:

- (a) a range of possible future environments that their businesses could face and
- (b) strategies that are robust enough to deliver results in different future worlds.

Scenario planning is an established technique for dealing with uncertainty but it is not widely used as most approaches take time and are resource hungry. The approach used in this course overcomes both these pitfalls, allowing scenarios to be rapidly developed without complex resource draining methodologies.

Course Content

The focal point of this one-day course is the provision of the tools that will help delegates to envision the range of possible futures that their business will face.

The module will encompass:

- § Why traditional business planning techniques will fail.
- § The key differences between scenario planning and forecasting.
- § Understanding the key 'macro' and 'micro' levels forces that inter-act to shape the future. Delegates will learn how to identify these forces and their potential to disrupt the marketplace by examining real-life case studies from financial services, technology and consumer goods sectors.
- § How to identify forces where the most significant levels of uncertainty exist.
- § How to develop a scenario timeline showing how the relevant forces at the 'macro' and 'micro' inter-act.
- § Development of implications for delegates' businesses.
- § Tests of strategic robustness – will current strategies win through?
- § Development of an early warning scorecard.
- § How to present scenarios in a simple visual format.
- § Resources for the scenario builder.

Importantly, delegates will use these techniques to build a sample scenario during the course.

Outcomes

After the course delegates will have a practical appreciation of:

- § How scenario planning can help businesses manage uncertainty.
- § The tools and approaches to use.
- § How to make scenario planning part of the day to day life in the organisation as opposed to a one-off exercise.
- § How to use early warning indicators.