

Leadership for a Sustainable Future

Moving Beyond ESG to Create Real Value

INTRODUCTION

Evidence is mounting that our legacy growth model, focused on shareholder value maximization, is not sustainable. The significant social and environmental costs of climate change, natural capital destruction, and rising income inequality that our old growth model is perpetuating, are increasingly affecting business, while unfairly impacting the bottom of the pyramid, putting pressure on the social contract and risking geo-political stability. As consumers, investors and regulators align around the need for a more sustainable future, tremendous opportunities arise for corporate players that take leadership positions in the biggest transition of this century, the transition towards models of growth that are environmentally responsible, socially just and ethically governed (ESG).

To take advantage of the ESG opportunity, companies need to transform themselves and the ecosystems in which they operate. The leadership mindset and skills required to successfully navigate and lead this transformation are markedly different from the mindset and skills that drove the old growth model. Future leaders will be expected to drive more regenerative and inclusive growth models, that work with nature, not against, that serve wider society, not only shareholders and that create value in the long term as well as the short.

This executive education module helps current and future leaders in business and public sectors better understand the trends that are quickly shaping the ESG future, see the opportunities arising from the sustainability transition and reflect on new leadership skills that will become essential for success and impact in this changing landscape. Taking insights from the sustainability transformation journeys of some of the leading corporate pioneers from Europe and the US, concepts, tools and methods will be introduced that will strengthen leaders' ability to transform themselves, their organisations and the wider systems in which they operate.

INSTRUCTOR PROFILE:

[Geert-Jan \(GJ\) van der Zanden](#) is managing director at [Xynteo](#), which helps reinvent leadership and drive systems change for and with some of the world's most progressive companies, including Unilever, IKEA, Mastercard, EDP, Yara, Verizon and Microsoft. He has worked with top leadership teams across sectors to help them equip themselves and their organisations to navigate the complex challenges of climate change, the shifting social contract, designing sustainable food systems, the energy transition and digital transformation. He is an appreciated guest lecturer on the topic of future-fit and transformational leadership at universities in Asia and Europe. He studied his MBA at IESE (Spain) and Dartmouth (USA) and obtained his MSc in Environmental Management and Policy at IIIIEE, Lund University (Sweden). He is an avid diver and runner and strong believer in the power of diversity.

KEY LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES EXPLORED:

1. As the biggest transformation of the century is accelerating around the world, what are the trends and forces that leaders need to understand to identify and unlock opportunities for new value creation arising from the sustainability transition? What can SE Asian companies learn from the experience of leading international MNCs pioneering the sustainability transition and what makes the SE Asian context unique?
2. In a reality where the impact of leaders' decision goes beyond their own operations, industry or sectoral walls, how can leaders develop the curiosity, awareness and humility, identify and avoid

filters and biases, and strengthen the ability to challenge norms, to make meaning of intelligence from a range of sources and to engage with trends before they become 'clear and present'?

3. In a world that is increasingly critically interconnected and complex, how can leaders better understand the complexity and interlinkages of systems, stakeholders and events, and identify opportunities for system interventions, to take better decisions for themselves, their organisations and the systems in which they operate?
4. With challenges increasingly being at system level (climate change, poverty/ inequality, resource depletion), innovation increasingly taking place in ecosystems and technological and business transformation fading the borders between sectors, how can leaders help their organisations build high performing teams and mindsets that bridge traditional company and sector silos and create value through effective collaboration and partnerships?
5. When short term competitive pressures force companies to prioritise hyper-efficiency of legacy models, how can leaders create the mental and physical space to radically reinvent the business before it is being disrupted by others?
6. In a complex and ambiguous environment, with limited certainty and considerable doubt, how can leaders prepare to make decisions, mobilise support and action, and build rapid feedback loops to test-fail-learn-pivot in a fast and agile manner?
7. Events like Covid-19 are demonstrating that individuals, companies, supply chains and systems need to better equip themselves for the unexpected. How can leaders and organisations strengthen their resilience by structurally thinking about and preparing for a range of future scenarios, and develop a framework for dealing with unexpected crises and developing strategies for the 'new normal'?
8. At the crossroads where we are learning that the old capitalist growth model needs to be reinvented to provide regenerative and inclusive growth, how can leaders use their personal purpose to lead and align others to reimagine their organisations at the intersection of commercial interest and societal need?

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, participants will:

1. Better understand the trends driving the evolution of, and opportunities emerging from, the sustainability transition.
2. Have gained insights from the sustainability transformation journeys of some of the world's most progressive multinationals.
3. Have Identified the leadership skills that are critical for personal and organizational success in the sustainable future
4. Be able to deploy powerful tools and frameworks to effectively develop and apply these skills, among others:
 - a. To holistically analyse trends, actors and dynamics affecting the systems we operate in;
 - b. To better engage stakeholders for the (co-)creation of a shared vision;
 - c. To identify opportunities for value creation and levers for the transformation of complex systems;
 - d. To develop a disruptive capacity and bias for action in a complex, uncertain, fast changing world;
 - e. To develop compelling leadership narratives to drive transformation at personal, organisational and systems level
5. Be able to reflect on their own progress in developing knowledge, skills, and purpose associated with effective leadership for the sustainable future.

TEACHING METHODS:

The learning approach is based on a combination of highly interactive experiential learning and group engagement, to encourage self- and group-reflection and stimulate valuable cross-sector knowledge exchange and networking between participants. Sessions will include:

- Introduction and plenary group discussion to explore and reflect on key concepts surrounding the ESG transition and implications for leadership.
- Introduction of methods and tools to strengthen leadership skills identified by CEOs of leading global MNCs as essential for success in the ESG future.
- Assisted group work to apply valuable tools to strengthen critical leadership capabilities for the ESG future
- Video and facilitated interaction with external expert speaker(s)
- Short pre-, during and post-course polls/surveys

The course will be given over a 2-day period, in English language.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

- Senior leaders that want to drive transformation of their organisations to capture the opportunities related to the sustainability transition.
- Middle management leaders with 5-20 years of experience in public or private sector that are aiming to ascend to senior leadership positions in their organisations.

MODULE STRUCTURE

Timing	Module element	Key topics
Day 1		
09:00-09:30	Introduction	1. Welcome & intro to course 2. Personal relevance 3. Course roadmap and practical considerations
09:30-10:30	1. The sustainability imperative	4. Planetary limits and systems in which we live 5. How are we doing? 6. Sustainable development and new growth 7. Playback of biggest challenges identified by participants (from pre-course survey)
10:30-10:45	break	
10:45-11:45	2. The biggest business opportunity of the 21 st century	8. What is holding back the sustainability transition in (SE) Asia? 9. The business opportunity: The perfect storm 10. Risks of Greenwashing
11:45-12:45	Lunch	
12:45-14:15	3. The corporate transformation journey towards sustainable value creation	11. Recap of the morning

- 12. Evolution of Corporate Sustainability Strategy / ESG
- 13. Learning from sustainability leaders and laggards
- 14. The unique SE Asian context and challenges
- 15. Key building blocks of the transformation journey
- 16. ESG integration in practise

14:15-14:30	break	
14:30-15:15	4. Leadership in a changing world	17. Leadership discussion 18. Personal objectives survey 19. Future-fit leadership
15:15-16:30	5. Future-fit leadership skill: Contextual mindfulness	20. Contextual Mindfulness 21. Identifying biases
15:40-15:50	break	
16:30-17:30	6. Future-fit leadership skill: Systems range	22. Intro to 3-Horizon & group exercise 23. Systems Range 24. Intro to System mapping & group exercise
17:30-18:00		Reflection over drink

Timing	Module element	Key topics
Day 2		
09:00-09:10	Day 1 recap and day 2 plan	
09:10-11:00	7. Future-fit leadership skill: Collaborative competence	25. Collaborative competence 26. Tools 27. Tailoring communication: Onion model of communication 28. Narrative – Golden Circle
10:05-10:15	break	
11:00-12:30	8. Future-fit leadership skills: Radical Intent / Bias for Action / Scenario Thinking	29. Stakeholder empathy / actor mapping and exercise 30. Radical intent 31. Bias for action 32. Scenario thinking

33. After-lunch workplan / group deliverable

12:30-13:30

Lunch

13:30-14:50

9. Group engagement

34. Systems transformation idea generation

14:50-15:00

break

15:00-16:00

10. Systems transformation presentations

35. Presentation of group work (6-8 min each x 6-8)

36. Evaluation discussion

16:00-17:00

11. Future-fit leadership skill: Purpose

37. Intro to Purpose

38. Guest speaker (in-person / virtual)

17:00-17:30

Conclusion

39. Stream of consciousness exercise

40. Final reflections, closure