

# CASE STUDY: PwC UK and the learning power of the FT

## How FT perspectives strengthened PwC's client conversations

### THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGE

PwC, one of the world's 'big four' professional services firms, was quick to recognise the profound changes sweeping through its markets. From digital technologies to new audit competition, these trends are not just reshaping the competitive landscape. They are changing the very world of work. If PwC partners, both new and old, were to continue to be seen as business leaders they would need **to develop new skills and insights that clients could rely on**. 'The need to stay relevant has never been greater', says Jeni Taylor, Head of Business Performance and Leadership at PwC UK.



"The most value I have got from two hours in a long time."

"I have a better understanding of what is possible; what the constraints might be."

### THE LEARNING CHALLENGE

PwC UK had traditionally approached leading business schools for help but wanted to take a fresh approach. The firm wanted access to respected **experts who could reaffirm, enrich or challenge existing views**, but also something focused, relevant and practical that could be of immediate use.

PwC's first challenge was to find a learning provider with an unrivalled understanding of today's news and trends, and who could analyse the potential impact on clients' business.

Its second challenge was to work collaboratively with the learning provider from initial design through to execution. PwC's own innovative and dynamic approach to learning meant that programmes needed to be tested and refined as and when needed to ensure that they met the exacting standards of its partners.

The third challenge was to persuade those extremely busy PwC partners to schedule time to participate in such a learning event. It therefore had to be purpose-built, tightly focused and sufficiently high level. The conventional briefing lecture would not work. PwC wanted a genuine two-way conversation with the acknowledged experts.

The Financial Times | IE Business School Corporate Learning Alliance offered both the co-design flexibility and access to the right expertise that PwC was seeking.

### FT FACILITATORS ON THE PwC PROGRAMME



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Chief Leader Writer



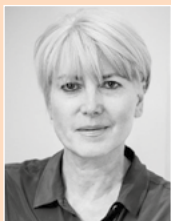
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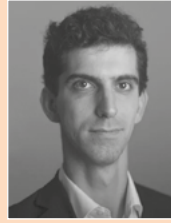


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## FT FACILITATORS ON THE PwC PROGRAMME



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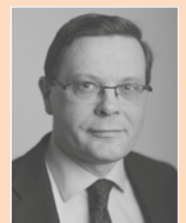
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### CO-CREATING A FLEXIBLE SOLUTION

Since the start of 2016, FT | IE Corporate Learning Alliance has worked closely with PwC to create exactly the right format. Following design meetings, interviews with PwC stakeholders, and a pilot workshop, a revised programme was launched. **‘We identified a rich thread of FT insight which we wanted to use in the most effective way,’** recalls Ms Taylor. ‘The result was a perfectly tailored learning solution.’

The first two-hour workshop explored how companies could best respond to Brexit—a subject on every client’s mind, but with few obvious answers. The session began with an intense, one-hour FT-led panel discussion. The second hour consisted of parallel table workshops, each comprising 5-7 partners, facilitated by FT journalists. These allowed partners to discuss their own business perspectives on Brexit and learn from experiences of colleagues in other departments—most of whom had not met before—another design goal. Key insights from the table discussions were then summarised and shared with the full group.



**“Priorities and economic impact were key subjects for me — I really enjoyed the format.”**

**“It was great to be engaged in authoritative debate”**



**“Excellent. Fantastic insight.”**

### DEMONSTRATING VALUE AND IMPACT

The refined format worked extremely well. As a result, PwC’s partners were keen to propose three new topics for subsequent sessions. Discussion on global trade, the new Trump Presidency and artificial intelligence proved equally successful, and a new series was agreed for 2018.

Perhaps the most important factor in the programme’s success was the seniority and calibre of the selected FT experts. PwC partners particularly valued the journalists’ insider view, and their insights gleaned from conversations ‘with politicians, bureaucrats and business people outside [my] own network,’ said one.

Equally important for participants was to be able to stress-test their views on issues that directly affect their clients, including: ‘the sectors that have done most planning for Brexit;’ ‘the impact on the labour and talent market;’ ‘dynamics between politics and economics;’ ‘supply chain threats;’ ‘reshoring;’ and ‘subtleties around WTO entry.’ Crucially, partner feedback suggests that **these insights are now being integrated into client conversations.**

According to one: ‘This was the most value I have got from two hours in a long time.’

**FT | IE Corporate Learning Alliance is a customised executive education and development company. A joint venture between Financial Times and IE Business School, we were formed in response to growing calls for more relevant, timely and engaging corporate learning solutions that help leaders and companies address a broad range of business transformation challenges.**