



CASE STUDY: ARLA FOODS

How we helped a fast-growing international dairy company to think more creatively and work more collaboratively.

THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGE: INNOVATION-LED EXPANSION

Arla Foods, one of the world’s leading dairy companies, headquartered in Denmark, was embarking on a major organic growth strategy ‘*Good Growth 2020*’. Renowned for its innovative and nutritious consumer brands, the farmer-owned company wanted to expand and enter new markets worldwide with healthy, natural, responsible and products’. **To achieve its ambitious goals, it realised it had to encourage collaboration and new thinking and build a more unified business—‘One Arla’.** Conscious of the responsibility to their owners, the management team knew that these signs of environmental change could not be ignored. Change was needed in organisational capacity.



“Highly engaged and motivating educators.”



“This program has delivered the knowledge and tools [that] are needed in order to lift us.”

THE LEARNING CHALLENGE:

FLEXIBLE DESIGN AND COLLABORATION

Arla’s answer was a leadership program for 280 directors to help them think and act more strategically. The company was already working with a business school, and was considering using the traditional business school model again. But after hearing about the FT | IE Corporate Learning Alliance’s unique, flexible and collaborative approach to corporate learning, Arla decided to try a new approach for this project. **IE’s entrepreneurial ethos fitted Arla’s aim to revitalise some of the innovative spirit that had long characterised the company.** Perhaps more importantly, Arla wanted to co-create programs that could be refined and perfected at any stage in the process. **As an expanding international company, it needed its learning partner to be able to operate anywhere, anytime and tap into the widest range of expertise.**

A ‘design jam’ was organised in June 2016, at which teams from FT | IE Corporate Learning Alliance and Arla worked together to create a two-year customised program. Its first two editions, each involving a cohort of 30 directors and lasting three months, took place in 2017. An online induction was followed by two offsite modules and a webinar, along with online weekly challenges facilitated by Corporate Learning Alliance experts.

“We have a winning formula.”

Claus Skaarup Flensburg, Learning and Development Director, Arla

SELECTED EDUCATORS



Educator
Roger Hallowell
Global Mindset



Educator
Alvaro Gonzalez
Leadership &
Transformation



Educator
Ricardo Perez
Innovation



Educator
Marcos Eguillor
Business Projects



Preethi Nair
Effective Leadership
through Storytelling

INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATORS

The first, four-day offsite module was held at an IE site in the historic city of Segovia, Spain: *'a fantastic and inspiring location to focus on learning'* said one participant. The second part of the program was held at hotel Legoland in Billund, Denmark, allowing participants to consolidate and implement what they had learnt.

The *'highly engaged and motivating'* educators covered leadership skills around innovation, collaboration and strategy execution. They included: understanding industry challenges; marketing a disruptive product; how storytelling can convey a message with more power; and the mapping of each participant's strengths and weakness against Arla's own list of desired leadership traits as the basis for Personal Action Plans. (A 'cheese-tasting' session was even included to provoke thoughts about quality and product promotion). One participant described it as: *'Inspirational learning. It enabled me to see things differently and to identify areas of personal and team development and improvement'*.



"This was a brilliant program which will transform how I work."

"The program enabled me to see things differently"



"Inspirational learning."

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

One of the most important parts of the program were the Business Projects. From the outset, participants worked with a facilitator on new ideas around innovation and optimisation. These ranged from new products and working practices to cost-reduction ideas such as an app to co-ordinate travel, packaging and logistics. These were presented to a judging panel at the end of the second module and the winning team was invited to pilot their project after the formal program had ended.

Another major reason for the program's success was the FT | IE Corporate Learning Alliance's ability to identify, deploy and then adapt program elements—including bringing in new educators—as and when needed. The initial format would be constantly improved over a total of eight editions held during 2017-18, until all 300 staff had been through the program.

Crucially, the program was highly practical: *'I am absolutely sure that this program has delivered the knowledge and tools [that] are needed in order to lift us to the next level'* recalls one participant. *'This is a brilliant program, which will transform how I work'* says another.

'We haven't just helped our people learn.

We have helped ourselves learn too - and we are all better for it'

Line Holt Wilgaard, Senior HR Manager, Leadership Development, Arla Foods