



# global focus

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Outstanding and impactful partnerships between  
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# Accelerating Strategy Execution and Professional Development

## ING and 'the world we work in'

Jetske van Heusden, Kate Ng and Gert-Jan van Wijk describe how ING and *'the world we work in'* co-created the High Impact Performance (HIP) programme. Designed for High Value Specialists (HVS), the HIP simultaneously accelerates strategy execution and HVS' professional development from technical specialist to trusted advisor.

### Challenge

At the International Conference in June 2004, the former CEO of ING Group addressed his top 200 managers head on: What skills would the new strategy require? Did ING have these skills in sufficient supply? If not, how would they be developed?

Managerial decision-making, responded the top 200, was sound. It was in executing the outcomes of these decisions that the company could hugely benefit from becoming more adept. One particular group stood out – the High Value Specialists (HVS): the high-potential, non-managerial people who “get things done”. With no systematic approach to their development, their potential was significantly under-utilised.

This was just the sort of assignment that ING Business School (IBS) relishes: the mandate to deliver a programme that would be at the heart of the new strategy. The chosen partner for this initiative was 'the world we work in' (TWWWI), a global network of experienced faculty and facilitators who share the values of co-creation, business involvement and impact on both the business and the specialist community.





### Challenge linked to strategy and desired impact

The team started by taking some critical design decisions, which connected the development initiative firmly to corporate strategy and secured the natural involvement of ING business line management and talent management in the design of each High Impact Performance (HIP). Since 2005 until today, these decisions have remained fundamental to its success.

1. Run the programme at a business line or functional level. While ING's initial request was an open enrolment programme for ING Group, the design team quickly realised that the HVS could better impact corporate strategy through business/functional strategy rather than directly. This business line focus would also engage their motivations more effectively.
2. Request the commitment and participation of a management team (MT) member who acts as a business line sponsor for the programme. This sponsor co-designs the programme and participates in a strategic dialogue with participants.
3. Focus participant nominations on the business line interest. Nominations are done by line and talent management, allowing participants to build a job-focused, information-rich network that has relevance back in the business.
4. Customise each programme to the strategy and key challenges of the business line.
5. Involve three [internal] clients – senior managers from the business line who each bring a live strategic problem to the programme.
6. Involve talent management in nomination, pre-programme phase, re-entry session and post-programme follow up.



### The emergence of a model

One of the benefits of a trusting partnership is that it facilitates learning and knowledge creation. Neither party to the partnership arrived with a model for the HIP. This took shape and evolved as we discovered the requirements of the business environment.

Next step was to interview potential participants, line managers and talent managers to understand more about HVS challenges. The outcomes were tested in five presentations, including the piloting business line. The challenges below were then agreed, along with the "three pillars" model of: strategy, client and personal impact.

- Work in more diverse virtual global teams as the business is becoming more international [impact].
- Be able to actively search for strategic direction through desk research and interviews internally and externally [strategy and impact]
- Translate these directions to implications for their own value contribution [strategy and impact].
- Understand [internal] client needs from the perspective of the client, which is essentially multi-disciplinary and strategic [client and impact].
- Build a client relationship outside the technical domain of the HVS [impact].
- Craft a workshop instead of a presentation, to influence others effectively through interaction and dialogue [impact].
- Understand their own personal styles better and how their preferred styles impact their interactions with others [impact].
- Use their personal differences and signature presence in presenting and influencing others [impact].

## ING and 'the world we work in'

The four-day programme itself is made up of a series of well-timed and sequenced action learning assignments based upon the challenges above, interspersed with theory and skills workshops.

For example, virtual teams are required to investigate part of the business line strategy starting four weeks prior to the programme. Each team presents the outcomes through an interactive workshop in which they must engage and effectively influence their fellow participants and strategy sponsor. They are supported by theoretical inputs and skills practices in areas such as dialogue, influence, team working and presentation.

After 15 iterations of the programme across different business lines and functions a second model emerged – a generic career track for specialists, similar to the career development described by Sharan and Drotter (2001) in "The Leadership Pipeline".

Three stages were identified: technical expert, trusted advisor and strategic business partner. The HIP helps technical experts make the transition to trusted advisors. Gert-Jan van Wijk describes "The specialist career track" in a separate article, which is also included in the EFMD EiP case study (appendix 5).

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*Virtual teams, are required to investigate part of the business line strategy starting four weeks prior to the programme*



### Ongoing customisation

As each business line or group function differs and individual learning needs change, the design changes accordingly. This is accomplished through a series of design steps for each programme:

- Initial conversation between lead faculty and talent manager about the participant group, strategy sponsor and senior managers joining the HIP.
- Design meeting with strategy sponsor to design the virtual team assignment
- Briefing meeting with strategy sponsor and senior managers.
- 30-minute participant briefing calls to start the learning process and understand participants' needs. Faculty fine-tunes the programme based on these.
- Letter to participants' line managers, inspiring them to support the development of their report, prior and post programme.
- Conference call for all participants to kick off the VT assignment.
- Faculty team meeting to discuss the detailed programme and its customised elements and assign roles.

### Impact

Since 2005, 65 programmes have been run successfully within nine business lines and group functions, in Europe, the US and Asia. Over 1,300 participants plus 250 senior managers and strategy sponsors have been involved. Post-programme evaluations show consistent average ratings of 4.5 on a 5-point scale.

Recently, however, both partners felt the need to review the impact of the programme on a deeper level. An impact study was conducted four to six months post-programme, among 100 HIP alumni and 15 strategy sponsors and senior managers. The key findings showed the impact was experienced as "strong" although less so (score 4.0) than in immediate post programme evaluations. Participants felt the HIP's greatest impact was personal.

Strategy sponsors and senior managers, however, emphasised the business impact:

"Personally, I was impressed with the workshops they ran during the HIP session; their views on potential steps to take in the light of revising our strategy in this changing environment were relevant and refreshing. I'm confident that these learning initiatives are strong engagement drivers and powerful enablers of our 5-year strategy." (CFO & Strategy sponsor).

The study concluded the HIP programme really is a leadership programme for HVS in the context of their relevant strategy and client environment. It highlighted opportunities to enhance faculty capability and post programme follow-up. As ING splits its insurance and banking businesses, the programme continues to support both.



# 65

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# 4.5

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