

Case Study

Advanced Management Practice



Laura Brailey
Head of Retail Operations
Mazda Motor Company UK

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“Real credibility shines through every speaker”

How did you come to be on the Advanced Management Practice programme?

‘As a member of Mazda UK’s senior management team, I had already discussed future development needs with my HR Director to further progress my career with the company. He was in contact with Henley, so when a place became available on the programme and he and my MD were asked to consider nominating a suitable candidate, I was a good fit.’

So what were your expectations, and how did the reality of the programme differ?

‘I had been on management courses in the past, so being honest, I thought it might be quite theoretic, quite dry. But it was completely different. It was so practical, and I could apply what I’d learned so directly to my work. And I was personally challenged to make my learning relevant. It really surprised me; it was very refreshing. The richness of the programme content was very appealing to me.’

What were the highlights of the programme for you?

‘One of the sessions was ‘Formulating Strategy in Complex Times’, and it was so relevant to my work challenges. The presenter was so engaging; we just listened to his real-life stories, and admired his passion and knowledge, and the generosity with which he was willing to impart his experiences. All the speakers on the programme were fantastic, but he really stood out for me.’

So what impact did that have professionally and personally?

‘It gave me a hunger for knowledge, and for exploring and finding ideas and value outside the usual boundaries. Working in the motor industry, I tended to look within the industry for ideas and best practice, but after we visited a local brewery, the approach they took opened my eyes to a wider range of possibilities.

‘The session on resilient leadership really resonated with me too, and a lot of the learnings about psychological aspects of leadership helped me in very practical ways. One of the first sessions we had - on the subject of ‘The Leader Inside’ - was all about how the brain deals with dilemmas. It’s so rare that we have time to think about these kinds of issues, but the course gives you permission to do it.

‘I’m definitely more confident now, and I find myself being comfortable in much more advanced strategic conversations. Recently, I was asked to take the lead in a meeting about change management; previously I would have taken a back seat because I felt I didn’t have the knowledge or insights. But I was quite relaxed about it; it was a massive step forward for me from where I was.’

So what advice would you give to anyone who might be thinking of enrolling on the programme?

‘Go with an open mind. Be prepared to question yourself and your organisation. And learn from people who have been there and done it; succeeded commercially at the highest level. They’ve earned the right to be listened to. Real credibility shines through every speaker. So take it in.’

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