

UNILEVER FOCUSES ON FACTORY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TO UNLOCK GLOBAL PRODUCTIVITY POTENTIAL



SOLUTION HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- A global leadership programme enhances factory frontline managers' leadership and collaboration skills.
- Engaging people, increasing productivity and operational efficiency are key aspects of the programme, upskilling managers to tackle future challenges with confidence.
- A local, flexible approach ensures content is aligned with needs so participants can learn what they need to and in their own language, keeping costs to a minimum.
- Unilever uses a variety of tools to measure improvements in leadership effectiveness and operational efficiency, with the Lerma Factory in Mexico achieving a 10% increase in overall equipment effectiveness (OEE).

ABOUT UNILEVER

Established over 100 years ago, Unilever is now one of the world's largest consumer goods companies. Its portfolio ranges from foods to soaps, shampoos and everyday household care products and includes world-leading brands such as Knorr, Dove and Domestos. In 2024, Unilever's reach spanned 190 countries and employed 128,000 employees.

THE CHALLENGE

Unilever's goal is to deliver best-in-class performance with its market-making, superior brands. The 280+ factories operated by Unilever play a significant role in its business' growth strategy. It recognises the pivotal role that factory frontline managers have in motivating their teams and delivering actions and efficiency at an operational level. Their jobs are extensive as they are required

to maximise production capability, ensure consistent performance and streamline training processes, all while minimising the learning curve for new hires and reducing production line gaps.

Veronica Luna, Global Learning and Development Lead for Supply Chain, Unilever, explains,

“ The leadership skills of our factory frontline managers are critical for maintaining operational efficiency and motivating teams as part of our mission to drive leadership. They typically manage many people in the factory and need to be a role model for them. They are effectively the driving force behind transforming objectives into tangible actions within our factories. ”

SOLUTION

Unilever turned to Tack TMI to build a global leadership programme. This is aimed specifically at frontline managers, with pre- and post- assessments to evaluate the effectiveness and business outcomes of the training.

The training programme, which is being rolled out globally, helps participants enhance their leadership skills and stay ahead in the rapidly evolving manufacturing industry, driving innovation and excellence across the board. The course is divided into three practical modules. Leading People focuses on the core responsibilities of a manager, team building strategies and effective coaching techniques. Leading Together is about collaborative management, creating a psychologically safe environment and fostering open dialogue. And thirdly, Leading Productivity helps to understand net productivity, improve structured problem solving and embrace digital tools for enhanced efficiency. Veronica adds,

“ We cover essential topics such as visionary leadership, fostering innovation and building resilient teams. It’s a step forward in upskilling our teams and preparing them to tackle future challenges with confidence, such as how we are bringing advanced technologies like AI automation to our factories. ”

Delivering on a global scale, locally

Unilever relies on Tack TMI’s network of high-quality training facilitators who are sourced locally and deliver the course in the local language, making it both more accessible to participants and less costly for Unilever. Training budgets are set at local level giving HR managers at



individual factories the flexibility to decide when and to what extent they will deliver the programme. For example, some factories may not require all the modules.

Training facilitators are sourced by Tack TMI from a pool of local specialists. Booking onto the programme is easy via Tack TMI and, once booked, a call is

set up so the factory HR manager, Tack TMI and the Tack TMI training facilitator can gain clear understanding of the training needs and pain points of those specific frontline factory managers. Veronica highlights,

“ Initial feedback shows that participants like the flexibility of the training programme which aligns with their individual needs, plus the fact that facilitators are local, so they are culturally and linguistically a good fit. ”

Unilever has kicked off the programme at 15 factories since its launch in 2024. Strong support from senior stakeholders within the business, together with advocacy, both internal and external, from early adopters is driving engagement.

Understanding the overall impact of the programme

Engaging people, increasing productivity and operational efficiency at Unilever are key aspects of the programme outcomes that the pre- and post- assessments are designed to evaluate. The ability to build psychological safe places is also crucial since frontline managers are responsible for a considerable number of workers within any given factory.

For measuring the business impact of the Leadership programme, Unilever conducted a comprehensive analysis



using the Kirkpatrick Model. The organisation uses overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) to measure how well its manufacturing process is operating compared to its potential, calculated using a combination of availability, performance and quality. In particular, the Lerma Factory in Mexico has achieved an increase in OEE of nearly 10%. This notable improvement underscores the effectiveness of the course in enhancing operational efficiency.

Another is NPS (Net Promoter Score), where Unilever uses a score out of 10 to measure the effectiveness of the training in enhancing leadership skills and driving continuous improvement. Early feedback in September 2024 from the Unilever Ploiesti factory in Romania shows the programme receiving an outstanding NPS score of 9.7.

The results collectively demonstrate a positive and measurable impact of the Leadership course on the operational efficiency of participating sites. The improvements in OEE percentages highlight the course's role in fostering better management practices and enhancing overall productivity.

Measuring leadership skills can be complex, as it involves assessing intangible qualities such as influence, motivation and engagement. By examining engagement levels before and after sessions, Unilever has been able to track improvements in its leadership effectiveness. In particular, figures from its last annual UniVoice Survey, which had a response rate of over 40,000 for factories, showcased employee engagement at 83%.

“ The programme metrics are all displayed on a dashboard, making it easy for me to see the outcomes of the training as well as the before and after assessments,” highlights Veronica.

“What we're seeing in factories that are highly rated is that they have strong leadership. That's why we are focused on robust training and developing strong leadership to empower our people to deliver on future growth and improved productivity.”



BENEFITS

Enhanced learning and retention

Feedback so far suggests that the high engagement of the learners means they are more likely to understand and retain information, producing long-term results for the company. Tracking engagement is also helping the team at Unilever to ensure the programme stays relevant to participants and is effective.

Increased programme adoption

Programme take-up is being supported through advocacy from factories in various countries internally across the organisation. Positive stories about the programme and its impacts are encouraging other factories to sign up, building credibility, strengthening company reputation and culture and helping to scale the programme more rapidly.

Boosted productivity and operational performance

By allowing participants to apply tools and techniques in real-world scenarios before continuing the next part of the programme, they are better able to retain what they've learned. The practical application reinforces knowledge and ensures that new skills are not forgotten after training, leading to sustained and tangible improvements in performance and operational efficiency.

Improved problem-solving

One of the key outcomes from the programme is the promotion of cross-functional collaboration among frontline managers, leading to improved shared problem-solving and alignment on shared pain points and goals.

Previously, these managers have focused solely on their individual production lines, often unaware of the broader challenges faced by their peers in other areas of the factory. By creating a structured space for them to collaborate and share experiences, the programme has bridged this gap, enabling frontline managers to gain perspectives and insights from peers in other areas of the factory.



WORKING WITH TACK TMI

“ I really enjoy working with the professional team at Tack TMI. Its large global network of training facilitators, paired with co-ordination and project management, has been well received. We have had a lot of positive feedback from the factories who have undertaken training.”

“The programme roll-out has been successful so far and delivering insightful results that we are using to align future learning and development needs. We are hoping to roll out a future programme to support our frontline workers, again delivered locally to meet their needs.”

Veronica Luna, Global Learning and Development Lead for Supply Chain, Unilever.