The Alternative to an Executive MBA

As an alternative to an executive MBA program, Harvard Business School (HBS) offers an accelerated learning experience that transforms the world’s most promising managers into the next generation of visionary leaders—the Program for Leadership Development (PLD).

What Sets PLD Apart?

Unlike an executive MBA, PLD is tailored to your unique leadership goals and business challenges. Two important components contribute to your personal and professional transformation:

- A personal case that enables you to address a specific challenge in your organization and develop and refine an in-depth strategy and implementation plan throughout PLD
- One-on-one professional HBS Executive Education Coaching sessions and facilitated team meetings that help you develop a unique leadership style and a personal action plan for ongoing development

PLD puts you on the fast track to leadership.

Often compared to a rapid-fire MBA, PLD is designed for specialists and star contributors who have at least 10 to 15 years of work experience and have been identified as outstanding prospects for increased leadership responsibilities. Focused on leadership, change, and innovation, PLD equips you with a broader understanding of core business functions and deeper confidence in your decision-making skills. You will emerge with a personal action plan for advancing your leadership goals—and strengthening your company’s competitive edge.

Take your leadership abilities to the next level.

Ideally suited for busy professionals who want to expand their leadership skills with minimal downtime, the rigorous PLD curriculum is tailored to achieve a singular goal—accelerate the development of emerging business leaders. Delivered via four intensive modules that take place over the course of seven months, the compressed format is designed with your responsibilities in mind. The two on-campus modules require a total of four weeks away from your job.

Key Benefits:

- Gain in-depth knowledge of business functions and build foundational skills to integrate these functions across your organization
- Examine new techniques and technologies for driving results throughout your company in any market cycle
- Engage in an Alumni Challenge project that helps your living group analyze the competition and address important real-world issues
- Build strategic skills for effective decision-making, strategy development, and implementation
- Expand your capacity to lead cross-functional initiatives and corporate projects amid challenging global markets
- Develop a personal leadership philosophy and presence that reflect greater knowledge, capabilities, and insight

Who Is Right for the Program

To ensure optimal peer-to-peer learning, HBS determines each PLD cohort by carefully managing the participant mix. PLD participants typically have 10 to 15 years of work experience, and are recognized as outstanding prospects for increased leadership responsibilities.

Letter of Reference

Harvard Business School Executive Education requires that a letter of reference be completed by a senior executive within the applicant’s organization, a board member of the applicant’s company, or a Harvard Business School graduate familiar with the applicant’s role and responsibilities who can provide a detailed firsthand account. This letter of reference provides the Admissions Committee with a better understanding of your background and your potential as a leader.

Real-World Results

Due to the transformational content and collaborative structure of the program, many PLD participants report that they have a broader grasp of management and approach business challenges and opportunities with greater self-awareness. Their bosses, peers, and subordinates, on the other hand, note that participants interact with their teams and colleagues more productively, engage with senior executives more confidently, and lead cross-functional initiatives and corporate projects more successfully.
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Program for Leadership Development (PLD)

In-Depth Curriculum, Long-Term Results.
The highly integrated curriculum is composed of four educational modules—two distance learning and two on campus—plus a fifth optional two-week session after which you achieve HBS alumni status.

MODULE 1 / Distance Learning / 12 Weeks
Foundational Skill Building
To establish a common level of knowledge in the classroom, you are asked to complete introductory courses in accounting, finance, and quantitative methods before arriving on campus. Our HBX digital learning tool provides access to PLD’s proprietary skill-building materials, interactive exercises, and instructional webinars, including “How to Prep a Case.” From cost accounting to financial analysis, you will gain insights into the processes that drive an organization’s budgeting, pricing, and forecasting decisions. You also will take part in an intensive, 360-degree customized Leadership Learning Path Assessment designed to accelerate your personal growth.

MODULE 2 / On Campus / 2 Weeks
Cross-Functional Business Approach
After arriving on campus, you will begin to develop an integrated perspective on business and a global network of peers. The multidisciplinary curriculum provides a big-picture view of how all functions interrelate and contribute to the overall corporate strategy. Delving into each function’s core operations and best practices provides an end-to-end view of business that is essential to your growth as a leader.

MODULE 3 / Distance Learning / 14 Weeks
Strategy Formulation and Implementation
Back at your organization, you will apply your new knowledge and continue to develop your skills through a series of highly structured online exercises, group work, and self-paced individual study. You will create a strategy statement and value proposition for your company, engage in an Alumni Challenge project, participate in faculty-led webinars, and explore innovative strategies that foster global collaboration. During three one-on-one phone sessions, you and your personal HBS Executive Education Coach will assess your progress on the personal case and leadership development.

MODULE 4 / On Campus / 2 Weeks
Leading Change
Immersed in classroom and group learning, you will examine ways to improve your leadership effectiveness and decision-making capabilities. You will present an overview of your personal case and action plan to your HBS Executive Education Coach and living group. Your living group will present the solution to its Alumni Challenge, and a winner for each challenge will be selected by the PLD participants. With a deeper understanding of change management processes and approaches, you will return to your company ready to drive innovation, navigate shifting global markets, and move quickly on promising opportunities.

MODULE 5 / On Campus / 2 Weeks / Additional Fee
Personal Leadership (Optional)
This two-week session brings all the elements of your PLD learning together in an intensive exploration of what it means to be an authentic leader. You will examine corporate finance, personal leadership and accountability in business and society, negotiation and decision-making, and how to lead effectively as your career progresses. After completing this module, you will earn HBS alumni status. (You also can earn alumni status by completing 10 days/two credit weeks of open-enrollment or custom programs.) Most important, you will return to your organization more confident, more capable, and better equipped to take on new challenges.

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