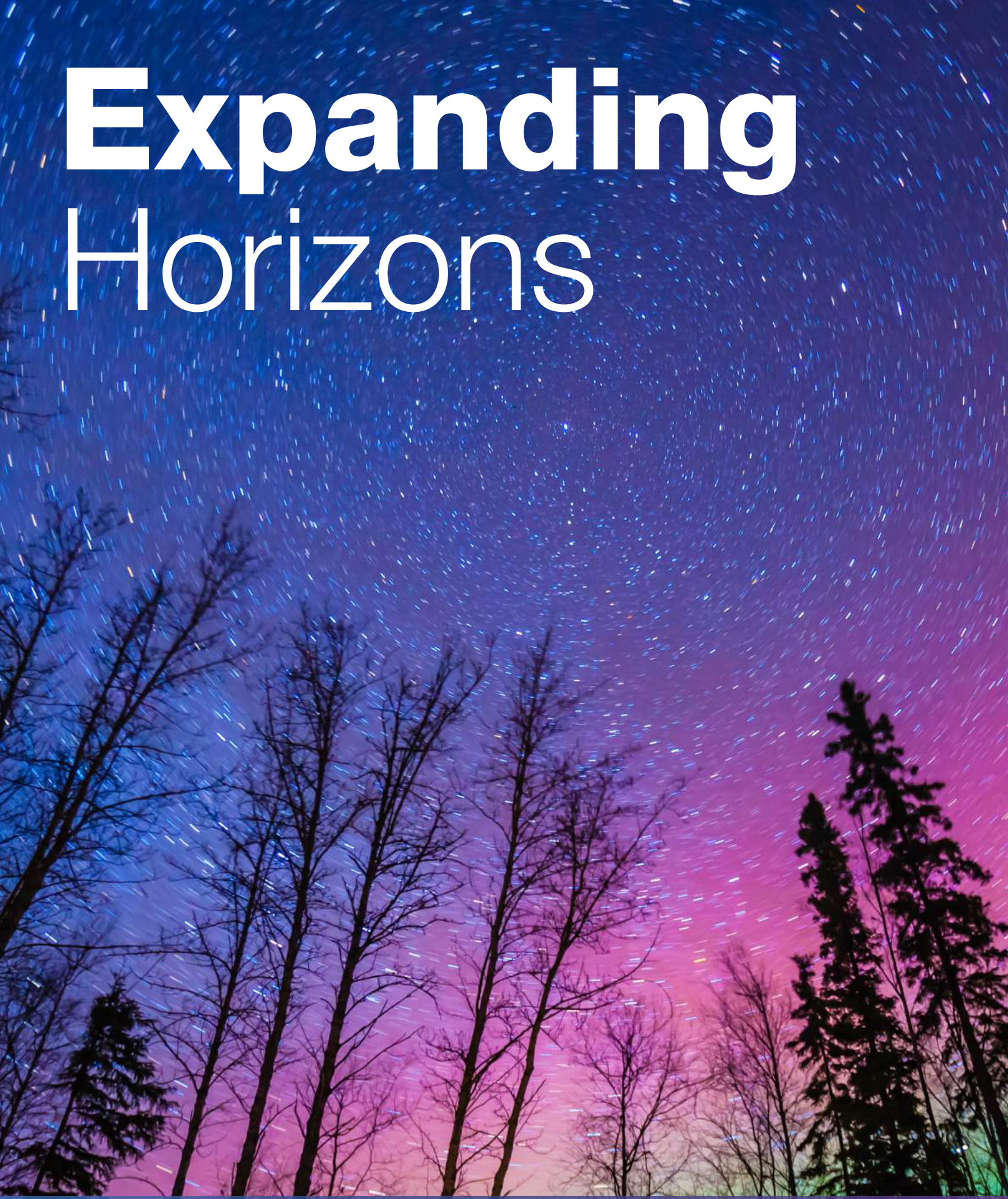
Expanding Horizons



A.T. Kearney

London Business School

Contents

Executive summary 3

Introduction 4

The challenge 5

The commitment 8

The L&D initiative 11

The impact 15

Concluding reflections 20

Appendix 21

Word count: 4,127

Executive summary

How can an organisation be known as the most admired in its industry? A.T. Kearney, a global strategy consultancy, partnered with London Business School to answer this question.

The challenge

To be the **most admired management consulting firm**, A.T. Kearney needed to:

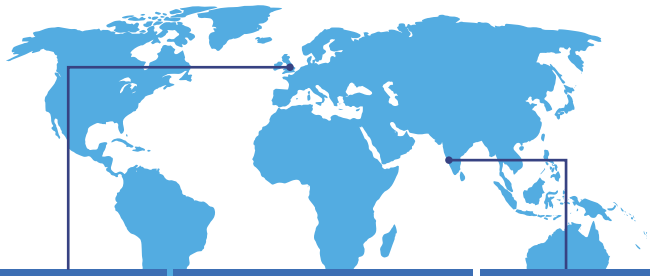
- Enhance focus on learning and development
- Instill a sense of collective purpose
- Deliver better results for clients
- Demonstrate reputation

The Learning & Development initiative

Expanding Horizons - 15 month programme

Preparation months 0-2
- Chairman invitation
- Coaching
- Pre-work

Immersive and transformative learning journey months 3-8
- 16 experiential elements



- Module 1 **London - 10 days**
- **On-the-job application** (with coaching) **- 3 months**
- Module 2 **India - 7 days**

Follow up months 9-15
- Facilitated peer learning
- Integration into partner systems
- Partner advisor

The impact

10 cohorts consisting of 233 participants from 40 different offices across 27 countries

Enhanced focus on learning and development

- Company hires first CLO to drive expanding L&D function
- New L&D programmes launched around Expanding Horizons
- ★★★★★ Organisational respect and appreciation for the learning function
- **'Best self'** LBS Dan Cable's research integrated into performance management processes

Shared sense of purpose

> *"It's been a once in a lifetime experience. I was really amazed with the help A.T. Kearney has been able to bring our organisation since day one. You could feel their spirit of collaboration and how they came across as one team."*
>
> Bruno Villettele, Chief Digital Officer, Takeda Pharmaceuticals

> *"I hear wonderful stories. I have heard examples of how the programme changed lives and led to better effectiveness in dealing with a client and improved job satisfaction."*
>
> Johan Aurik, Managing Partner and Chairman of the Board, A.T. Kearney

Better results delivered for clients

- **19%** Increase in client project size from 2013-2017
- **33%** Increase in number of large client projects
- **94** New CEO meetings through partnership with World Economic Forum

Improved reputation

- **58%** Increase in top-tier media mentions in the Americas since 2015
- **128%** **90%** Uptick in engagement across multiple digital platforms between 2016 and 2017
- WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM Strategic partner in 2015

Introduction

Expanding Horizons

The ideal partnership in the leadership development space requires intense levels of openess, trust and collaboration. These characteristics personify the partnership between London Business School (LBS) and A.T. Kearney.

In 2013, the two organisations partnered on the Expanding Horizons programme, a learning journey designed to reimagine the culture at A.T. Kearney.

A.T. Kearney is a global team of 3,600 forward-thinking, collaborative employees that delivers immediate, meaningful results and a long-term transformational advantage to its clients and colleagues.

Since 1926, the firm has been trusted advisors on CEO-agenda issues to the world's leading organisations across all major industries and sectors.

London Business School strives to have a profound impact on the way the world does business, and the way business impacts the world. Through its executive education offerings, LBS provides transformative learning journeys for individuals and organisations.

Delivery teams led by a world-class faculty create innovative experiences for executives to grow. Participants from around the world come to reflect, refocus and reimagine for maximum impact.

The **challenge**

The challenge

How can an organisation recover a strong culture that seems to have dissipated during a tumultuous time?

This was one of several key strategic questions facing A.T. Kearney. In 1995, the firm was acquired by EDS, a technology consulting firm. A.T. Kearney once again became an independent company in 2005. From a business point of view, the firm rebounded relatively positively from this tumultuous transition and enjoyed several successful years, driven by the firm's partners (management consultants).

But there was a strong desire to revitalise A.T. Kearney's culture, which was severely strained during the firm's years as an EDS subsidiary. During that time, the firm had suffered a decrease in revenue, had lost many senior and emerging partners and had experienced brand darkness in some parts of the world and in some sectors. There was also the realisation that what might have worked in the past to drive business success wouldn't necessarily be the impetus for future growth. The firm had survived – now it needed to take the next step to thrive. Shortly after Johan Aurik became managing partner and chairman of the board in 2013, he and other senior leaders outlined the company's roadmap for a successful future in a strategy entitled ***Vision 2020***.

VISION 2020

A.T. Kearney to become the most admired consulting firm in the world:

A.T. Kearney's vision is to be most admired for the firm's impact on its clients and its ability to attract and retain the best people. Therefore, the firm seeks to be admired by those communities in addition to the wider stakeholder groups with which it engages.

Enhancing focus on learning and development

Instilling a sense of collective purpose

Delivering better results for clients

Improving reputation

"Growing a business in consulting means growing people. It is easy to say. The challenge is how you do this, particularly for senior level partners."

Johan Aurik
Managing Partner and Chairman of the Board, A.T. Kearney

"In consulting, confidence and interpersonal capabilities are a key part of the mix to being effective. We needed to improve partners' soft skills to become more successful."

Phil Morgan
Partner, Chief Human Resource Officer, A.T. Kearney

Learning and development focus

In the world of management consulting, emphasis is on billable hours resulting from client work. The sector overall devotes little time to non-client activities. This was the case for A.T. Kearney, particularly as it relates to developing senior partners.

“To be the most admired firm in the world, we needed to be the best versions of ourselves individually. This meant we had to take learning to the next level,” said Stephen Parker, A.T. Kearney’s chief learning officer and head of talent management.

The firm had a narrowly defined L&D function with limited resources. Training had primarily been targeted at new consultants. Other L&D activities were more reactive and traditional. Many senior partners went years without any formal leadership development. They primarily relied on the apprenticeship model: learning on the job.

One of the obstacles to making this investment in development was the audience. As Aurik noted, A.T. Kearney’s partners are brilliant management consultants, but are not always open to behavioural change.

Partner and former board member Xavier Mesnard summed up this mindset: “We love to learn but hate to be taught.”

Shared purpose

To be the most admired management consulting firm, A.T. Kearney needed to strengthen bonds and cohesion to forge a true partnership in which the consultants realised that they not only worked at the firm, but also maintained ownership of it.

“We needed to create a common understanding and strengthen the fabric of our culture,” said Parker. "It required new performance fuel to more ably drive the engine of inspiration, change and growth for our employees, clients and society.”

Results for clients

It was becoming apparent that transformational issues – particularly around the digital revolution – were becoming increasingly more complex for A.T. Kearney’s clients. Partners needed to engage differently with their clients.

“A partner should not just be technically well skilled but really understand what makes people and companies change,” said Aurik. “Our partners don’t lack the business skills. However, we needed to address the other side of the brain – the emotional side – so we can better connect with clients and guide them through the required changes that are necessary to compete in the future.”

Key to delivering better results was improving partner productivity. “Improving partner effectiveness was a priority for the firm” said Morgan, “so developing partners through Expanding Horizons was an easy decision to take.”

Reputation

The leadership at A.T. Kearney believed that the firm's reputation would enhance if partners developed new mindsets, behaviours and capabilities. This would support retention of existing employees and serve as a draw in recruiting new partners. Reputation would also be evidenced by the types of clients A.T. Kearney worked with over time, an increase in CEO engagement and recognition from external stakeholders.

“A.T. Kearney is more than the sum of the individual partners. We need to get as much out of the synergy – out of the orchestra – as we can and that requires a strong fabric."

Mark van Weegen
Partner, Head of Transformation, A.T. Kearney

The **commitment**

The commitment

Early on, A.T. Kearney realised that the type of organisational transformation required meant stepping outside the norm of what had previously been done. It was also important that the L&D partner represent a strong brand to establish credibility among the senior partners.

“We wanted to do something extraordinary, and to have an impact that was significant,” said Morgan. “We concluded that we needed to use the ‘best of the best’ to create something that was unique, tailored and special.”

The L&D partner they sought to work with wasn’t to come to the table with already-prepared presentations and solutions. Rather, it was vital to work with a partner that could co-create a learning journey that would ultimately shift the culture at A.T. Kearney in a sustainable way.

“We co-create and work alongside our clients,” said Parker. “We wanted this same approach in addressing our challenges. It is the core of who we are.”

Several top business schools submitted proposals to work with A.T. Kearney. According to Parker, London Business School was the only school that truly demonstrated this spirit of co-creation.

"London Business School was the only executive education provider that truly sought a real collaboration, were willing to create the programme with us and were actually excited about the prospects of a 50/50 partnership" said A.T. Kearney's director - global learning and talent management, Bronwyn Tinker-Kelly.

"This was evident even during the tendering process. London Business School embraced the notion that the final design would be completely different from what either of us had envisioned at the outset."

Stephen Parker
Chief Learning Officer and Head of Talent Management, A.T. Kearney

To kick off the partnership, members of the LBS delivery team walked senior leaders of A.T. Kearney’s L&D team through a process called ***Design in the Room***. This design process tests assumptions by starting with the end in mind, in terms of desired behaviours and impact, which then informs the design and style of learning. The ultimate goal is to co-create a solution. In advance of this session, the LBS team conducted 15 in-depth partner interviews to understand their different perspectives.

Three themes emerged from these interviews:

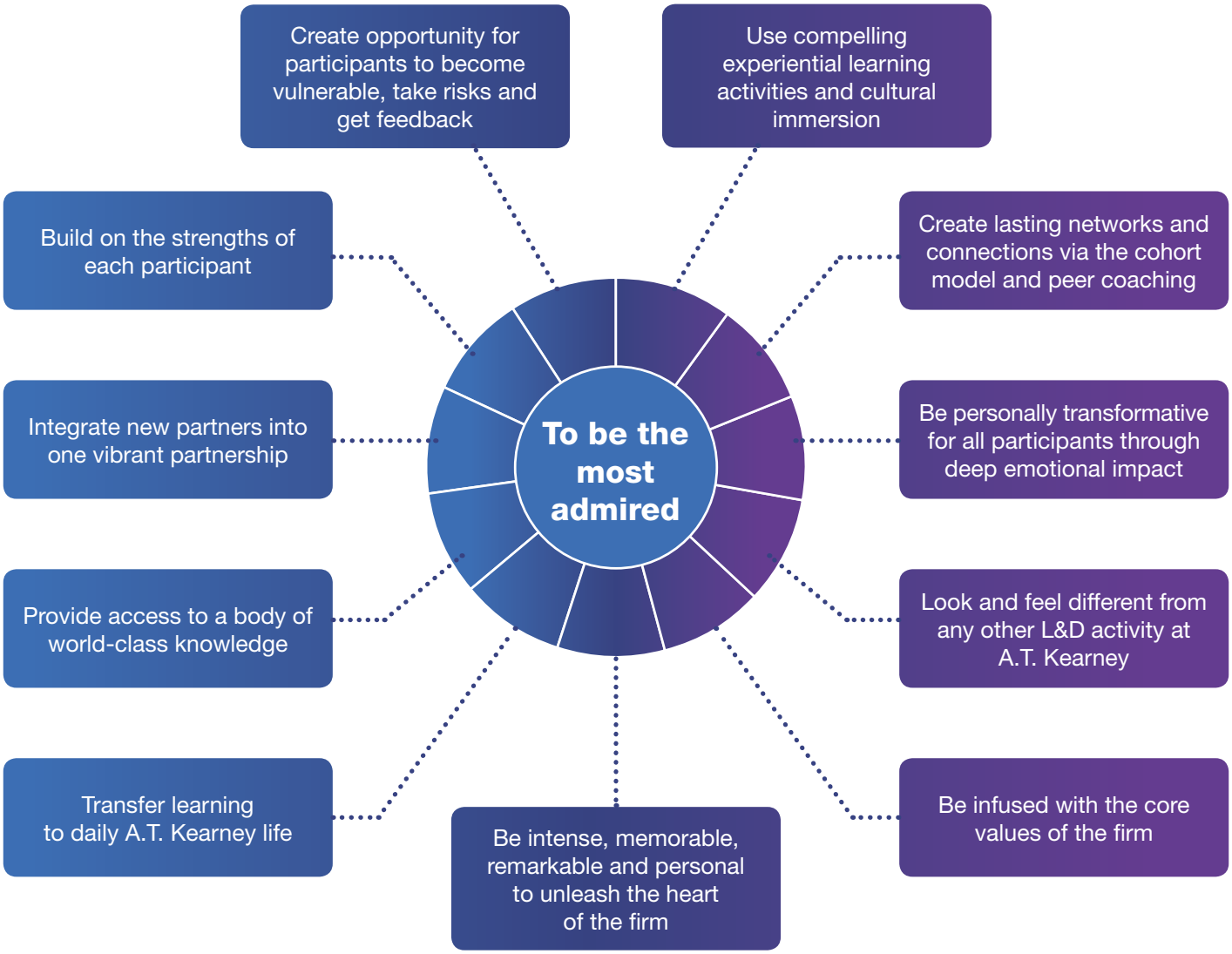
- **Partners needed to build on their understanding, awareness and confidence within themselves.**
- **They had to relate successfully with others to ultimately increase the breadth and scope of their work with clients.**
- **They were looking to develop their work, make impact and have a greater purpose for life.**

“One of our goals was to create cohesion,” said van Weegen. “We all have an accountability and responsibility to act as owners of the firm. Therefore, we needed an intense programme with deep experiences and that accomodated different learning styles.”

During ***Design in the Room***, the LBS and A.T. Kearney teams worked together for five days to determine the best way forward, mapping partners’ perspectives and the organisational challenges to different learning paths that would foster such results. At the conclusion, there was complete alignment on Expanding Horizons, a programme designed to create a unique experience for partners, focusing on the core interpersonal behaviours that enable success.

Five assumptions that informed the overall programme design	
1	Clients trust consultants who trust themselves.
2	Clients notice how much consultants believe in the value of their work.
3	Teamwork requires trust in each other’s intentions and honest dialogue.
4	Successful teams invest the most talent and energy in work that matters to them.
5	Successful individuals know what matters to them and how to access their talents.

After just two and a half months, LBS and A.T. Kearney committed to the following design characteristics:



"We worked backwards from the business impact partners wanted. We looked at the themes, attitudes and behaviours partners needed to adapt to make this a reality," said Peter Shepherd, Programme Director, LBS.

The two organisations believed that integrating all of these components was imperative in order for A.T. Kearney to deliver better results for clients, enhance focus on learning and development, improve reputation and instil a sense of collective purpose.

"We are a demanding client, but LBS proved very flexible which has made it truly feel like a partnership and not a vendor relationship," said Tinker-Kelly.

It is also a relationship that has stood the test of time. Expanding Horizons has been an integral part of A.T. Kearney's L&D strategy since 2013. There have been personnel changes for both organisations during that time span. The commitment to a radically unique learning solution has never wavered.

"This was a very intensive time period – we were doing lots of research and were onboarding contributors into the process. It required the utmost commitment from both LBS and A.T. Kearney to work as one team in creating this design."

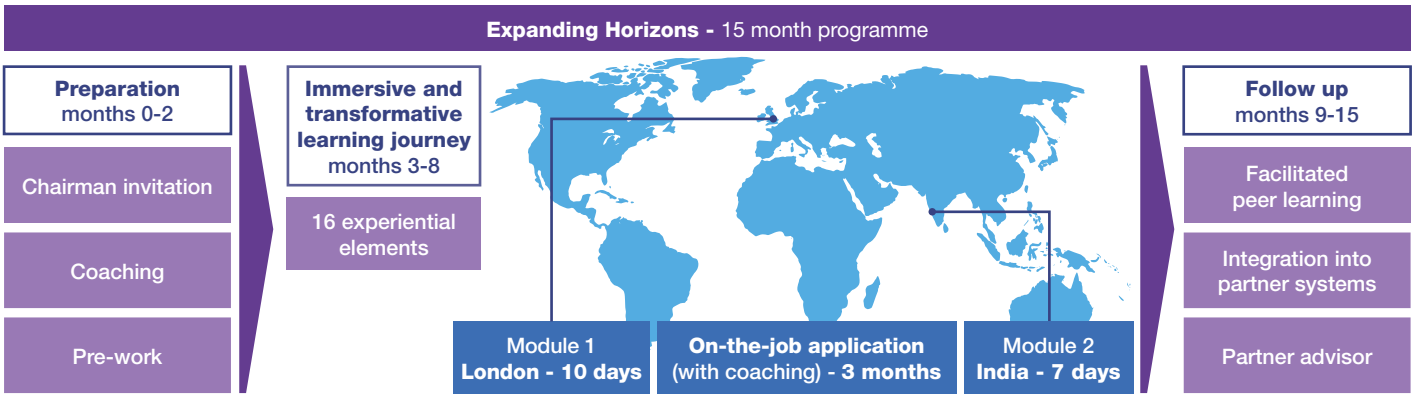
Katie Coates
Client Director, LBS

The **L&D initiative**

The L&D initiative

Imagine a horse out in the English countryside teaching a busy and successful management consultant about influencing people. On the surface, it might seem unrealistic. But for the 233 participants from 10 different cohorts who have gone through Expanding Horizons, this experiential learning exercise was eye-opening for all, and in some cases transformational.

The journey for each cohort of 25 partners consists of the following:



Guiding the journey are two core London Business School professors who provide their research, insights and thought leadership. This journey requires a significant investment and commitment from partners. The opportunity cost of removing a partner from the business for this extended period of time is tens of thousands of dollars per individual.

Module 1	Module 2
The first module in London focuses on how partners can become reacquainted with themselves. They experiment with new ways of behaving as they go through a wide variety of intellectual and emotional stimuli that are likely to be unfamiliar. The intention is to disrupt what may have become narrowed patterns, routines and taken-for-granted ways of operating so that new and expanded possibilities for thought, feeling and action can emerge. Little formal teaching takes place – preference is on partners arriving at their own solutions.	In the second module, partners spend two days in the bustling city of Mumbai and then move along to a retreat destination in northwest India for five days. This module is designed to disrupt assumptions about business as usual. Partners explore how to create alignment between strengths, values and passions in an unfamiliar environment. They develop awareness of the lens through which they see and interpret the world and then are asked to consider what it takes to bring independent perspectives – intellectually and emotionally – to their client so that they can provide the most value.

Throughout the entire programme, partners are encouraged to open up and share perspectives on important topics with their colleagues. There are numerous spontaneous opportunities for connection between colleagues who often know little of each other outside of a work context.

“Module 1 is challenging in content and experiential learning while the environment is reasonably familiar,” explained Shepherd. “We are based in the centre of a capital city within an established European market.

By contrast, Module 2 takes place in an emerging market and uses rather less orthodox approaches. Module 1 is stable enough for partners to engage, while Module 2 is more challenging to elicit deeper understanding. Throughout the programme, we are putting the partners in the optimal environment to be vulnerable, which under normal circumstances would not be possible.”

To support the overall experience, Expanding Horizons incorporates a “just in time” 24/7 coaching component. This entails coaches who are available for one-to-one conversations to help the partners make sense of their experiences.

“Unlike formal structured sessions, this is an opportunity to seize every moment to provide feedback and help the partners think about applying their learning,” explained Caroline Stearman, the lead coach on the programme.

"I thought that our coach in residence was very helpful. I was doubtful upfront because I wondered how she could support people without knowing them. However, her experience and framework allowed her to bring insightful ideas and challenge us in the right way" added Christine Laurens, partner and chief financial officer at A.T. Kearney.

Eighty percent of Expanding Horizons incorporates experiential learning. In total, there are 16 different experiential activities.

“These exercises engage the emotions of participants and whet their appetite for self exploration,” said Shepherd. “It creates the conditions under which changes in behaviour and outlook can occur whilst leaving the responsibility for individual changes with the learners themselves.”

There was a degree of uncertainty about the programme. Partners didn't know what they would be doing from one day to the next. This was intentional and part of the design. “Our conversations showed us a lot of partners aren’t comfortable with ambiguity – they like to know what is going to happen when they walk into a client meeting and have control,” said Tinker-Kelly.

"We wanted to build lots of ambiguity and see what behaviours that drew out in people. Limiting behaviours can be triggered by the stress of not having control and knowing the outcomes. We wanted partners to be able to recognise this happening, and then have the means to revert back to their best selves, not letting the ambiguity throw them off."

Bronwyn Tinker-Kelly
Director – Global Learning & Talent Management, A.T. Kearney

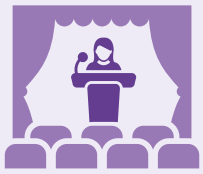
Some examples of experiential activities:

Visits to NGOs
Engaging with new experiences and people. For some, it is challenging to accept the vast and complex nature of some individuals' daily challenges without being able to fix them.

Opening and closing circles
A way to punctuate the programme with regular sense-making sessions that enable the group to reflect together.

Street photography
Participants think about how they observe and perceive the world, and how perspectives differ from person to person.

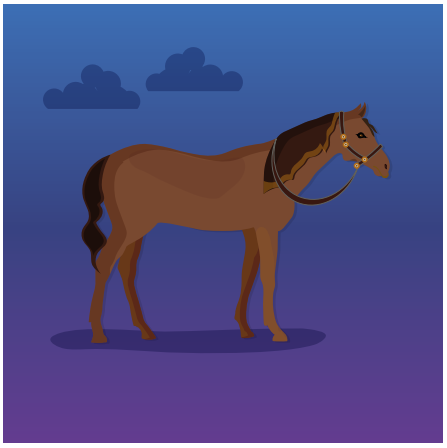
Mindfulness
Space for participants to ‘tune in’ to their own thoughts, feelings, perceptions and physical sensations.



Working with actors
Learning to build positive associations between breath, posture, voice, listening, courage and trust.

Storytelling
Harnessing the power of story to shape culture and influence the performance of the firm. Partners are reminded that they own the firm and are the authors of its future.

Here is a snapshot of how some of these experiences contribute to the journey:



Gaining perspectives from horses about how to influence colleagues and clients

Marcy Beitle, a partner, board member and the former head of the Americas, was a bit daunted by interacting with an aggressive horse during the equine experience (alluded to at the outset of this section). To her surprise, the interaction was a pleasant one.

"The takeaway is to set aside your fears and be thoughtful in your approach. How you initially present yourself can change the outcome of a situation. I took away some valuable lessons in terms of listening and perceiving."

Marcy Beitle
Partner, Board Member, Former Head of the Americas, A.T. Kearney

Create harmony like musicians

The partners are put in charge of a quartet that has been playing together for decades as part of the Quatuor Annesci string quartet experience. The one caveat is that the musicians are instructed to play as they did during their first rehearsal together. It is the partners' responsibility to direct the quartet back to their ability level.

"The analogy is about creating harmony together and really listening and attuning with others. Partners learn to signal intentions and to lead when appropriate, follow or step in and intervene."

Peter Shepherd
Programme Director, LBS

Theatre-style workshop to convey positive energy

Patsy Rodenburg, recognised as one of the world's leading acting and voice coaches, runs a theatre-style workshop to help partners build positive associations between breath, posture, voice, listening, courage and trust. Partners take part in a variety of participatory exercises designed to demonstrate and support the embodiment of positive and confident emotional intentions.

"The session was brilliant – I never would have thought that the application of drama and stagecraft would be something relevant to us, but learning how to connect with an audience is now something that I think about all of the time."

Mike Wise
Partner, A.T. Kearney

The **impact**

The impact

For both London Business School and A.T. Kearney, Expanding Horizons was not strictly a numbers game in terms of measuring impact. Rather unusually, A.T. Kearney was more interested in behavioural and mindset change within the participants. Yet there are numerous qualitative and quantitative data and examples that demonstrate how A.T. Kearney has been able to achieve its objectives.

Enhanced focus on learning and development

It was important for A.T. Kearney to take its L&D activities to the next level. There was no formal CLO in place at the firm prior to 2013 when Parker was appointed. This investment in learning was considered a risk to some. Parker is convinced that if Expanding Horizons hadn't been successful, he wouldn't still have his job as CLO.

As it turned out, Expanding Horizons was an accelerant of the learning ideas that A.T. Kearney had discussed for years prior to the launch of the programme. In addition, the L&D function is embedded and well respected throughout the firm, thanks in large part to Expanding Horizons. The programme has not only served as a springboard for learning, but is also a cornerstone of the firm's HR strategies (not vice versa!).

"We re-imagined many of our HR and learning strategies around Expanding Horizons because of its success," said Parker. "We basically built – or reinforced – our processes using the philosophy and DNA of the programme."

To demonstrate this, Parker notes that A.T. Kearney's performance management processes have been designed around the 'best self approach'. This concept is based on research by London Business School professor Dan Cable and was introduced to partners during Expanding Horizons.

HR has integrated Expanding Horizons into its recruitment strategies. New partners have concrete evidence that the firm takes development seriously. A.T. Kearney's commitment to learning also sends an important signal to existing partners.

	Company hires first CLO to drive expanding L&D function
	New L&D programmes launched around Expanding Horizons
	Organisational respect and appreciation for the learning function
'Best self'	**London Business School professor Dan Cable's research integrated into the firm's performance management processes**

"We have definitely unlocked the dimension of L&D around behaviours. We are not relying solely on the luck of the apprenticeship model which is hit or miss. Having a function in place is so valuable. There is a logical flow, a destination in mind and specific learning objectives for individuals at different points in their career. This is very important for retaining great talent."

Brian Dunn
Partner, A.T. Kearney

An instilled sense of purpose

The more employees appreciate their place of employment, the more admired it is among all key stakeholders. It was therefore important for A.T. Kearney to measure how working around a new shared purpose as a result of the programme was impacting employee attitudes.

These survey numbers only communicate part of the story. Demonstrating the bonds and sense of shared partnership, Parker highlighted how partners who took part in the programme were asked in a separate survey if they would invest their own money for their colleagues to go through Expanding Horizons at a future date. Demonstrating the sense of partnership, almost all partners responded yes!

There is a palpable difference in how A.T. Kearney operates that can be felt throughout the firm.

In a recent remployee engagement survey:

99%	**of partners noted that their work gives them a sense of personal accomplishment**
92%	**said A.T. Kearney is a motivating employer**
24.2%	**increase around partners' willingness to take part in L&D activities (87% in 2016; 70% in 2014)**

Partner perspectives

"The programme caused me to be more deliberate about the reason why I work. I am now more focused on paying it forward to others."

Beth Bovis
Partner, Global Practice Leader – Leadership Change and Organisation and Head of A.T. Kearney Women's Network, A.T. Kearney

"Expanding Horizons is the best thing I've ever seen at A.T. Kearney. It made me realise how I wanted to live out my values through the way I work."

Jerome Souied
Partner, EMEA Head of Private Equity / M&A, A.T. Kearney

Top leadership perspectives

"A renewed code has been established among partners. There is a shared language now for development and a common passion for how connection and relationship prowess can benefit and grow the firm."

Stephen Parker
Chief Learning Officer and Head of Talent Management, A.T. Kearney

"A programme based on improving relationships so we can better support others is contributing to differentiate us from our competitors."

Christine Laurens
Partner and Chief Financial Officer, A.T. Kearney

Better results delivered for clients

The new confidence and approaches that many partners brought to the table played an important role in creating these results.

Take for example Marcy Beitle. As a result of her surprisingly positive interaction with an aggressive horse, she decided to put more focus on connecting at the personal level with her clients, as opposed to always preparing bullet points in advance of meetings and ensuring that these topics are addressed.

The opportunity to put this into practice came shortly after her programme when she met with the CEO of an Australian company that was going through a period of difficult transition. The meeting evolved into a deep personal discussion that laid the foundation for a strong connection. This CEO eventually moved on, but because of the rapport that was established, he introduced Beitle to the new leadership team. This introduction eventually resulted in A.T. Kearney winning a $5 million project.

Partner Brian Dunn's scheduled 45-minute meeting with a CEO of a hedge fund turned into an almost three-hour discussion. For more than half that time, Dunn and the CEO talked about Expanding Horizons and how the hedge fund might also pursue cultural transformation. This conversation resulted in the hedge fund retaining Dunn to lead a significant project.

Jerome Souied, a partner and the EMEA head of private equity / M&A, believes that the programme instilled in him the courage to be authentic. This was on display when he was in the process of pitching a new project to a former client. Despite the lure of the account, Souied picked up certain warning signals. He felt that the prospective client needed to change its approach. When he faced resistance, Souied did something for the first time in his career: he advised the client to work with a competitor. This candour greatly impressed the decision-maker and actually led to re-engaging the discussion. The company became an A.T. Kearney client.

"I would have never previously been so confident in an exchange with a prospective client," Souied said.

19%	**increase in client project size from 2013-2017**
33%	**increase in number of large client projects**
94	**new CEO meetings through partnership with World Economic Forum**

Improved reputation

Media visibility is a metric that informs how an organisation is doing in terms of reputation. A.T. Kearney tracked these figures to gauge progress on how the firm is advancing in its quest to be the most admired. On that note, A.T. Kearney has seen positive shifts across the board.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Signalling A.T. Kearney's rising reputation, the firm became a strategic partner of the World Economic Forum in 2015. This has contributed to many of the positive media metrics since that time. A.T. Kearney and the World Economic Forum also collaborated on a joint report in 2018, and the firm was able to garner significant visibility among the influential leaders who attend the Davos Summit. As a result, A.T. Kearney's partners secured **94 CEO meetings** at the Forum alone. In addition, some **200 leaders** attended the intimate CEO roundtables that A.T. Kearney organised at the Forum.

	After several years of no coverage, six different articles authored by A.T. Kearney partners have been published in *Harvard Business Review* since 2015.
58%	**The number of top-tier media mentions in the Americas increased 58% since 2015, including a 15% increase in 2017.**
128% 90%	**There has been an uptick in engagement across multiple digital platforms between 2016 and 2017, including a 128% increase on Facebook and 90% increase on LinkedIn.**

"As a result of Expanding Horizons, there is greater skill in how we relate and even more passion about our firm and how we are different from our competitors."

Stephen Parker
Chief Learning Officer and Head of Talent Management, A.T. Kearney

Concluding reflections

"It was the best 10 days of my working life."

Andrew Stewart
Partner, A.T. Kearney

"We have shared a language and experiences that have deepened our bonds."

Sean Monahan
Partner, Board Member, Americas Head of Operations & Performance Transformation, A.T. Kearney

"The language we use has changed and the culture of the firm has been transformed. If you could see how much Expanding Horizons has changed individuals, it would put a smile on your face!"

Johan Aurik
Managing Partner and Chairman of the Board, A.T. Kearney

The Expanding Horizons Journey

Appendix

Appendix

Making History at A.T. Kearney

Johan Aurik maps out the Vision 2020 growth plan in the *London Business School Review* (2014).

Find out more >

Too few companies open to creative L&D

***HR Magazine* interviews Stephen Parker on the importance of innovative learning and development (2015).**

Find out more >

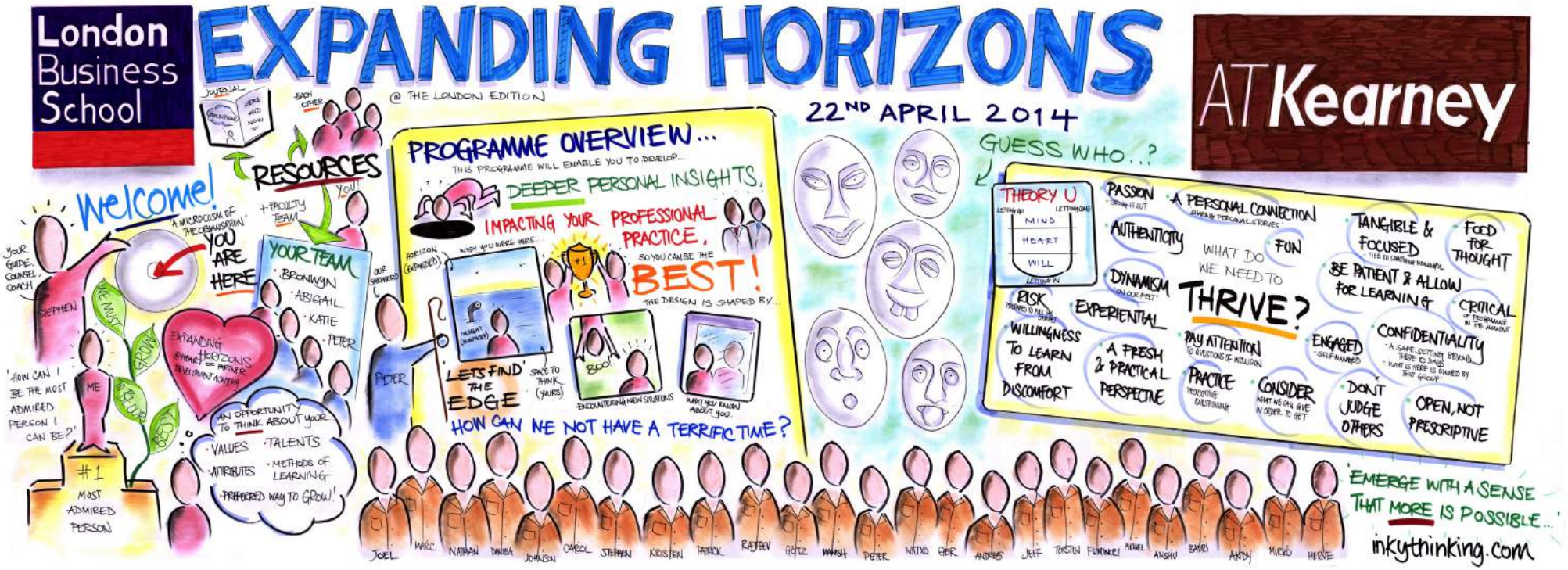
The Strategy Awards – CLO media

Stephen Parker wins Gold in Division 2 (2017).

Find out more >

Organic social media content

Stephen Parker produces four LinkedIn articles exploring the Expanding Horizons methodology (2016).

Find out more >

Sample Expanding Horizons 'Inky Thinking' storyboard