DAIMLER WolffOlins

Leadership 2020 Live: A Massive Open Online Conversation for Daimler

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If you want to change the world, change yourself

Faced with unique new challenges and opportunities redefining the boundaries of its industry, Daimler – the inventor of the automobile – embarked on a journey to lead the reinvention of mobility once more. Through a learning and development initiative that transcended barriers of hierarchy, continents, divisions and functions, Daimler entered a learning journey of unprecedented self-renewal.

An open invitation was sent out at Daimler, inviting leaders to engage in a community of pioneers and innovators that would contribute to an open-ended process, unlock the full organizational potential and invite to think outside the box. ‘Leadership 2020’, an open and agile process, started in early 2016. 144 Daimler line managers from all levels, regions and divisions of the organization started a journey to examine every aspect of the company to better equip Daimler to shape a future at least as successful as its history. Eight promising game changers and eight new leadership principles that would guide and support the company’s vision were then made available to every leader worldwide, quickly spreading beyond the initial nucleus of the 144, and into the lives of leaders and employees alike.

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In order to bring the project to life, and in particular to devise a learning journey that would ensure a common understanding of the purpose, nature and reach of Leadership 2020, Daimler Corporate Academy partnered with London-based brand consultancy Wolff Olins. The learning experience that was created was a massive open online course (MOOC), tailored to Daimler's learning requirements emerging from the Leadership 2020 initiative. 'Leadership2020 Live' was a bespoke social learning experience, using FutureLearn as a platform. The four-week worldwide learning intervention featured a wide range of interactive formats that enabled a new learning experience for leaders.

Beyond just delivering content in a multi-modal and engaging way, the program triggered a global conversation, where more than 13,000 participants from across the world shared their experiences, challenged their assumptions, and put forward their suggestions to further develop leadership. Following the principles of action learning, the leaders who participated also practiced the new principles in their working life, gaining a hands on understanding of the implications of what they had learned for their immediate working environment, and sharing their experience concerning team dynamics, trust, empowerment and cooperation with the rest of the community.

Leadership 2020 Live brought a culture changing initiative to all leaders at Daimler – and by inviting them to make their contribution to a global community of learners, it established a new understanding of collaborative learning enabled by digital technology.

Click to play

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1

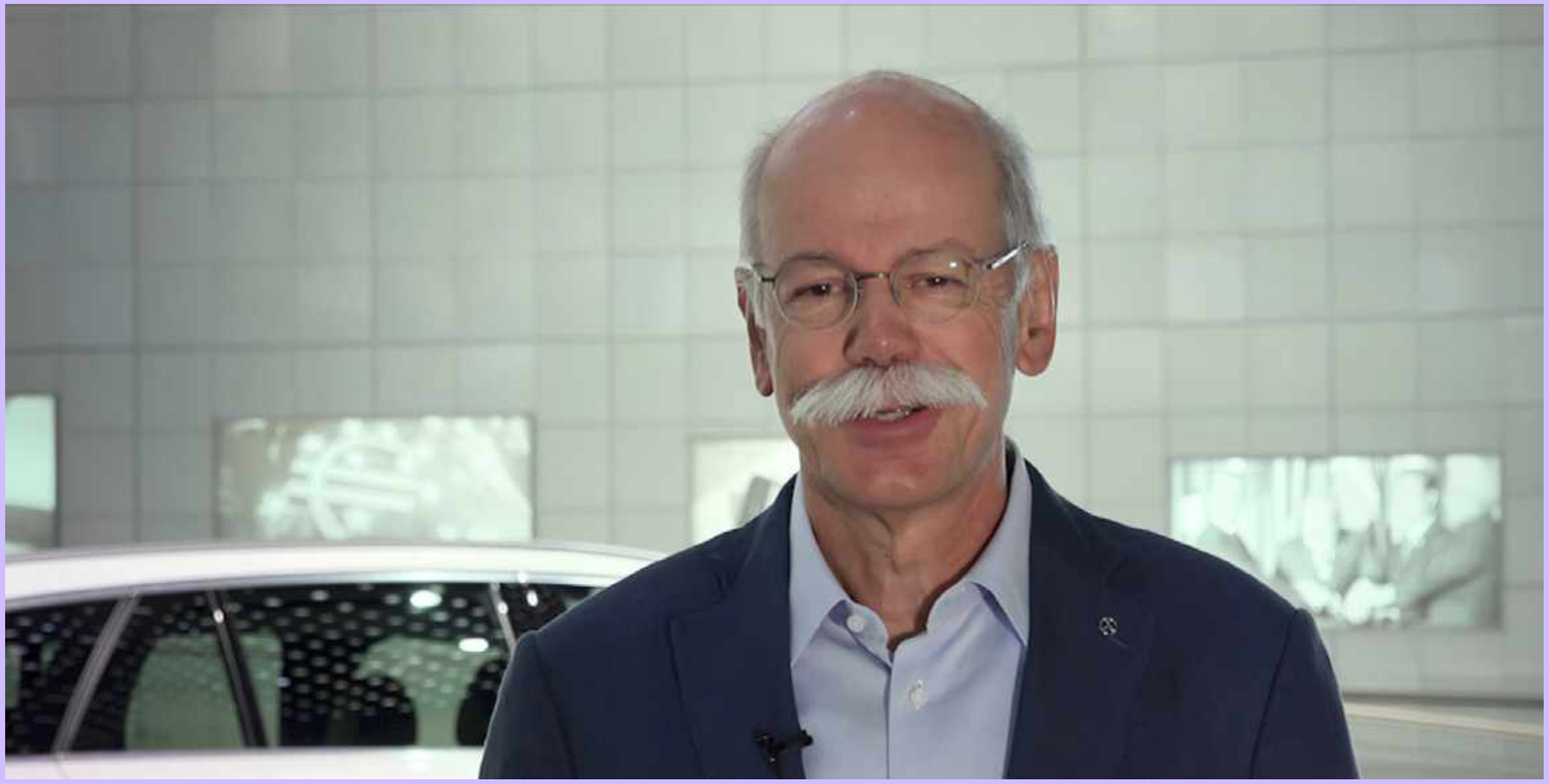
The challenge

As a business, how do you continue to lead when everything around you is changing?

Faced with industry disruptions that are expected to redefine the automotive industry, Daimler embarked on a cultural change initiative that was nothing short of a small cultural revolution. To lead the future Daimler was determined to transcend the boundaries of the manufacturing industry and shape the future of mobility.

Our company stands for stable success in volatile times.
But: stability is no justification for standing still. That’s why we are pushing forward with the transformation in all areas at Daimler.

Dieter Zetsche
Chairman of the Board of Management of Daimler AG
and Head of Mercedes-Benz Cars

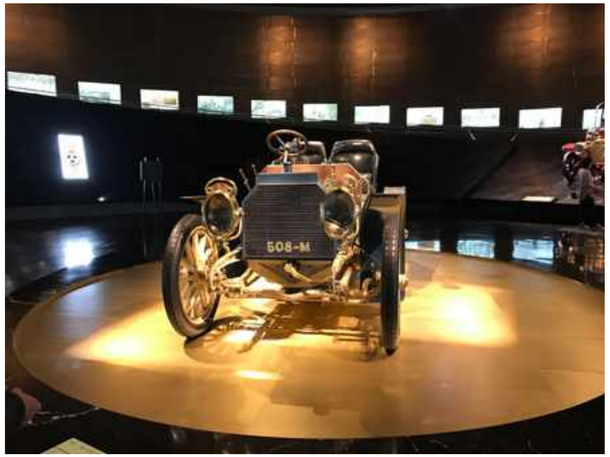


Shaping change from a leading position

Daimler is one of the world's leading producers of premium cars and the world's biggest manufacturer of commercial vehicles with a global reach.

It has maintained a position at the top of its industry for decades, and has enjoyed a recent period of particularly strong commercial success having posted record growth and revenue figures over 48 subsequent months, yielding a net profit up 24% in 2017. Going against management trends that link success to complacency Daimler embraced disruption and change from a leading position.

By 2016, the world of trendsetting technologies, outstanding products, and made-to-measure services was changing fast. This change, although brought on in large part by technological developments, went far beyond the technical domain to include disruptive changes in the domains of increasing connectivity, autonomous driving, shared ownership and electrification of propulsion systems. In a market where both incumbents and disruptive entrants jostle to take a leading position in new technological paradigms, a strong market position was no predictor of future success. While presenting considerable opportunities to deliver new products and services, each of these trends alone presented a set of unique challenges to each of Daimler's divisions.



As the inventor of the automobile, we strive to be a leader in its re-invention as well.

Daimler strategy, 2018

Shaping change from a leading position

Changing consumer behaviour and demand in combination with shifting industry dynamics called for an increase in speed and flexibility with which Daimler could introduce new products, services, and business models.

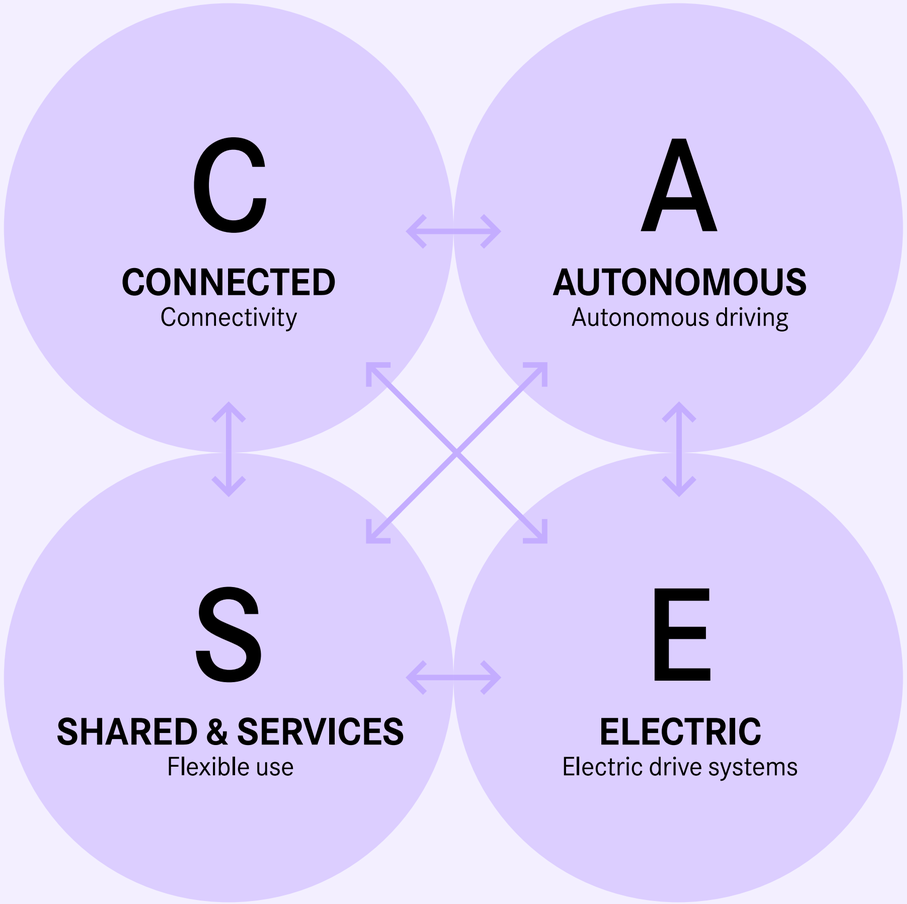
To shape this change from a leading position, Daimler embarked on a dual strategy of strengthening its core business and responding to disruptive changes in the industry.

Four key areas of strategic focus were identified under the acronym CASE – each responding to a key industry challenge: **connectivity** (**C**onnected), **autonomous driving** (**A**utonomous), **flexible use** (**S**hared & Services) and **electric drive systems** (**E**lectric). What is more, the organizational strategy acted as an opportunity to push the boundaries of what is yet to come:

Each of these topics has the potential to turn our industry upside down. However, the real revolution lies in combining them. That is what we are working on.

Daimler strategy, 2018

'CASE' framework



Groundbreaking, ground-up approach

It was clear that all these requirements would pose challenges to long-established, large organisations, particularly those that were capital intensive, and focused on scale and maximum precision in a particular area, such as Daimler.

In response to this challenge an invitation was sent to 17,000 leaders at Daimler, urging them to engage in a process of unprecedented self-renewal, working in a network, across hierarchical levels, leaving no stone unturned, and without preconceptions as to what exactly the end result should be – as long as it had the potential to better equip Daimler to deal with future challenges. A groundbreaking organizational development initiative was underway.

The Leadership Live Initiative in action

"Leadership 2020", an open and agile process, started in early 2016 when 144 Daimler managers from all levels, regions and divisions across the organisation, embarked on a journey to examine every aspect of the company through the lenses of more technological or organizationally unique companies.

Unusually experimental and open-ended for an engineering-driven company striving for uninterrupted excellence, this ground-up approach led to:

- **Eight new "Leadership principles" that would create a supportive corporate culture to keep Daimler ahead of the increasing complex changing environment**
- **Eight "Game changers" that represented areas with huge potential impact across the organisation (ranging from performance management, agility, digitisation, and the role of leaders themselves)**

Both the 'Leadership Principles' and the 'Game Changers' opened promising new avenues for the future of Daimler. However, instilling these in a large global organisation was a challenging task. Daimler's scale of global operations far outstrips even the largest venue.

What was needed was an approach to scale the conversation that would bring the essence of 'Leadership 2020' back into the organisation: an interactive and empowering experience that would not just evangelise, but would educate and engage. An approach that would transcend any hierarchical, divisional, regional or organisational boundaries.

8 8 new leadership principles and 8 new game changers

Click to see leadership principles

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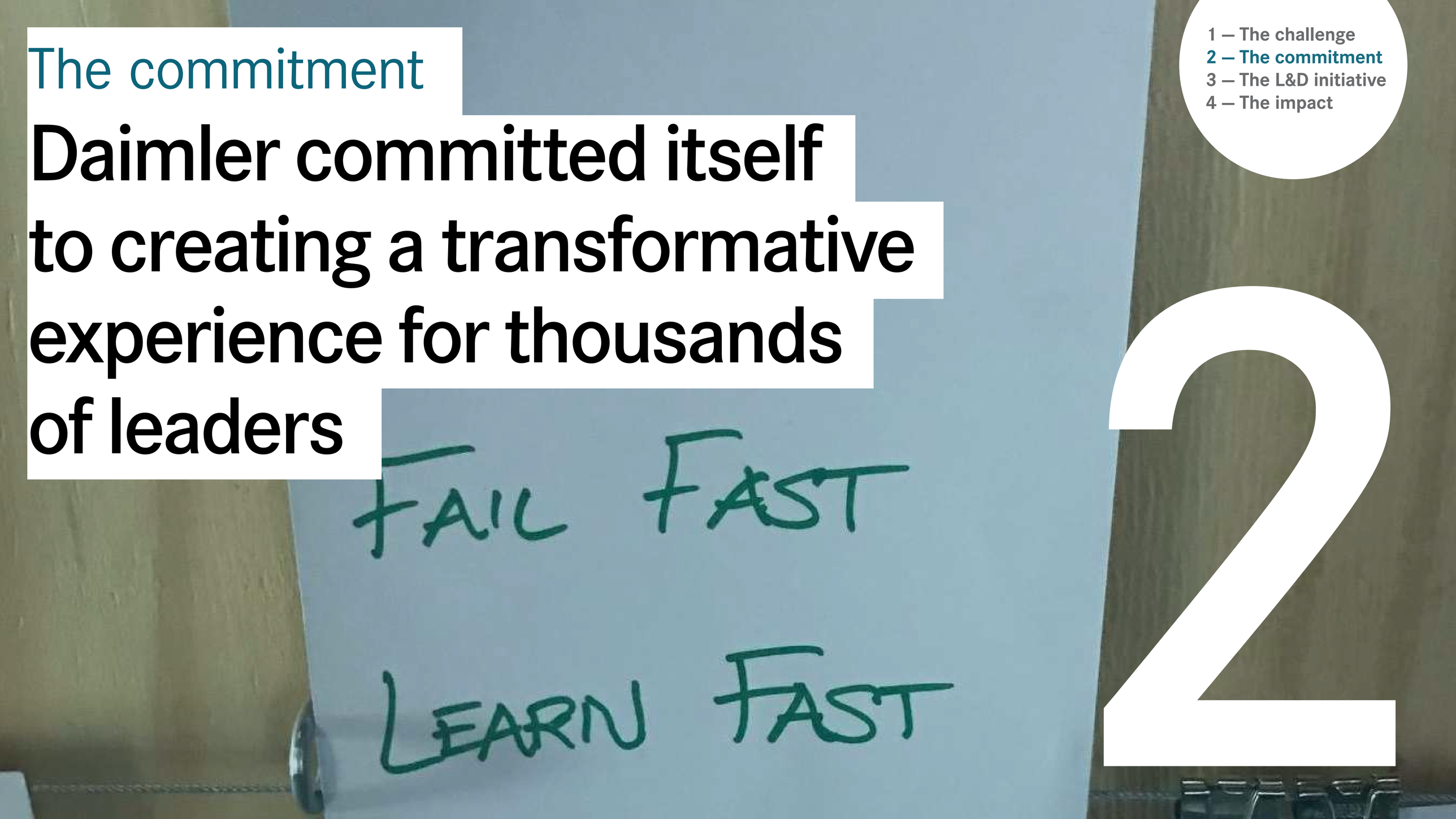
The commitment

Daimler committed itself to creating a transformative experience for thousands of leaders



2

Daimler committed itself to creating a transformative experience for thousands of leaders. It was clear in its strategic aim of bringing change through learning. At a time of digital revolution a technology based solution seemed appropriate but traditional e-learning was regarded more as a tool for conveying knowledge than changing attitudes, producing more compliance than creativity. Daimler was in need of a learning experience that would:

- Enable all Leaders to join the ‘Leadership 2020’ transformation journey, irrespectively of where they are positioned in the organization
- Engrain the new leadership principles to support a deep and sustainable mindset and behavioral shift
- Allow room for critical self-reflection on the ongoing journey, exploring the progress of the transition
- Transform every leader into a change ambassador

The learning experience that was created was a massive open online course (MOOC) especially designed for Daimler. Originally launched in 2012 in the US as way of offering university courses to huge audiences, MOOCs were emerging as a means of social learning as thousands of participants share a simultaneous interactive learning experience. A MOOC could be social rather than individualistic, and stimulate deep changes in attitudes and behaviours. However, despite the obvious advantages of a MOOC, it was equally clear that using this new and unfamiliar form of digital learning would in itself require a substantial change in learner attitudes and behaviours. Corporate MOOCs, just as publicly available academic MOOCs, were not always successful in generating the enthusiasm to participate in and contribute to a multi-week learning experience.

Working in new organizational forms, with complex and sometimes rapidly changing reporting lines... requires learning.

Katrin Adt
Vice-President of HR Development and HR Services, Daimler

Finding the right partner

Due to the innovative and non-standard nature of what was required, finding the right partner – and assessing the very different vendors on a set of valid criteria – required pioneering work; there simply isn't a well-known and accepted "field" for this type of work.

The project was of central importance to Daimler's Learning and Development team and a flagship for the Daimler Corporate Academy, demonstrating Daimler's leadership not just in the world of automotive, but also in the world of learning. The search for a process that could deliver more than a traditional eLearning project led Daimler to search for a partner that could push the boundaries of learning. The organization needed a creative partner experienced not only in innovative learning design but also familiar with complex organizations and the stakeholder management challenges these can bring. Further, it needed an agile partner who could bring a strong working relationship with a learning platform and operate within tight timeframes.

After a rigorous selection process, Daimler partnered with London-based brand consultancy, Wolff Olins. Wolff Olins brought 50 years' experience in helping major global businesses navigate complex transformations at pivotal moments. More importantly, Wolff Olins was an expert at translating corporate concepts into simple ideas that excite and motivate people on a more personal level, a characteristic that was considered essential in making the new world of Leadership 2020 accessible to a wide audience. More recently, the company had also developed a expertise in organisational learning, using MOOC technology.

For Wolff Olins, the opportunity to partner with Daimler was great. The opportunity to collaborate with an industry leader looking to make an ambitious, large-scale transformational change through the use of digital technology was intriguing. Daimler's approach however to face industry disruptions through collaborative learning practices that challenge dominant thinking together with a strong board level commitment was inspiring.

MOOC Provider Selection Process

Request for proposal (mid Jan '17)	Q+A call (10.2.17)	Pitch (20.2.17)	Scoping workshop (2.3.17)	Final decision
Sent to 8 potential providers, one of them being WOLFF OLINS	All eight potential providers used the opportunity to take part in the Q&A call in order to get more detailed background information	Six potential providers were invited to the pitch, including WOLFF OLINS	with WOLFF OLINS and another competitor in order to get more data for the final decision	WOLFF OLINS

Selection criteria:

Expertise
- End to end provider
- MOOC experience
- Content Architecture

Cultural Fit
- LS 2020 Spirit
- Creativity and Innovation
- Project Management

Daimler Empathy
- Knowledge of Daimler
- Understanding of target group
- Collaboration/reputation

Technology and Commercials
- Platform Quality
- Costs and transparency
- Package comprehensiveness

Collaborating to solve complexity

In order to bring this unprecedented, large and complex learning intervention to life, Daimler and Wolff Olins worked in close collaboration and capitalized on their complementary skills. Through intensive two-day workshops managers from Daimler and Wolff Olins worked as one team on the content, the platform and the internal promotion of this MOOC course.

Working together to build the learning journey

Collaborating to solve complexity

The technology platform for the MOOC was FutureLearn, the UK Open University designed project for hosting public-facing university courses . While this platform is known to also host corporate projects, many design elements were primarily made to meet individual end user requirements rather than a global organization’s processes and standards. So it needed to overcome a number of challenges, such as ensuring that the standards-compliant platform would run appropriately and attractively on a wide range of devices, providing multilingual first-line support and meeting a demanding “Cloud Risk Assessment” process. It would also have to be robust agains traffic peaks.

In order for this learning initiative to meet its visionary aim both partners committed to working in an agile way. A user test panel comprised of approximately 100 eventual participants and key stakeholders was established during the project kick off to constantly review different versions of the learning journey and content as the MOOC developed and provide critical feedback to the team. This early engagement with incomplete and experimental work reinforced the fruitful partnership within members of the team and maintained a clear sense of direction.

Delivering the online learning journey on a page

Creating a collaborative and iterative experience for Daimler and Wolff Olins

1 — The challenge
2 — The commitment
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The L&D initiative

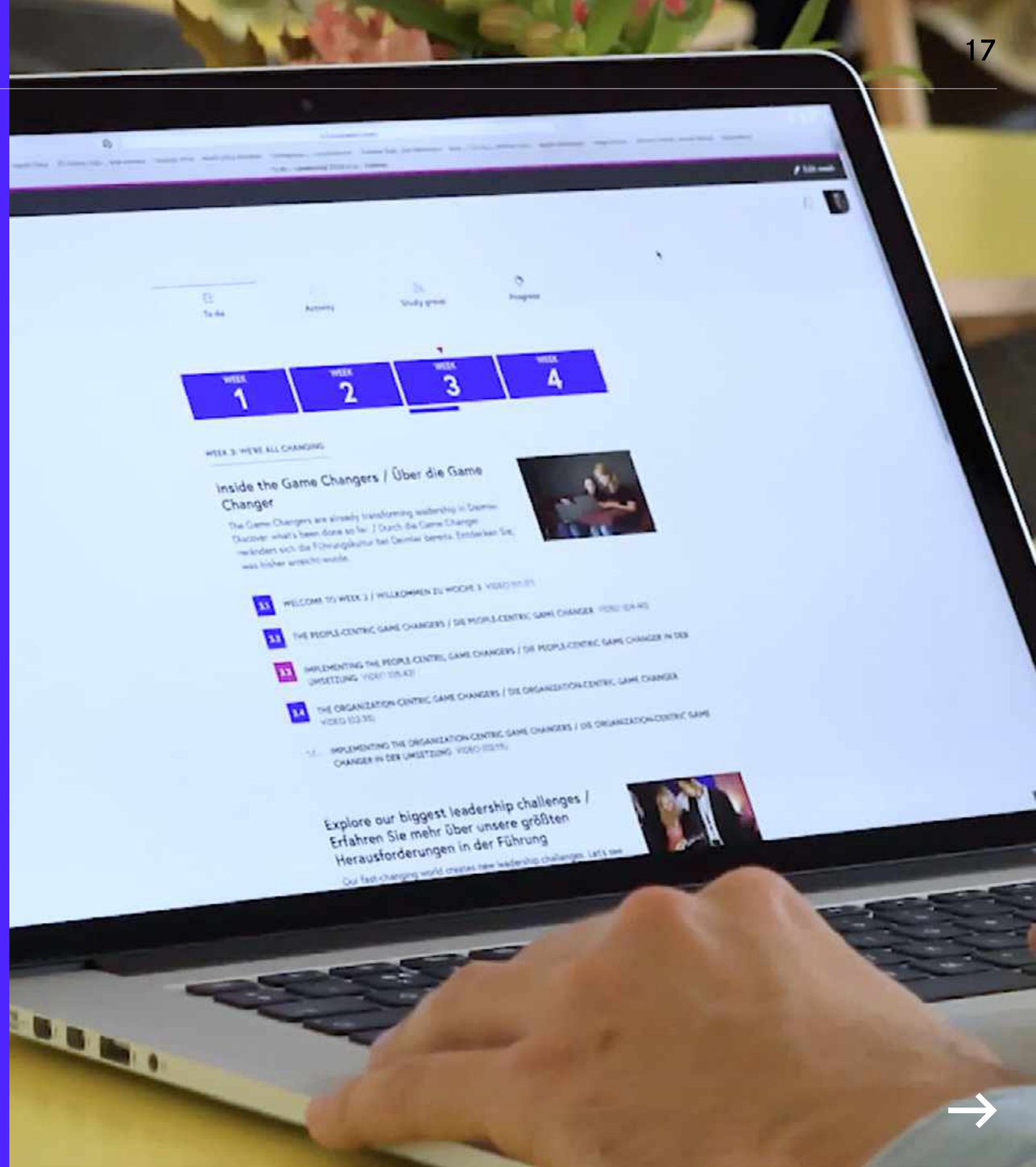
The resulting programme was a four-week, conversation-driven MOOC called ‘Leadership 2020 Live’

3

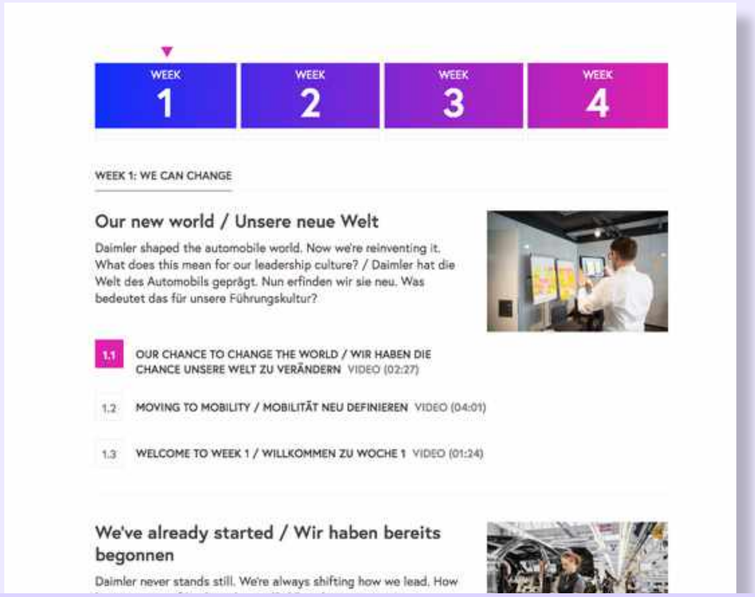
In September 2017, the online learning platform 'Leadership 2020 Live' was introduced to all 27,500 Daimler leaders worldwide. This number included the technical supervisors ('Meisters'), a particularly important target group that played a crucial role in bringing Leadership 2020 to the production process, and a group which the Daimler Corporate Academy has previously not targeted in their programmes. The credibility of this initiative, it became clear, depended on reaching a very diverse target group with a single and consistent message.

The learning intervention itself was offered in German and English, but PDF versions of the narrative were offered as a download in 7 other languages. The four-week worldwide learning intervention included several interactive formats that facilitated and encouraged engagement for leaders. The MOOC was designed so that leaders within Daimler would:

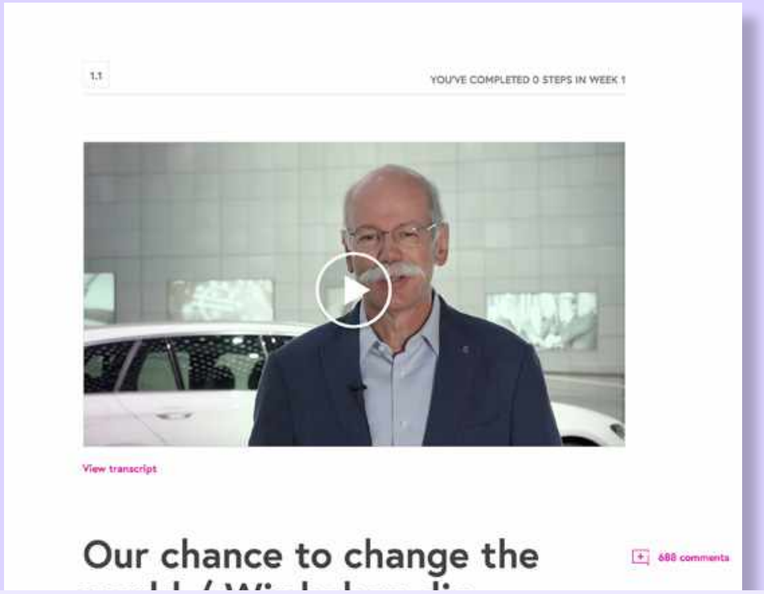
- Gain an understanding of their own approach to leadership
- Understand how their approach to leadership shapes team dynamics, trust, empowerment and cooperation
- Understand what the new leadership principles mean for them
- Understand what mindset and behavioural shifts will be required from them
- Share their own leadership journey



4 week online learning journey...

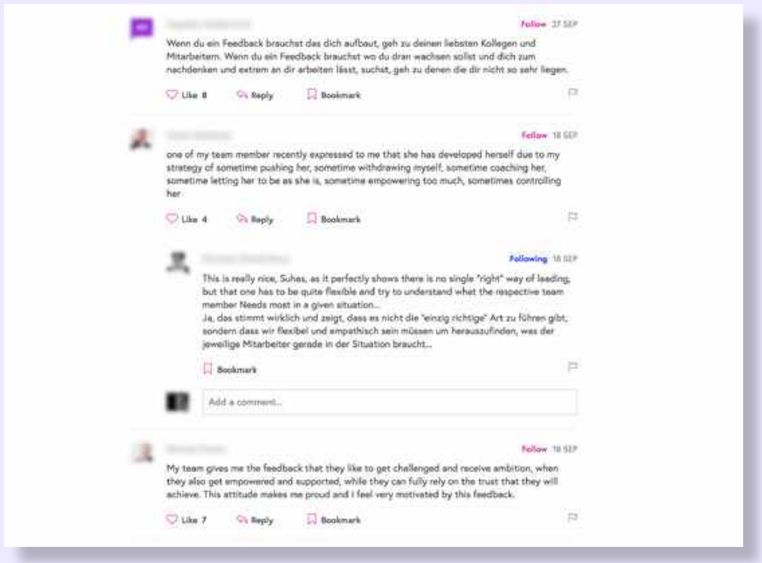


...where learners were invited to participate in shaping the future of the company



...completing interactive activities and tasks

...sharing their ideas with other colleagues across the world

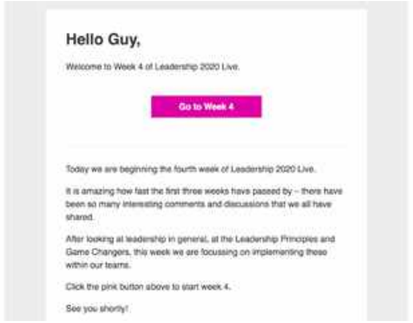


Challenging assumptions – embracing new perspectives

When the MOOC was launched, leaders were invited to embark on a four-week learning journey to discover, experiment, and reflect on the 'Leadership Principles' and more importantly, on their leadership practices in general. Leaders were invited to participate through an email sent from the Board of Management.

This was part of a wider set of engagement activities, including more targeted social media efforts, designed to attract attention and maintain momentum while the MOOC was running. The initial email was followed by video messages from the project's Board Sponsor and the Head of Workers Council who shared their own expectation and excitement for the experience ahead – a symbolic message indicating the importance of learning for the transformation of Daimler. Throughout the course, weekly introductory and roundup emails were sent by the two leaders acting as "course hosts". These introduced participants to each week as it became accessible, and also shared their highlights of the material and discussion.

Early in the design phase, the team created a broader framework and experience around the course. A compelling narrative was produced to communicate the program's purpose and a "pre-course" discussion activity was designed to allow participants to enroll before the course began, allowing for further interactions between participants and providing them with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with key functionalities of the platform.



Weekly emails to get participants straight into learning

Invitations to participate from senior stakeholders

Pre-course discussion to create excitement

Course hosts introducing and reflecting each week

Four weeks of change

‘Leadership 2020 Live’ was a four-week online social learning experience. A key guiding principle behind this initiative was the decision to make the course open to all Daimler leaders, irrespectively of where they are positioned in the organizational hierarchy. There were no selection criteria. In order to enhance its empowering element, Daimler also decided not to make the course compulsory, but attractive so that leaders would decide to participate.

Through a wide range of tools (including short videos, articles, discussion questions and peer review tasks) each week gave learners the opportunity to:

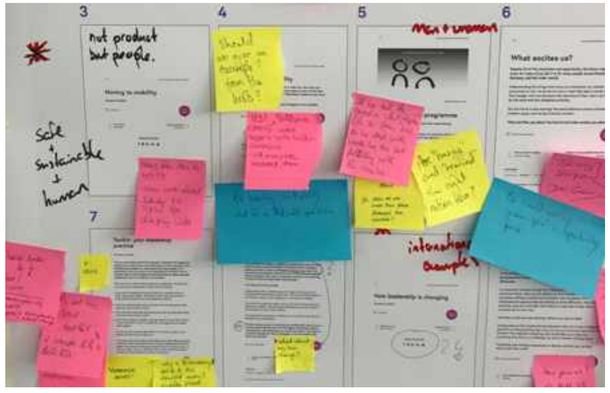
- **Discover** the rationale behind, and the content of the ‘Leadership Principles’ and the ‘Game Changers’
- **Experiment** by applying those concepts in practice
- **Reflect** on those experimentations and share ideas with all the other participants, through online discussions.

The storyline was firmly grounded in the learning needs identified in stakeholder interviews, which were designed to include not only the specific – and very urgent - learning needs concerning the global involvement around Leadership 2020, but also any thoughts pertaining to the fact that this form of learning was unfamiliar to almost every prospective participant.

At every stage, participants were encouraged to share ideas and challenges, showing them the breadth of the experience accross the organisation.

Four driving principles

‘Leadership 2020 Live’ was guided by four key design principles that were aimed to respond to the key aims of the learning initiative.



…by engaging leaders in an open conversation around leadership and by welcoming their personal perspectives and experiences. Participants weren’t told how to be better leaders but learned from each other through sharing their stories. Each step of the course asked participants to submit their thoughts in response to a provocation, a challenge, or a reflection.

…by supporting participants’ daily work, not getting in the way. Each week therefore was designed to span across all days of the week, requiring smaller time commitments from leaders. Across the four weeks participants were guided on a journey of progressively bigger missions that gave them easy-to-implement ideas that they could try within their teams. Leaders felt supported by knowing that their own managers would be doing the same.

BE SOCIAL

BE USEFUL

Leadership 2020 Live

BE COLLABORATIVE

BE HOLISTIC

…through FutureLearn’s “peer review” functionality that captured leaders’ individual leadership challenges, and then connected them to a randomly selected colleague for detailed feedback. Throughout the course, similar opportunities for collaboration between colleagues were designed.

… by designing a single shared journey that aimed to appeal to everyone. Rather than design pathways or “walled gardens” between different orgainsational levels.

The impact

The programme engaged more than 13,000 leaders with clear impact on 4 aspects of Daimler's culture

4

‘Leadership 2020 Live’ registration mail was sent on 11 September 2018. 24 hours later more than 3,500 participants had registered, representing a distribution across levels and regions.

Overall 13,143 leaders registered to the program, exceeding all initial expectations as well as benchmarks from other corporate MOOCs. Through a data analytics workstream that ran alongside the course directly from the FutureLearn platform, Daimler Corporate Academy was able to monitor daily levels of participation and interaction.

This data was used to inform enrolment interventions, targeted outreach activities and guided internal reporting. The analytics workstream shed light to the impact of the ‘Leadership 2020’ initiative and the broader role of learning and development at Daimler. By the end of the program, Daimler Corporate Academy was in position to communicate a rich, evidence-based report to the organization and most importantly to its participants.

A path breaking concept. Turned out to be beyond expectations.

The discussion board was the crowning highlight, with views shared from accross the globe

Learners feedback

An engaging learning experience

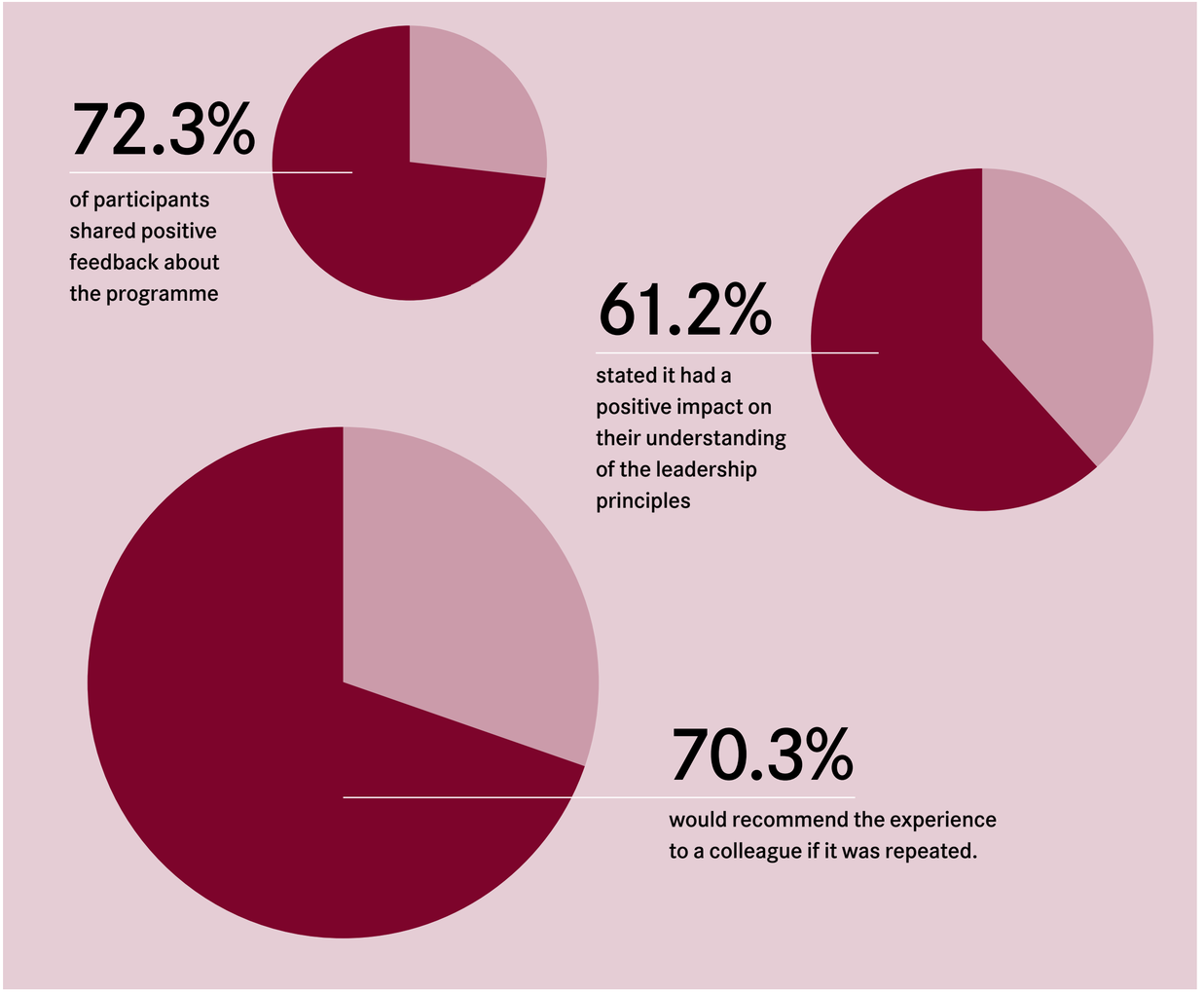
The programme resembled more of a massive, organisation-wide conversation, but it was more than just talk: the leaders who took part practiced using the principles in their daily working lives, and committed to applying Leadership 2020 ideas with their teams. Participants were extremely positive about both their experience of the learning format, and the impact it had on their work. In follow-up surveys, 58.3% of respondents reported a positive experience with the platform and 61.2% stated it had a positive impact on their understanding of the leadership principles. 70.3% would recommend the experience to a colleague if it was repeated.

> I like that the company invests in such a high quality programme.
>
> **Learner feedback**

> The ability to take the training at our own pace but yet having a committed time frame allowed me time to concentrate on each step. I was also engaged and was curious to read the comments for others.
>
> **Learner feedback**

Most importantly ‘Leadership 2020 Live’ made four impactful contributions to the cultural transformation of Daimler as it:

- Brought people together across divisions of hierarchy and geography
- Converted passive learners into active contributors and problem-solvers
- Created a culture that embraces online learning
- Translated the values and principles of ‘Leadership 2020’ into tangible actions



Will it change the way I do my job?

Yes it will!

Learner feedback

From units to unity

A key impact of the initiative was the widespread adoption of learning reflected in the high levels of participation. Despite the program's voluntary character and leaders' busy schedules approximately half of all the company's leaders from all levels participated in this social approach to learning and problem solving. Leaders valued talking to each other across levels and across countries – and the format of the programme was itself seen as game-changing. Leaders engaged in stimulating and thought provoking conversations. Overall, 63% of social connections spanned leadership levels, and 51% were across countries and locations.

63% of social connections spanned leadership levels

> To give feedback to some unknown colleague in India and to receive the same from an unknown person in the Truck Group feels really cool. I feel like I belong to a wonderful very big family and if we truly, faithfully and courageously take the steps ahead we can beat anyone.
>
> **Learner feedback**

From learners to collaborators

Another important impact of the 'Leadership 2020 Live' was the introduction of collaborative practices of learning: 44.1% of participants actively engaged with the content. This is considerably higher than the equivalent figure for public – and therefore also voluntary – business-focused MOOCs on the FutureLearn platform, which see an average of 30.3% active participation. Daimler Corporate Academy's ambition to create one big conversation was successfully realized: a total of 14,269 comments were left by participants, totalling over 600,000 words. The conversation turned out to be so rich that most participants made every effort to read not only the MOOC content, but every single comment as well. These were visible to all participants and – as originally intended – drove the activity from content-consumption to conversation and collaboration. Real problems were debated and many solutions were proposed.

> My highlight of the week was the direct feedback for unknown colleagues but with real problems - outstanding!
>
> **Learner feedback**

Participants frequently praised the wealth of experience shared and requested for the experience to remain accessible beyond its planned closing, to enable them to further explore the discussion. In light of data protection standards, two weeks were considered acceptable.

> The ability to take the training at our pace but yet having a committed timeframe allowed me to concentrate on each step. I was also engaged and curious to read the comments from others."
>
> **Learner feedback**

→

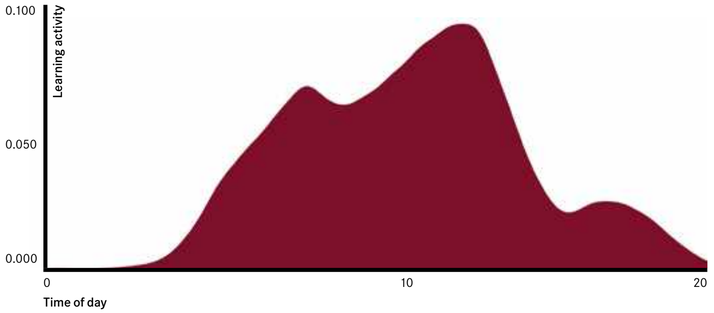
From long-established to new ways of learning

The programme introduced the MOOC concept to Daimler and quickly overcame resistance to new modes of learning. The positive experience of using this digital learning technology led to further discussions of future learning opportunities which will equip Daimler for the challenges ahead. Using sentiment analysis we obtained a more objective sense of how positive the conversation about the principles were.

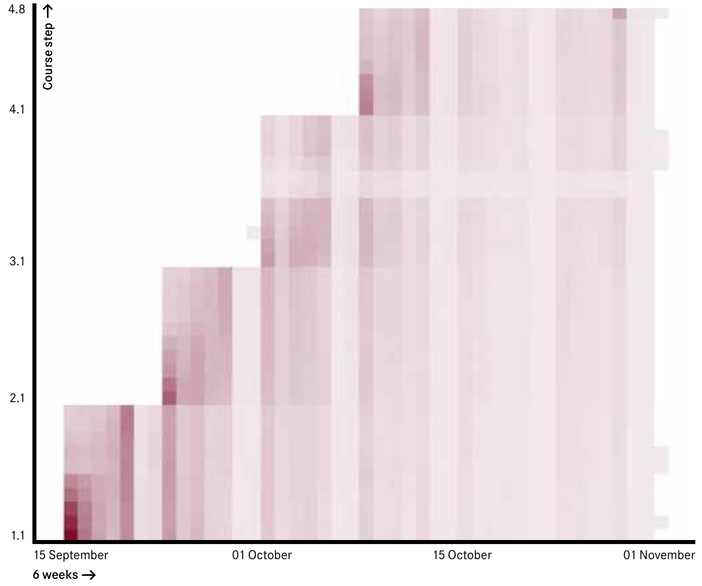
This new way of learning and exchanging knowledge is part of our change and, in my opinion, should be maintained, emulated and expanded to all levels.

Learner feedback

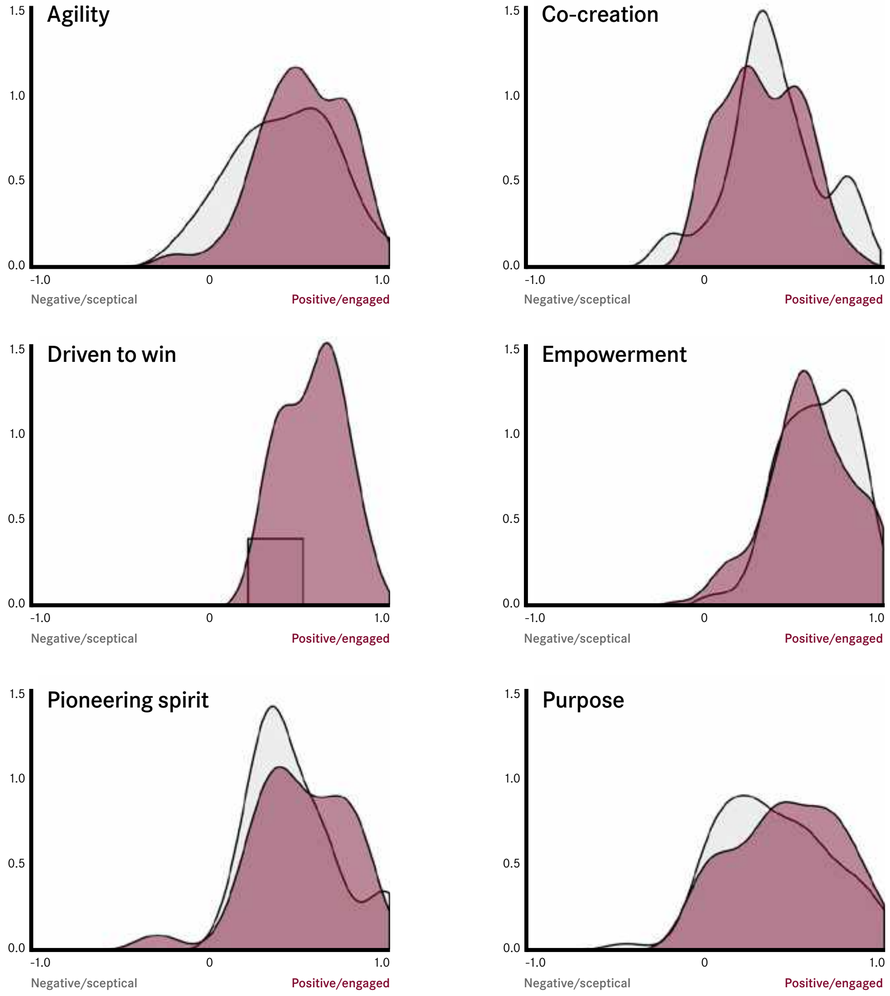
Leaders learning around the world, and around the clock



Conversations happened for weeks as participants replied and shared



Participants began to speak more positively about the leadership principles



From theory-based to action-based knowledge

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the programme also drove a notable shift in sentiment around the leadership principles, turning theory to action.
The tone of people's comments showed enthusiasm for the broader changes of 'Leadership 2020' and a strong sense of engagement with the 'Leadership 2020' content. For those people who had felt Leadership 2020 was overwhelming and hard to assimilate, the course converted anxiety to a sense of empowerment.

Some feedback from learners:

Honestly the course was the first LEADERSHIP information that took me closer to the idea of Leadership 2020 and all the ideas behind.

Week 3 and 4 were great... I learnt a lot each day, felt a part of it and felt an impulse to get involved

Will it change the way I do my job? Yes it will – the principles in the programme and the tips to take small steps are not overwhelming and I can use them

I was very skeptical regarding the form the content was presented. Sometimes I rather have a piece of paper and physical coach in front of me. But the experience itself was awesome, due to the fact that the amount of available information, and the possibility to reach thousand people at the same time and you do not miss anything, when you were not present. The stuff is waiting for you.

I always had the feeling to not have reached to every possible aspect of Leadership 2020, which is timewise anyway virtually impossible. I [now] have a good feeling and I feel much more inspired now. And I know where to go to dig deeper.

I'm happy now that we will spread this spirit, and these ideas all over the company. This is leadership, and we can incubate it.

Leading change through learning

Overall, ‘Leadership 2020 Live’ achieved Daimler’s vision to lead change through learning as it successfully:

- Created a learning experience to enable all leaders to join the LS2020 transformation journey
- Engrained the new principles to support a deep and sustainable mindset and behavioral change
- Created the forum to reflect on the journey so far and understand how transition is going
- Excited every leader to keep up the momentum.

Anybody else feels like we should create an app at Daimler which allows for this kind of exchange whenever we feel like we need it?

Learner feedback

Thank you

Click to play