

MicroMBA / AgilityBooster™

To boost the agility of organizations and their managers

The Organization challenges

In a highly competitive and fast-moving environment organizations must become more agile to:

- Identify relevant opportunities
- Keep an edge over the competition
- Handle new constraints, including regulatory ones
- Review their business model according to market evolution
- Adapt their processes in a fast-moving environment

Middle managers challenges

Middle managers are usually specialists who:

- are frequently experts in a specific field but who do not have a holistic understanding of what goes on in other functions of the company
- lack business savvy
- have not received a general management education (or only partial, without a global perspective)
- find themselves in a managerial position without suitable training
- do not take advantage of synergy and network opportunities with their colleagues
- wish to develop their know-how and management skills
- yearn for recognition and development.
- sometimes perceive competency training as admission testimony of their own incompetence
- want to attend training seminars that are recognized in academia

AgilityBooster has been designed to boost middle managers while providing academic recognition.

AgilityBooster™'s Objectives

AgilityBooster™ (also called MicroMBA™) is a **mind broadening training** program that complements the traditional « catalog » of competency training available in most large and medium size organizations. It gives **middle managers** a business education covering a wide range of subjects while stimulating **inter-division/department collaboration**. Participants are also expected to implement an **innovative or change management project** for the benefit of their organization; this hands-on learning experience also brings their employer **tangibles deliverables**.

AgilityBooster provides participants the tools to

- Increase the collaboration with other divisions and break silos (“departitioning”);
- Develop their business savvy
- Introduce them to the holistic management of a business unit combining various disciplines;
- Encourage them to behave in a more entrepreneurial manner (intrapreneurship);
- Improve their engagement and effectiveness;
- Increase their autonomy;
- Become proactive change agents who can manage change
- Diplomatically manage internal stakeholders
- Develop their ability to work in multidisciplinary groups;
- Help them better factor-in the human aspects of their work (including team building activities) ;
- Develop their personal (and informal) networks;
- Increase their desire to attend in-depth corporate training workshops to master certain subjects.

In addition, AgilityBooster provides a unique platform to convey messages concerning the corporate culture as well as explaining the corporate strategic objectives. It is an effective corporate strategy deployment vector that can reach a management level that usually does not fully know about the strategy.

The program consists of several modules, which cover the fundamentals of entrepreneurial management and behavior. It was designed by an entrepreneur for training intrapreneurs and heads of business units. It is deliberately focusing on concrete and practical results, while integrating a conceptual support. The time between each module (or groups of modules) gives the participants the opportunity to apply in their daily work what they learn while being coached by the trainers. The attached list of modules specifies the topics that can be taught.

The training methodology relies on concrete examples, practical checklists and the relevant theoretical concepts suitable for managing corporate entities or units. The courses include experts’ facilitation, case studies, group work, debate as well as written course materials. Since all trainers are or have been seasoned entrepreneurs or executives who are also teaching in the best business schools they can legitimately teach on the basis of their experience.

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The Practice

After the courses and to maximise integration participants are asked to put in practice what they have been taught. This is achieved in concrete project that can be, depending on the organization preference:

- A. **An innovation project** that fits the organization strategy while bringing competitive advantages (new product/service, new business model, cost reduction, process improvement, etc.). For these emerging innovation projects participants must, in multidisciplinary groups, identify the opportunity, obtain buy-in from decision-makers and finally implement the project.
- B. **The adaptation to their environment of a best-practice** implemented elsewhere in the organization. These projects are more suitable for organizations that prefer deployment of operational excellence to emerging innovation. As the identification of best-practices must be made by the participants they must learn to spot them before adapting them to their own context.

These projects must benefit the organization and translate into a measurable return on investment. To increase their chances of success and enhance their learning opportunities the participants are coached by the program director. Each group is requested to write a report and make a compact presentation in front of the other groups to share their learning and achievements.

One of the objectives is to lead participants to change the way they look at their work and their ability to contribute. They are encouraged to share what they have learnt with their colleagues, which extends the reach of AgilityBooster beyond the participants' circle. Their boss can be involved in the process by providing opportunities to use AgilityBooster content in the participants' actual job. This helps maximize the participants' as well as the corporation's benefits.

Return on Investment for the Organization

Benefits for the organization implementing AgilityBooster are:

- Implementation of 4 to 6 innovative projects (at minimal cost) which ensure a measurable return on investment, which is significantly higher than the cost of the training.
- Deploying a culture focusing on results rather than on means
- Turning employees into pro active change agents
- Customer orientation
- A better integration of the strategic priorities to achieve corporate objectives
- More successful and easier change management initiatives
- Conveying strong cultural messages
- Higher level of engagement and motivation of the participants as well as their colleagues
- Develop staff retention and loyalty
- Pro active acquisition of competitive advantages and seizing of opportunities
- Behavioral and attitude changes
- Professionalization of the competencies (not only the soft skills!)
- Breaking silos to better take advantages of synergies
- Better (internal and external) communication resulting in increased efficiency
- Talent and high potentials identification
- Feedback from the fieldwork

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University Recognition/Acknowledgement

Participants who successfully finish the program and the innovative project can benefit of up to 50% of the credits of the executive MBA of the E U Business School (19th in the worldwide ranking of the Financial Times). This diploma gives the opportunity to obtain an MBA without prior university studies (no university degree required).

Customize implementation.

Each program is customized to meet the needs and objectives of each organization.

The customization process:

- Selection of the most relevant modules addressing the specific needs of the organization (See below some examples of modules)
- Close cooperation with the HR Department or Training Center: the Micro MBA is designed to become a powerful tool enabling HR to achieve several objectives: talent identification and retention, developing competencies, engagement, motivation, stress management, culture change, etc.
- Aligning the content of each module to the company vocabulary and processes. Each trainer will contact the company expert (financial director, marketing director, HR director, etc.) to adapt the content of his/her presentation to the methods and objectives of each function.
- As a complement. company experts may also be invited to lecture in order to add the company perspective. One of the modules could, for instance, be partially facilitated by the CEO or other senior executive (see below).

Time and Place

The training part lasts between 6 and 8 months, depending on the number of modules that have been selected. It is then followed by the time required to implement the project (6 to 9 more months). The program ends with a session where participants share and discuss the outcome of their projects

The number of modules, their frequency and the location are agreed upon with the training center according to the objectives and constraints of the organization.

Designer and Coordinator

The AgilityBooster approach has been developed by Prof. Raphael H Cohen. He is a keynote speaker and an expert in both professional agility and “weapons of mass innovation”. He has conceived the IpOp Model, which is presented in his latest book *“Winning Opportunities, proven tools for converting your projects into success... without a business plan”* (downloadable on www.winning-opportunities.org). Published in 2006 the French version *“Concevoir et lancer un projet”* has since been a bestseller. The IpOp Model taught in executive education seminars empowers entrepreneurs as well as intrapreneurs to identify, analyze and seize opportunities that bring competitive advantages to their company. In large organizations Raphael’s tools boost innovation, entrepreneurial behavior, selling effectiveness, business development as well as employees’ commitment.

AgilityBooster/MicroMBA MB’s are the corporate version of the first four CREATE courses of Entrepreneurship for engineers and scientists in Switzerland (at both University of Geneva and EPFL, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) that Raphael H designed and ran until 2002, when he started the first AgilityBooster/MicroMBA MB’s

He is currently the Academic Director of the Entrepreneurship and Business Development specialization of the Executive MBA of the University of Geneva (postgraduate Diploma of Executive Education), which he launched in 2001. He has also been the MBA European Academic Program Director of the Thunderbird School of Global Management (Phoenix, Arizona), where he holds the title of clinical professor.

As serial entrepreneur, active CEO and business angel, Raphael H brings his hands-on experience in his lecturing and consulting activities providing training, mentoring and management services to senior executives, bankers, directors and entrepreneurs. Raphael serves on the board of directors of several companies, including one Swiss bank, and is a regular contributor to several business publications.

He obtained his Ph.D. in Economics in 1982 while managing an international group of companies. His diversified working experience on 3 continents and in many industries led him to develop expertise in innovation, leadership, strategic analysis and business development, management, negotiation, sales, HR, coaching and mentoring, financial engineering, legal affairs (intl. taxation, licensing, real estate, M&A, etc.), asset management, turning-around businesses, interim and crisis management.

Customized Content

Modules are selected according to the objectives of each organization while taking into account the participants’ level and needs. Modules content are customized to fit the corporation vocabulary and specific objectives. Cases studied are chosen regarding the specific needs of a particular audience. During their training participants must apply the content to their professional activity.

AgilityBooster has been adapted from the entrepreneurship courses of EPFL and HEC Geneva taking into account the specific characteristics and requirements of corporate training.

AgilityBooster concept has been adopted by several organizations, including Nestlé, Microsoft, Sanofi-aventis, Publigroupe, the University Hospitals of Geneva (HUG), Edipresse, SICPA, banks, utility companies, public administrations, etc.

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Longer versions include hands-on workshops while others are like the specialization in Entrepreneurial Leadership of the EMBA of University of Geneva.

To evaluate its benefits, articles and testimonies about the impact on AgilityBooster participants are available, on request.

Examples of AgilityBooster™ Modules

Some modules can be dropped and others can be added to this non-exhaustive list.

A. Team building

Maximizing team output by capitalizing on diversity and effective communication, and developing the aptitude to work in groups. Removing mental barriers and limiting beliefs.

B. Presentation skills

The benefits of effective communication. Making clear presentations that are tailored to different target audiences. Body language and voice. Using visuals for maximum impact. Smooth, confident and persuasive delivery. Exercising presentation skills.

C. Market analysis & marketing strategy (1 or 2 modules)

The essentials of marketing and market analysis. Identifying market needs, product/service positioning, acceptable pricing, channels of distribution and the most viable client segments. Market research and competitive analysis tools. Marketing plans.

D. Seizing business opportunities (2 to 3 modules)

Introduction to the IpOp Model, a step by step toolbox: from the identification of a business opportunity to its implementation. Defining a viable business model. Product life cycle. Key factors of success and failure. Writing intrapreneurial proposals (Business Plan, Business Case, etc.)

E. Leadership and personal effectiveness (2 modules)

Leading and guiding individuals as well as teams. Motivating and developing individuals with diverse profiles. Emotional intelligence and meta-programs. Using different styles of leadership appropriately and understanding the basics of group dynamics. Optional self-evaluation of knowledge/skills gap.

F. Strategy

F1: Basic principles of strategic reflection. The role of values. Communicating the mission and the objectives. Expliciting the enterprise's strategy. Finding "blue oceans."

F2: Strategic diagnostic. SWOT, PESTEL, Porter's 5 forces model, and the value chain analyses. Identifying competitive advantages and elaborating strategic positions for success.

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G. Change management

Tools and key factors for successfully implementing important changes. Tools to anticipate and deal with the obstacles to change.

H. Human resources

Recruiting and interviewing techniques. Appraisals. Job description. Training and development. Optional: personality profiles.

I. Managing teams

Various hands-on tools for managing more effectively, including the management of expectations, facilitating meetings, managing group work, communicating decisions and providing constructive feedback.

J. Communication & PR

Understanding critical issues in communication. Image and identity management. Internal and external communication. Press releases and PR. Direct marketing, Buzz. Effective collaboration with the communication department.

K. Accounting & budgeting

K1: Fundamentals of accounting, Forecasting budgeting and cash flow preparation. Interpreting basic financial information. Cost price analysis.

K2: Financial statements. Understanding and interpreting financial statements and ratios. The balanced score card as a monitoring and management tool .

K3: Budgeting. Methodology to follow in order to elaborate a robust and well documented budget for a new project. The importance and benefits of budget monitoring.

K4: Balanced scorecard. Acquiring the methodological framework related to this tool. Learn to develop and then deploy a BSC in an organization. Get a good understanding of the necessary prerequisites for its implementation. Discussing the most frequently used KPI's.

L. Legal issues

Contract law. Working contract. Product liability responsibility. Industry specific legal issues.

M. Negotiation

Negotiation strategies and techniques. Key factors of success.

N. Selling skills

Sale processes cycle. From the management of the prospect to the closing. Getting the first appointment, Sale interview. Preparing the negotiation and handling objections. The use of closing techniques and developing an ongoing relationship. Complaint management.

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O. Project management

O1: Goal Directed Project Management (GDPM). Follow-up tools and monitoring. Effective project management to ensure projects are completed on time, on target and within budget. Avoiding classical mistakes and pitfalls.

O2: How to deploy a project within a company. Integrating projects. Avoiding rejection by the organization immune system. Human factors of project management.

P. Resilience

Preparing teams to deal with the ups-and-downs of innovation. What team resources to bounce back and deal with adversity. Once its resilience-profile has been analyzed each team receives recommendations to improve the team resilience

Q. Process management

Tools to analyze and map processes allowing cost reduction. Managing process improvement and evolution. The GE “workout” method to improve processes.

R. Work-life balance (Stress management)

Identifying stress factors. Physiological reactions to stress. Stress management techniques for yourself and your team.

S. Exploiting personal networks

Using networks to increase influence and reach. Developing internal and external networks. Network maintenance. Mistakes to avoid.

T. Field reality

Participants present to other participants the findings obtained while investigating the characteristics of different company activities. Highly appreciated and very effective departitionning method.

U. Conflict and recognition management

Causes of conflicts and their prevention. Management tools for interpersonal conflicts. Distinguishing “recognition” from “reward”. The importance of recognition in motivating team members. How to express recognition.

V. Business intelligence

Internet research techniques. Access to extranets (data bases). Competitive analyses.

W. Intellectual property

Overview of the theoretical and legal bases for a broad spectrum of intellectual property rights, including copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, design rights, patents and domain names, and how to use them in a strategic context internationally. Regarding intellectual property: global international protection strategies, technology transfer, joint venture, and product launch initiatives, valuation and dispute resolution strategies.

X. Cultural diversity

Understanding cultural differences and risks of misunderstanding. Managing diversity. Decoding tools. Mistakes to avoid.

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Y. Better manage one's boss

Tools to better understand one's boss and increase his awareness to dimensions that he is not aware of. Decoding tools. Influence strategy. Mistakes to avoid.

Z. Virtual teams

Managing projects in multiple locations. Rules and tools for distant collaboration. Overcoming physical separation.

AA. Meet the CEO

Q&A session with the CEO or another senior executive. It gives participants the opportunity to obtain answers to their concerns, in particular those concerning the deployment of the strategy (about 2h).

BB. Final group work debriefing

Presentation of all the group innovation assignments in front of the other group (the audience) and a jury. Questions/Answers followed by each presentation evaluation by the audience and the jury.

Other Modules

This is a non-exhaustive list. Additional content can, upon request, easily be added to the program.

It has been the case for the following subjects:

- Digital transformation
- Optimizing the selling price
- Emotional intelligence
- Internet as a commercial tool
- Audit as a management tool
- "Grafting opinions in hostile environments"
- Using "Story Telling" to communicate messages
- Information system architecture
- Contract law
- Intrapreneurship
- Competitive Intelligence
- Branding
- ...

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