

THE OXFORD ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP



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TRAINING CENTER



Introduction

The Oxford Adaptive Leadership Training Course prepares leaders to work with problems that resist standard solutions and demand changes in behaviour, not just in process. Participants examine how adaptive challenges differ from technical ones, why familiar answers fail, and what leaders must do instead. The programme connects diagnostic frameworks with live leadership dilemmas and personal practice. As a result, learners gain a disciplined method for leading through complexity. Furthermore, the course strengthens judgement, stakeholder mobilisation, and the resilience that adaptive work demands over long periods.

The Oxford Adaptive Leadership Course Objectives

- Distinguish technical problems from adaptive challenges clearly.
- Apply the adaptive leadership framework (Heifetz) to real dilemmas.
- Use the Cynefin framework to match approach to problem type.
- Get on the balcony and read the wider system before acting.
- Identify the values, loyalties, and losses at stake in change.
- Regulate distress and work within the productive zone of disequilibrium.
- Give the work back to teams instead of absorbing it as a leader.
- Mobilise stakeholders using power-interest grids and coalition building.
- Protect dissent and manage backlash during difficult change.
- Build personal resilience, ethical judgement, and adaptive capacity.

Course Methodology

- Interactive sessions built on adaptive leadership cases.
- Workshops on problem diagnosis, systems reading, and intervention design.
- Group exercises on giving the work back and regulating distress.

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- Hands-on practice with the Cynefin framework, power-interest grids, and scenario planning.
- Simulation of a contested adaptive challenge with active resistance.
- Facilitator coaching and peer review on personal leadership plans.

Who Should Take This Course

- Senior managers, directors, and heads of function.
- Leaders facing complex, adaptive organizational challenges.
- Transformation and change programme leaders.
- Business unit leaders driving culture and behaviour change.
- Senior professionals preparing for broader leadership responsibility.
- Consultants advising on transformation and leadership development.

The Oxford Adaptive Leadership Course Outlines

Day 1: Technical Problems and Adaptive Challenges

- What makes a challenge adaptive rather than technical.
- Why familiar solutions fail on adaptive problems.
- The adaptive leadership framework (Heifetz) and its core ideas.
- Getting on the balcony: stepping back to see the system.
- Identifying the values and losses at stake.
- The leader's own part in the problem.
- Case discussion: a leader who applied a technical fix to an adaptive problem.

Day 2: Diagnosing Complexity and Reading the System



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- The Cynefin framework: simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic.
- Matching leadership approach to problem type.
- Systems thinking and seeing interconnections and feedback loops.
- Stakeholder mapping with power-interest grids.
- Scenario planning for uncertain futures.
- Distinguishing urgent from important with the Eisenhower matrix.
- Workshop: diagnosing a real challenge and reading the wider system.

Day 3: Regulating Distress and Giving the Work Back

- Why adaptive change produces distress and avoidance.
- The productive zone of disequilibrium and keeping it workable.
- Giving the work back instead of solving problems for people.
- Sequencing interventions and pacing change.
- Protecting voices of dissent and hosting difficult conversations.
- Managing resistance with the Thomas-Kilmann conflict modes.
- Exercise: planning interventions for a live adaptive challenge.

Day 4: Mobilising Stakeholders and Building Coalitions

- Building coalitions across formal and informal authority.
- Influencing without position using credibility and evidence.
- Communication, framing, and message discipline.
- Handling backlash, blame, and scapegoating.
- Working with authority figures and managing upwards.
- Ethics and consistency when pressure rises.
- Simulation: mobilising a divided group around an adaptive change.





Day 5: Adaptive Capacity, Resilience, and Personal Practice

- Building adaptive capacity and distributed leadership.
- Reflection, peer support, and the leader's own support system.
- Personal resilience, energy management, and sustainable pace.
- Turning setbacks into learning and adjusting approach.
- Institutionalising adaptive practice in an organization.
- Personal leadership development planning.
- Capstone: presenting an adaptive leadership plan.

Conclusion

By successfully completing The Oxford Adaptive Leadership, participants will gain a disciplined command of adaptive diagnosis, intervention design, stakeholder mobilisation, and personal resilience. They will acquire skills in separating technical from adaptive work, regulating distress, giving the work back, and building adaptive capacity across an organization. Gentex Training Center designs the programme to help leaders meet complex challenges with judgement and steadiness.

FAQs



Q1 What is the "The Oxford Adaptive Leadership" course about?

It prepares leaders to work with problems that resist standard solutions and demand behaviour change, not just process change. The course spans the distinction between technical problems and adaptive challenges, complexity diagnosis and system reading, regulating distress and giving the work back, stakeholder mobilisation, and adaptive capacity and resilience.

Q2 What are the key benefits of the "The Oxford Adaptive Leadership" course?

You gain a disciplined method for leading through complexity rather than reaching for familiar fixes. The course improves diagnostic judgement, strengthens intervention design, sharpens stakeholder mobilisation, and helps leaders sustain adaptive work without exhausting themselves or their teams.

Q3 What skills will I gain from the "The Oxford Adaptive Leadership" course?

You will develop four core skills: adaptive challenge diagnosis and system reading, intervention design and pacing, stakeholder mobilisation and resistance handling, and personal resilience with adaptive capacity building.



Q4 What tools, methods, or standards are covered in the "The Oxford Adaptive Leadership" course?

The course covers the adaptive leadership framework (Heifetz) including getting on the balcony, regulating distress, and the productive zone of disequilibrium, the Cynefin framework, systems thinking and feedback loops, power-interest grids, scenario planning, the Eisenhower matrix, intervention sequencing, the Thomas-Kilmann conflict modes, framing and message discipline techniques, and reflection and peer-support practice.

Q5 How is the "The Oxford Adaptive Leadership" course applied in real-world practice?

Participants apply it to real work such as diagnosing why a reform keeps stalling, planning interventions for a culture change, mobilising divided stakeholders around a contested decision, and giving ownership back to teams rather than absorbing it. The same methods support leadership development and organizational learning.