# Developing Managers to Lead Confidently Through Dual Digital Transformation

Harvard Business Publishing

Corporate University Atos

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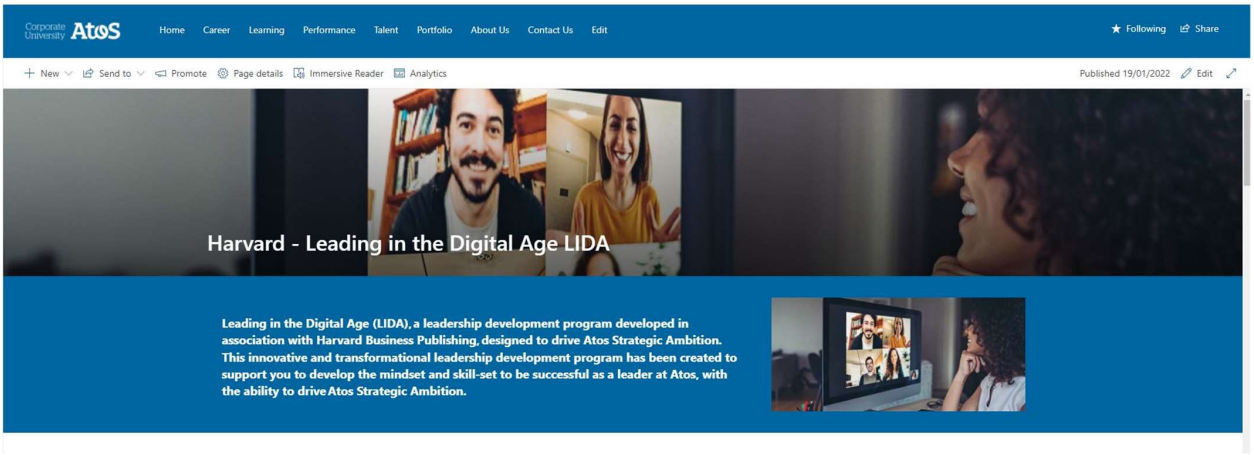
# Introduction

Atos is a global leader in digital transformation with 109,000 employees and annual revenue of c. € 11 billion. European number one in cybersecurity, cloud and high performance computing, the Group provides tailored end-to-end solutions for all industries in 71 countries. A pioneer in decarbonization services and products, Atos is committed to a secure and decarbonized digital for its clients. Atos is a SE (Societas Europaea), listed on Euronext Paris and included in the CAC 40 ESG and Next 20 Paris Stock indexes.

The purpose of Atos is to help design the future of the information space. Its expertise and services support the development of knowledge, education and research in a multicultural approach and contribute to the development of scientific and technological excellence. Across the world, the Group enables its customers and employees, and members of societies at large to live, work and develop sustainably, in a safe and secure information space.

Harvard Business Publishing (HBP) was founded in 1994 as a not-for-profit, wholly-owned subsidiary of Harvard University, reporting into Harvard Business School. With approximately 450 employees, the company serves as a bridge between academia and enterprises around the globe through its publications and multiple platforms for content delivery. HBP's mission is to improve the practice of management and its impact in a changing world. This mission influences how the company co-creates solutions with leading global organizations.

# Executive Summary




In 2018, Atos partnered with Harvard Business Publishing (HBP) to design and deliver an in-role leadership development program, Leading in the Digital Age (LIDA), for the manager population across Atos' geographies and units.

The initiative supported Atos leaders to develop the new leadership capabilities required to lead through digital disruption impacting their direct reports and teams in their own organization as well as their clients.

Between September 2018 – April 2022, eight cohorts of 200 participants each reached approx.1,500 leaders representing all regions and functions.

LIDA developed the targeted population into leaders who are capable of leading Atos' strategy, inspiring and motivating high performance teams, and leading by example in the digital transformation –the Atos way.

LIDA fostered a robust learning culture for Atos leaders, enabling them to develop an authentic approach to personal leadership, lead the business, and inspire and motivate teams. It featured:

- External perspectives from HBP, new trends in leadership aligned with Atos values and culture, and the best business cases
- Top leaders from Atos are involved as co-moderators to promote Atos strategy
- Many reflection and application exercises completed in the flow of work

LIDA's approach to design retained core curriculum while responding to such significant changes as the pandemic and a CEO change. Because of this built-in flexibility LIDA has maintained its relevancy and impact over three years.

## Key achievements:

Business Impact

- Managers witnessing more **confident, strategic leaders** who are prepared to lead Atos into the digital future
- 74,6% participants made **behavior changes** to become the leader that they want to be
- High alumni **retention** ratio: 10% more than overall Atos retention rate
- 12 point increase in **Great Places to Work** survey since 2018
- Encouragement for **low cost countries** participation: 90% of recharging model

Talent Impact

- High alumni **promotion** ratio: 23%
- High **candidate nomination** requests: 45% over-subscriptions
- High **diversity**:
  - **60 countries** represented (86% of total Atos countries)
  - **gender** ratio 6% more than the overall Atos ratio

Program Engagement Impact

- The highest **engagement** rates Atos has ever seen in a virtual programme: 88%
- High learner **satisfaction** rate: 4.3 out of 5

"LIDA encouraged us to think differently. After doing this program, I felt better equipped in various ways to lead in the digital age."

- LIDA Participant

"People see themselves in the driver's seat and have a clear view of what they need to do – they are enablers for change."

- Manager of LIDA Participant

# The Challenge

Atos launched its own digital transformation to thrive in the midst of widespread and constant change. That is to say, Atos was redesigning its own internal processes and competencies through digital technology while simultaneously guiding customers through the same changes.

This **complex strategy** – dual transformation – required **rapid upskilling** of the global workforce on the most dynamic and in-demand skills in order to stay ahead of their clients.

In addition to embracing digitalization in every facet of the business, Atos' strategy relied on leaders with a **broader range of managerial and leadership competencies** than was required in the past. Leaders and managers are the first actors of this change and transformation.

Managers needed to embrace a new way of leadership– **to become more confident, more inspirational, more compassionate, more engaged** with their teams.

To make this shift, Atos needed to align its approach to training and development with its global strategy. **Hiring and retention** are key in the high technology world. Employees are the company's best assets.

## Atos Managers Population

Managers at Atos keenly felt the top-down and bottom-up pressures brought about by dual digital transformation because of their client-facing and team leadership roles. Because they exert an outsized impact on the organization, they can be a **strategic lever for change**. At the same time, there was a risk they would become a **block to progress**.

Many people had been promoted into these managerial positions based on their technical skills. Because of this technical focus, most managers had received **little to no training on how to be a manager** and **had little to no leadership practice**. In general, teams and individuals **lacked confidence** and were reluctant to experiment due to a fear of risk, a resistance to change, and a feeling that they would not be supported if they failed.

Therefore, they were not particularly attuned to the **company's vision**. Furthermore, some key messages about the company's strategy were not getting through to a majority of the workforce in a meaningful way.

The company needed to drive change, and knew it had to come from the middle. By strengthening this population's capabilities, Atos aimed to drive **greater business success and enhanced employee engagement**.

In order to achieve its bold ambition, Atos needed this manager population to **lead strategy, and to become more consultative with clients and less transactional**. They needed to look through a strategic lens to see the ways client industries were being disrupted. They needed the combination of **digital acumen and leadership capabilities** to understand deeply the impact of digital transformation on industry so they could help educate their clients.

Stronger managers would be more prepared to enhance the client experience, improve employee satisfaction, and increase Atos' competitiveness.

Managers were being asked to:

- Adopt a **new way of thinking**
- Become **more proactive & empowered** to make decisions
- Become more **global**

The aim was to:

- Improve **personal leadership**
- Enhance **strategic thinking**
- Build an agile, **collaborative culture**

# The Commitment

Atos and Harvard Business Publishing (HBP) took a best-in-class design approach to co-create LIDA for Atos' manager population.

*Figure. Atos and HBP built a partnership on shared values*

The ambition was to deliver a **robust in-role program** with engaging learning experiences and fresh content, with **impact and scale.** The aim was to **reach to the entire population of approximately 1,500 leaders in about three years** through large globally mixed cohorts of managers from around the globe.

## Methodology

Rooted in sound pedagogy, HBP's learning design principles represent "how" leaders gain knowledge and develop skills to become more effective.

*Figure: HBP's Learning Design Principles*

All six principles are reflected in LIDA, including:

- Learning in the **context** of Atos' specific challenges
- Time built in for **reflection and application**
- The expectation to bring the learning back to the team, giving learners the opportunity to **teach others** and better **internalise** what they've learned

## Participant-Centered Design

The experience is driven by discussion, case discussions and exercises. Every individual's participation is essential to the success of everyone's learning. The learning experience creates a safe environment to ask questions, share ideas, test thinking, and learn to disagree in helpful, healthy ways.

## Needs Assessment

In June – July 2018, the HBP team **interviewed 12 senior-level leaders** across Atos to gain insight into the current challenges and opportunities for the middle management population at Atos.

## Key Takeaways

Managers needed to progress and develop key capabilities, with increased competency in – and awareness of –the following objectives:

- An inside-out approach to **leadership**, including increased **self-awareness**, recognition of **personal leadership styles**, and **impact** on others
- **Accountability** for one's own communications and actions, as well as holding others accountable
- A more **strategic mindset**, showing a deep understanding of Atos' strategy and market thought leadership in execution and decision-making, as well as articulating key messages both internally and externally
- Increased responsibility to shape Atos' organisational culture into a flattter, more caring, **agile and collaborative culture**

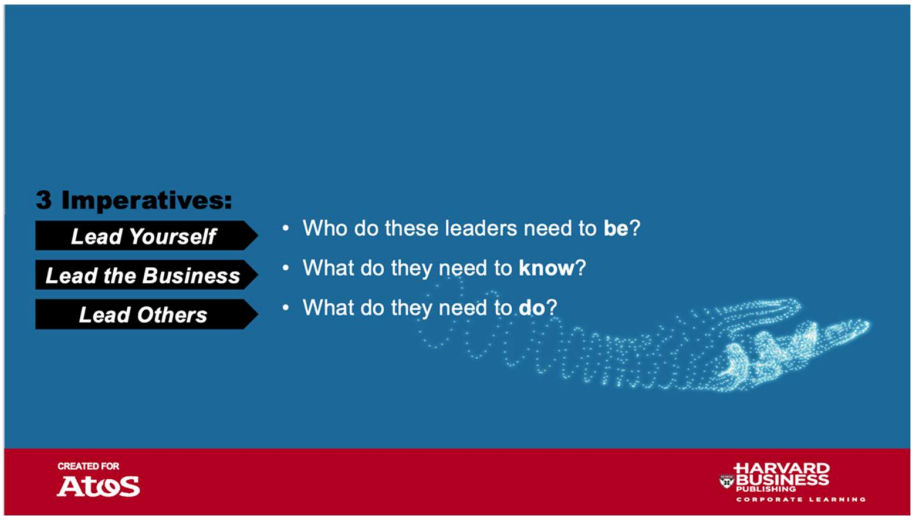



*Figure. Modules would address three Be-Know-Do imperatives*

### Program Enhancements After Each Cohort

After action reviews after each cohort evaluated performance and informed decisions on design and/or content changes for the next cohort.

LIDA was continually refreshed to reflect:

- Atos' thought leadership
- Strategy updates
- Leadership initiatives
- Newly published thought leadership

Other changes were based on:

- Participant surveys, end-of-module and end-of-program
- Focus groups- Managers of LIDA participants shared their insights on key mindset shifts/ behavior changes of their direct reports

### Affordability: Equitable Cost Model

Atos implemented a cost model that made the program more affordable for low cost countries, which gave them a more equitable opportunity to participate. Recharging training cost is 10% lower for low cost countries than for high cost countries.

Any seats in the program that became available due to attrition or were not subscribed were given free of charge to participants in underrepresented countries.

## Design Requirements

Managers are extremely pressed for time so it was critical to keep LIDA content immediately applicable to their roles. The design reflected key values:

- Purposeful engagement of exemplary Atos leaders to facilitate personal reflection and application
- Framework-based application exercises in study groups to apply to key in-role challenges
- Guidance for manager check-in meetings to support personal development
- A continuous feedback loop so Atos executives gained insights from LIDA sessions
- Toolkits to help participants connect to their managers and cascade learning to their teams

## Moderated Learning Platform

The program was delivered **virtually** using state-of-the-art learning technologies and compelling content aligned to Atos, moderated by expert HBP facilitators. The virtual platform:

- Provided access to **world-class thought leaders** and content
- Promoted interaction with other **participants**, **Atos leadership**, and **thought leaders**
- Enabled participation **without taking time off the job**

## Global Cohorts; Global Project Teams

Global cohorts would **facilitate networking, bridge structural siloes and encourage collaboration**. Participants would come from 60 countries (86% of Atos global presence). Waves of cohorts would reach managers with speed and at scale. The goal was to challenge the participants to:

- Work cross-functionally
- Connect with people they didn't already know
- Build out their personal networks
- Get a perspective from across the organization

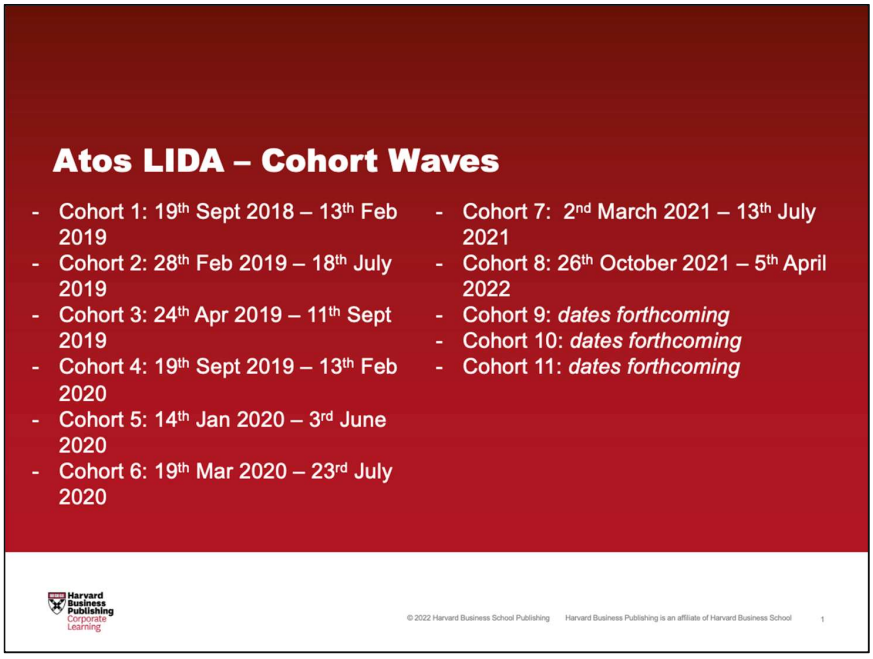



*Figure. Cohort schedule*

## Wrap-Around Support

Two **self-paced digital learning solutions** were integrated into the design:

- Harvard ManageMentor - On-demand leadership development with deep skill building and application
- Harvard ManageMentor Spark - Personalized, best-in-class microlearning resources
- Through a very robust design, the participants could follow **curated pathways** for further development

In addition to self development, the digital solutions offered:

- A **manager engagement toolkit**: LIDA Connect. Articles, videos, reflection and discussion prompts helped participants connect with their managers
- Curated materials to **cascade the learning**: LIDA Cascade. Modules, lessons, plans and pathways helped participants connect with and coach their teams and cascade key LIDA learnings to them
- These resources remained available post-program to facilitate **continuous learning**

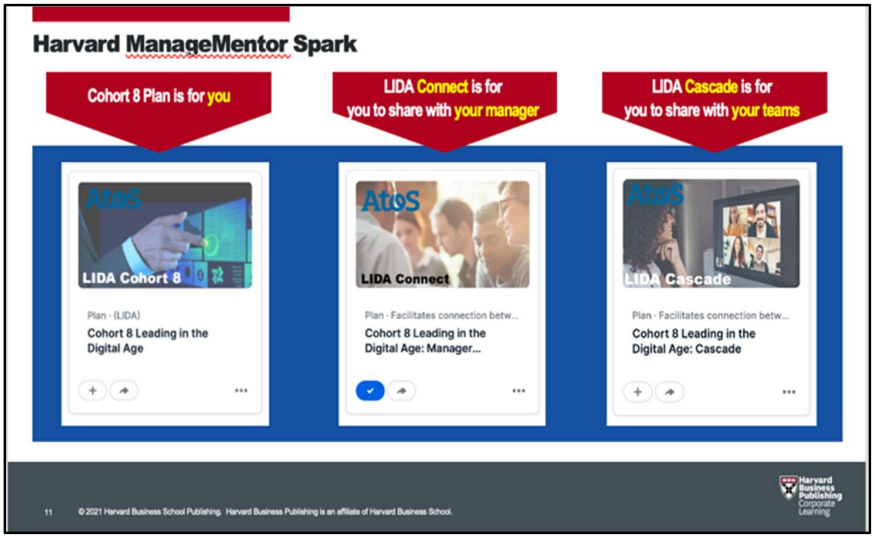



*Figure. Digital resources supported LIDA participants*

## The Development of LIDA

LIDA would unfold **as three virtual modules** with learning objectives aligned to Atos' behaviors, strategic plan, and thought leadership. Specific content for each module was identified based on Atos' unique organizational needs and the defined priorities for the development of Atos' leaders.

### Learning Objectives

- **Understand** why Atos' current and future context calls for transformational leadership
- Commit to **full engagement** throughout the program and appreciate Atos' investment in the participants
- Commit to **sharing diverse opinions** and respectfully **challenging group-think**. Set/follow norms of courageous contribution, active listening, and speaking up

Three imperatives emerged as the most crucially needed areas of competence for middle management population.

*Figure. Modules would address three Be-Know-Do imperatives*

# L&D Initiative

The fully virtual LIDA experience accelerated the development of leaders by addressing both **mindset and skillset**, through a rich blend of participant interaction, practice and application activities.

## Program Design

Three modules required a total effort of **42 to 48 hours** (14 – 16 hours per module) spanning a duration of **6 to 9 months**:

- Module 1: **Personal Leadership** – Thriving in the Digital Age
- Module 2: **Leading the Business** – Driving Strategy at Atos
- Module 3: **Leading Others** – Motivating and Inspiring Talent & Teams

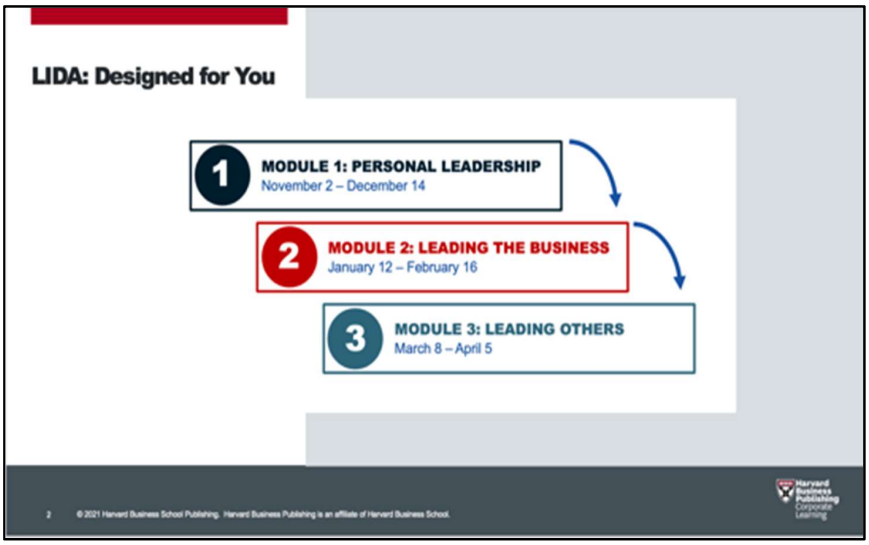



*Figure. Three Module Program Design*

**Module 1** started with the **Atos internal perspective** with one or two Atos business leaders sharing their experience and point of view on a specific topic. The first discussion, for example, featured a **female executive** who talked about the importance of a **strong leadership style**, particularly in the digital era where technology is playing such a significant role. This module looked at how **to create community** and **team accountability** in the new world of work.

**Module 2** dove into the **big questions of strategy and leadership** to get the participants more strategically aligned and **thinking beyond the operational level**. Participants considered Atos' challenges in the context of challenges to the industry, and within the context of Atos' scientific thought leadership. Early cohorts focused on disruption, whereas later cohorts focused on balancing attention, as context shifted.

**Module 3** helped participants adopt good practice for **teaming and management of others**. Because many of these people may not have had any development around leadership, there was a dedicated focus on creating **psychological safety**, being **inclusive**, giving and receiving **feedback**, **storytelling** and building **trust**.

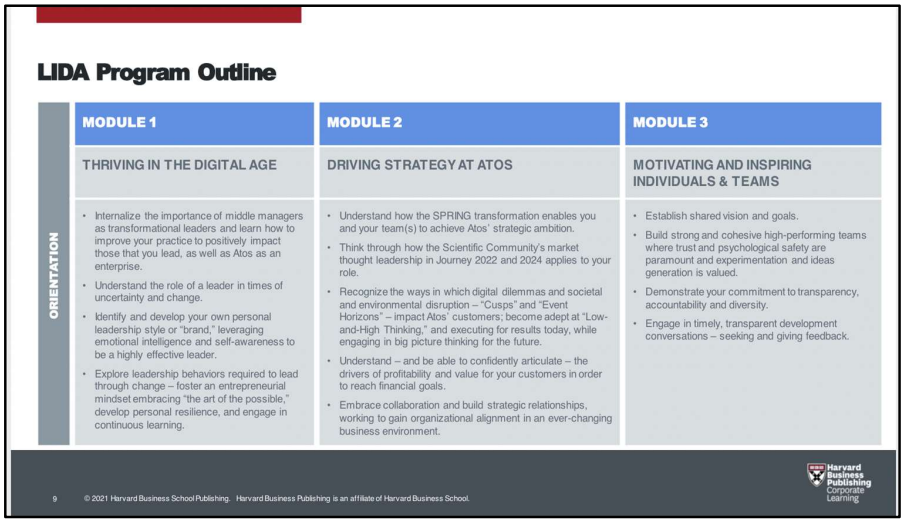



*Figure. Learning objectives for the three LIDA modules*

Each module was delivered over **six weeks,** with live events in weeks 1, 2, 4 and 6.

- Session structure
  - **Pre-work** before key events
  - Introduction to the module topic via an **internal perspective** session with Atos co-moderators
  - An **external perspective** session with Harvard Business School faculty
  - **Case study** and discussion
  - **Application exercise** or business **simulation**
- Weeks 3 and 5 involve **small group** assignments
- Participants invest 2 – 3 hours per week
- Note that Week 6 design was distinct in Module 1
  - Week 6 in Module 1 was a **personal brand exercise** designed to support Atos leaders in engaging in informal communications and as a platform to give/ receive feedback. Learners defined their personal brand and socialized it with their manager, direct reports, and personal significant others
  - In comparison, Week 6 for Modules 2 and 3 featured an application exercise

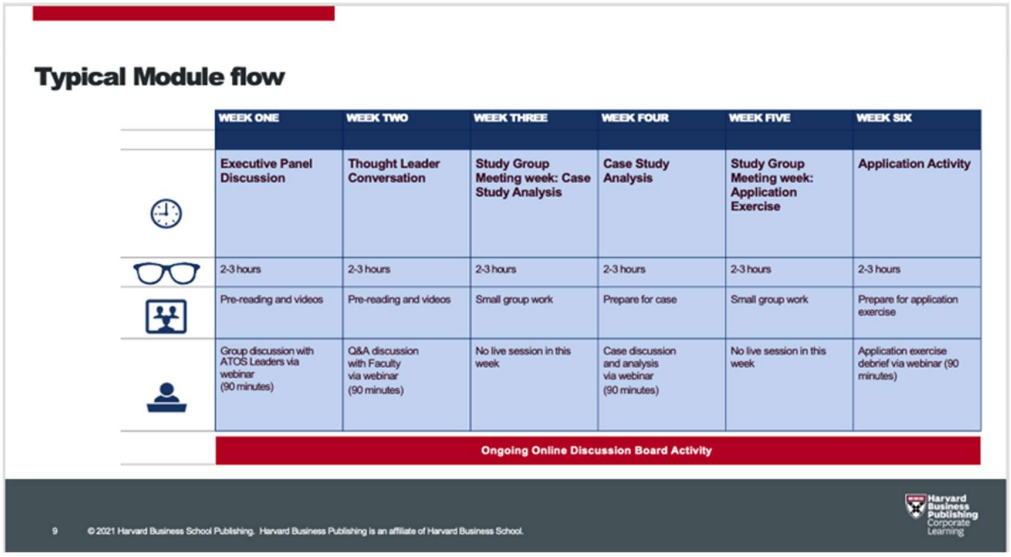



*Figure: LIDA Module Framework for Modules 2 & 3. Week 6 is different in Module 1*

## Participant Selection

### Methodology

LIDA was a **voluntary in-role development program**. Atos global L&D held an information session for HR Business Partners so that they could **accurately represent the program** to the learning services managers (LSMs). All LSMs nominated candidates, and global L&D formed the cohorts on a first-come first-served basis.

### Cohort Orientation

Cohorts began with an **orientation** with head of L&D, Atos executive, and dedicated moderator from HBP to set expectations.

It delivered:

- Overall **learning objectives** and takeaways so that the learners would **hold themselves accountable** for shifting their mindset and behaviors
- Introduction to the **learning platform** and how to get the most out of the functionality
- Complete **syllabus**
    - Every event was automatically added to the participants' schedules to minimize conflicts
    - Prework (required and optional) and additional resources, including curated learning paths through Harvard ManageMentor Spark that they would access during and after the experience
- **Expectations**, including **participation**, assignment **completions**, and **surveys** at the end of each session and end of program

## Key Learning Elements

*Figure. Comprehensive set of content and learning methods*

### Senior Leader Sponsorship and Participation

Two top leaders serve as **sponsors** of the program: a business leader who sits on the executive board, and an HR director.

Each cohort featured different **senior leaders well matched to the content**. They provided essential context setting at orientation and at the start of each module. They also shared personal experiences and talked about change, the future, working cross-culturally and empowerment in an energizing way. HBP prepared these leaders in advance to articulate key points of Atos strategy as it pertains specifically to the middle management population.

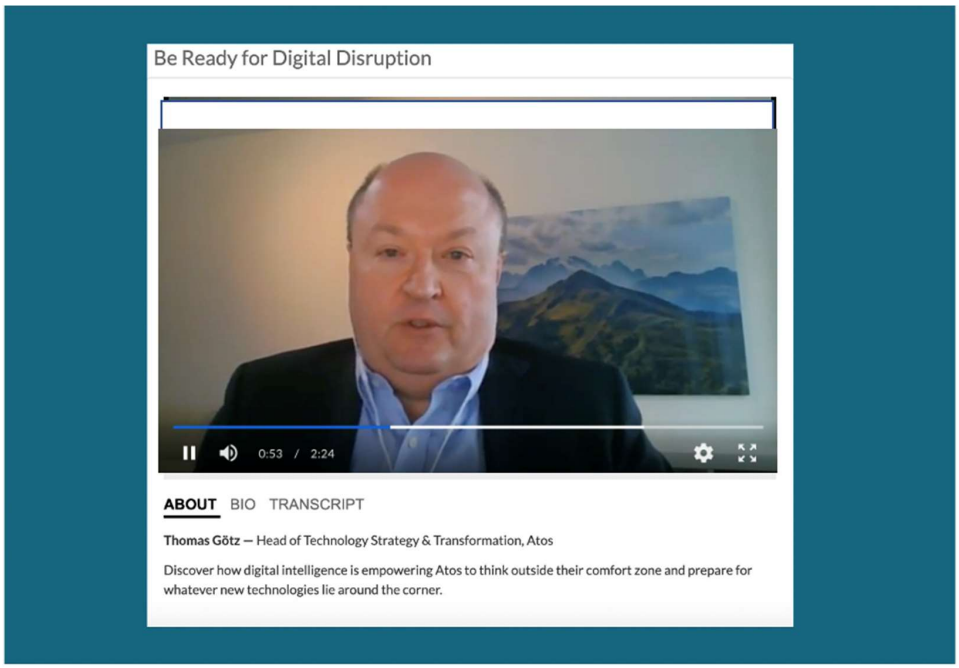



*Figure. Senior leaders participate in live sessions as well as through recorded videos*

## Expert Thought Leadership

Carefully selected **Harvard Business School faculty and industry leaders** shared their research and thought leadership in the sessions, engaging in **in-depth discussions** and helping the learners gain **external perspective**. HBP prepped each thought leader in advance so that their examples would relate to the Atos culture.

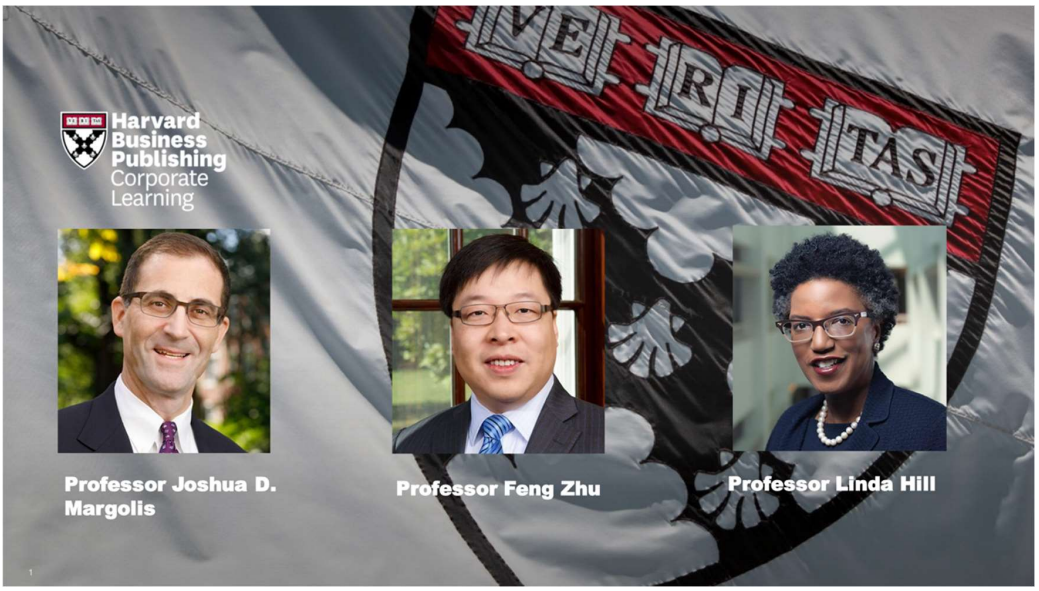



*Figure. Sample of the HBS faculty featured in LIDA*

## Small Group Work

Study groups were a key component of LIDA. Small teams were formed for every group project, and **each assignment featured different small groups**.

## Focus on Application

The **application exercise in each module** would be to apply lessons they had learned earlier. In small groups, they would consider how it applied at Atos, and submit their analysis to the moderator. The entire cohort would meet to **debrief** and discuss their insights and takeaways.

## Dedicated Moderator

The HBP moderator facilitated discussion and drew out greater insights at every phase of the journey. Whether drawing from in-session chat logs or formal debriefs of simulations or case studies, she served as the **red thread** that helped to maximize the learning.

## Interactive Platform

Participants knew they could access **all elements** of LIDA program through the platform, from the syllabus to meeting links. In particular, the moderated online **discussion boards** became a central meeting place.

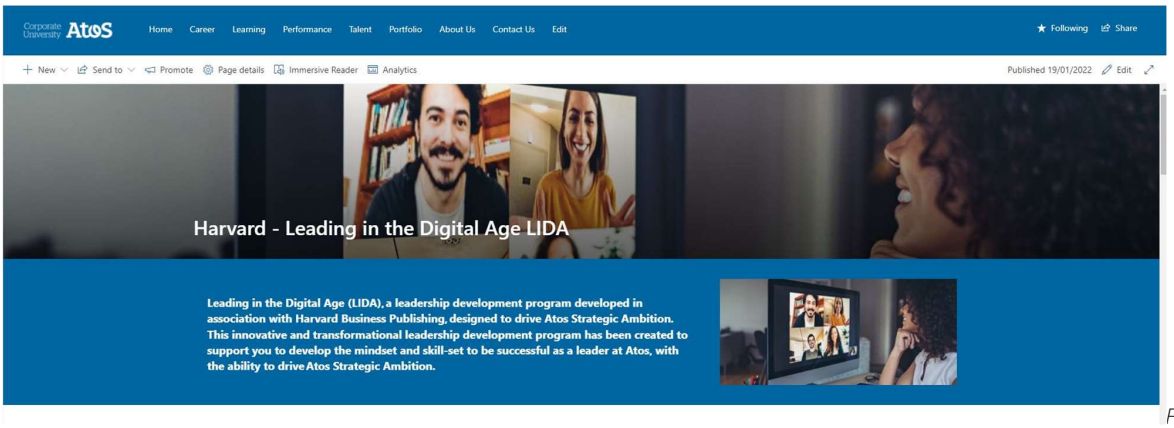



*Figure: The LIDA Platform*

# The Impact

LIDA has exceeded expectations.

Atos' consistent and global approach to leadership development built momentum for learning and elevating skills around **leadership, strategy,** and **collaboration**.

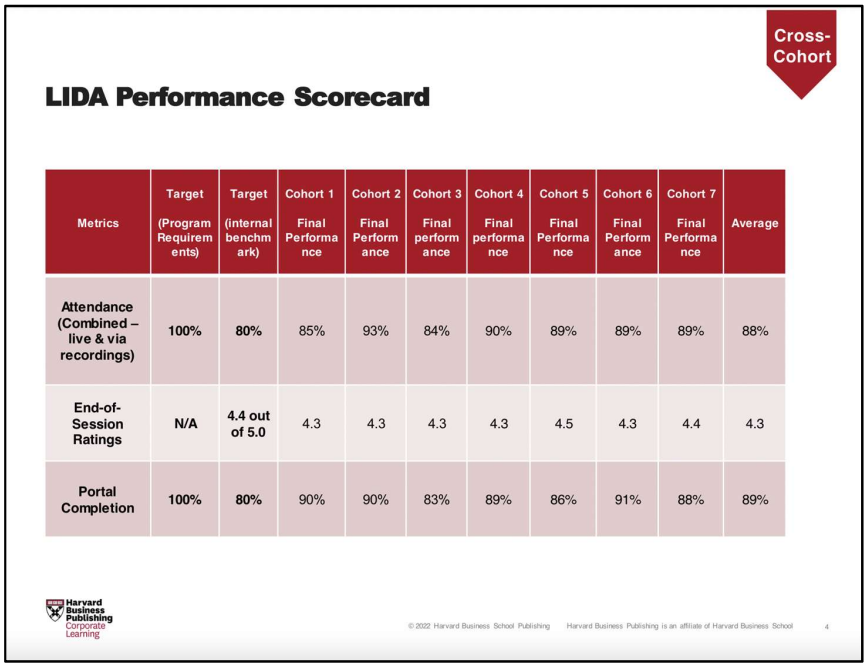
Leaders are demonstrating more confident, **strategic behaviors** to lead Atos into the digital future.

Alumni have **greater confidence** about employing leadership concepts as they build customer's digital transformation strategies.

## Engagement

### Performance Scorecard

The quality of **participation (89%), attendance (88%) and satisfaction (4.3/5.0)** has remained consistent from cohort to cohort, as a testament positive awareness of the program and exceptional relevance. Even after eight cohorts, LIDA enjoys high candidate nomination requests (45% over-subscriptions/waiting list).




| Metrics | Target (Program Requirements) | Target (internal benchmark) | Cohort 1 Final Performance | Cohort 2 Final Performance | Cohort 3 Final performance | Cohort 4 Final performance | Cohort 5 Final Performance | Cohort 6 Final Performance | Cohort 7 Final Performance | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attendance (Combined – live & via recordings) | 100% | 80% | 85% | 93% | 84% | 90% | 89% | 89% | 89% | 88% |
| End-of-Session Ratings | N/A | 4.4 out of 5.0 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.3 |
| Portal Completion | 100% | 80% | 90% | 90% | 83% | 89% | 86% | 91% | 88% | 89% |

*Figure. Performance scorecard shows high learner engagement*

### End-of-Session

Feedback was captured after each event, analyzed and discussed in after action reviews. Cohort 7 scores were as strong as Cohort 1.

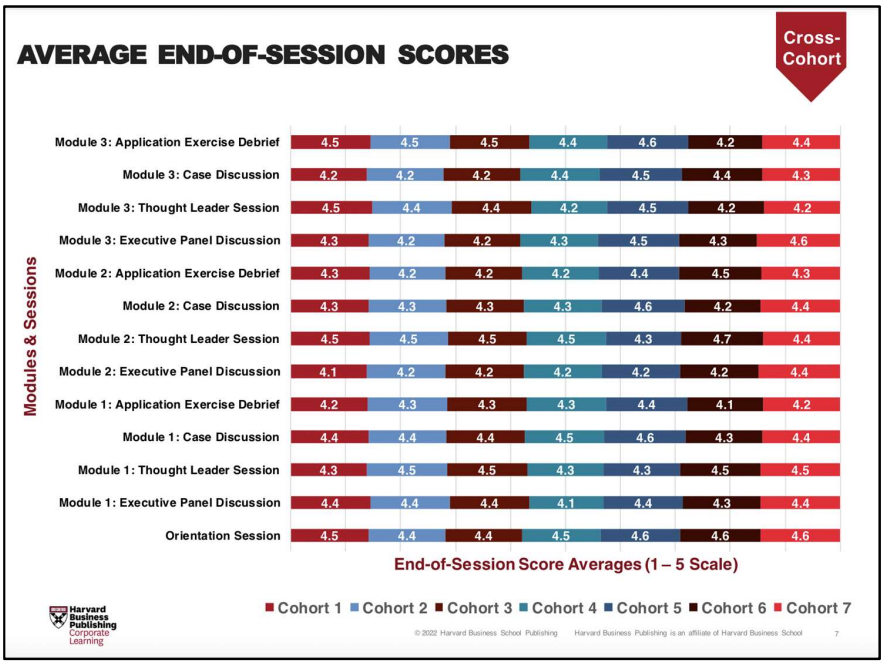



*Figure. End of session scores were* ***consistently high over time***

## Program Value

Program value scores show 94% of participants were very satisfied or satisfied with the program, noting **wider perspectives, useful frameworks, increased confidence and improved decision making**.

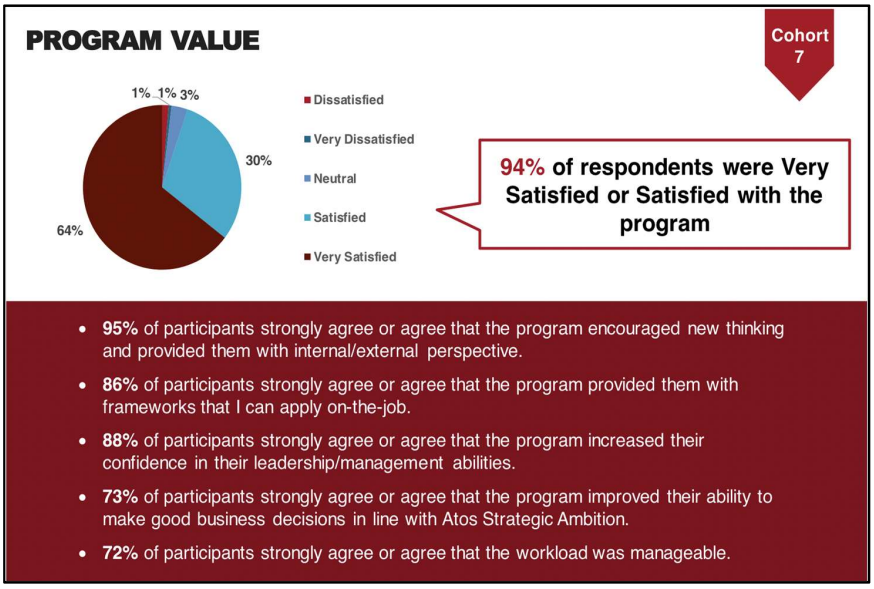



*Figure. Program value scores*

## Behavior Change

At the very start of LIDA, each participant identified one or two changes that they needed to make to become the leader that they want to be.

When asked, "Have you made progress in one or both areas?" the majority (74.6%) had made progress in one or both areas.

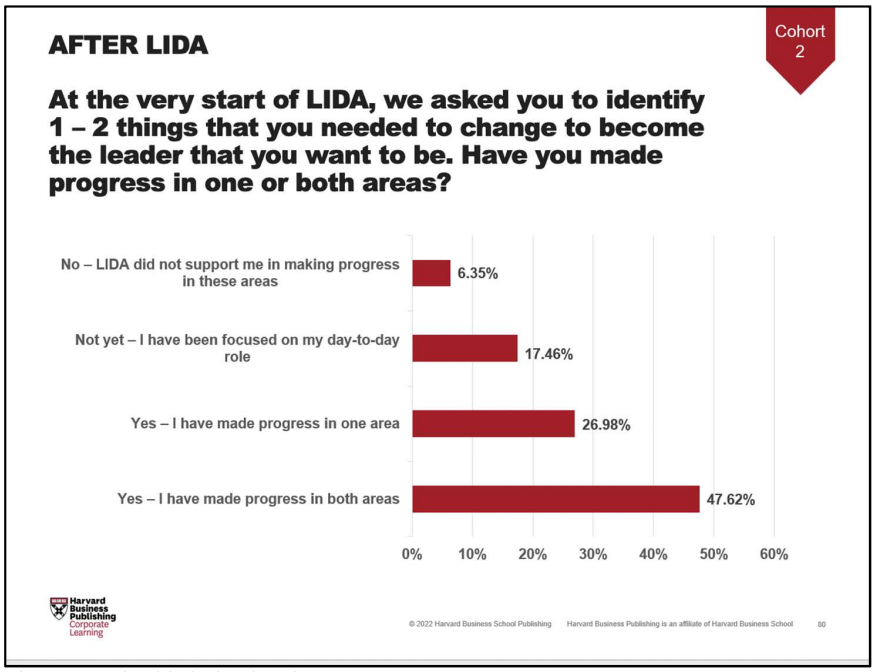



*Figure. Leadership behavior change*

When asked, How have you grown as a leader as a result of participating in LIDA?

Anecdotal/qualitative comments include key points, such as:

- Empathy
- Growth mindset
- Feedback
- Coaching
- Alignment
- Listening

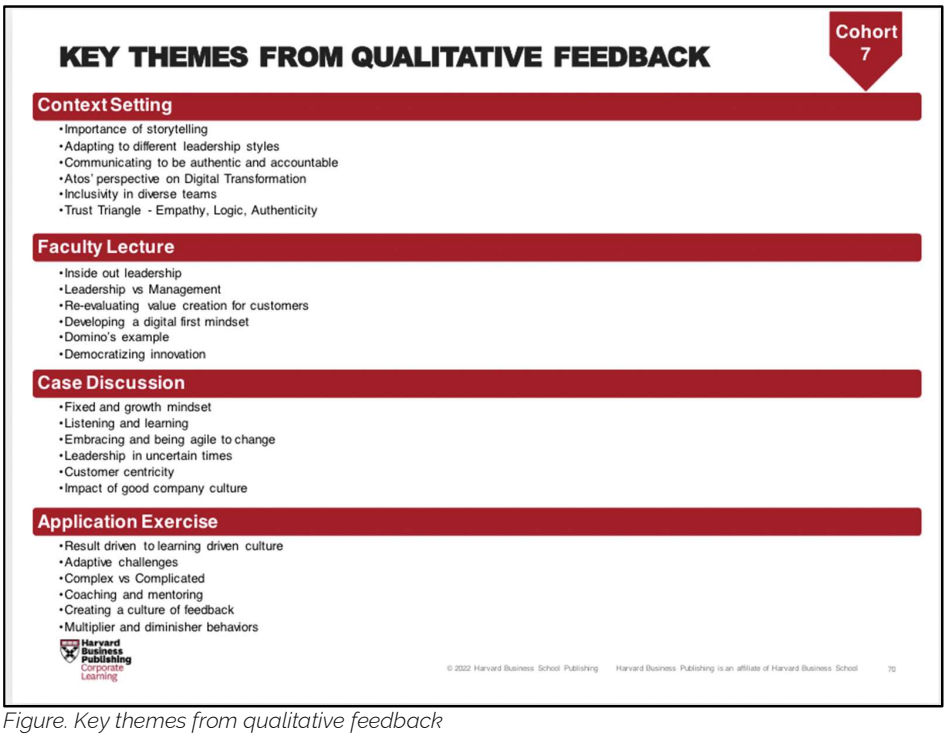



*Figure. Key themes from qualitative feedback*

Managers of participants unanimously felt strongly that LIDA was beneficial and that participants had made progress across the areas addressed by the program.

Majority saw positive behavior change in their direct reports –they were exhibiting new waysof thinking/ working

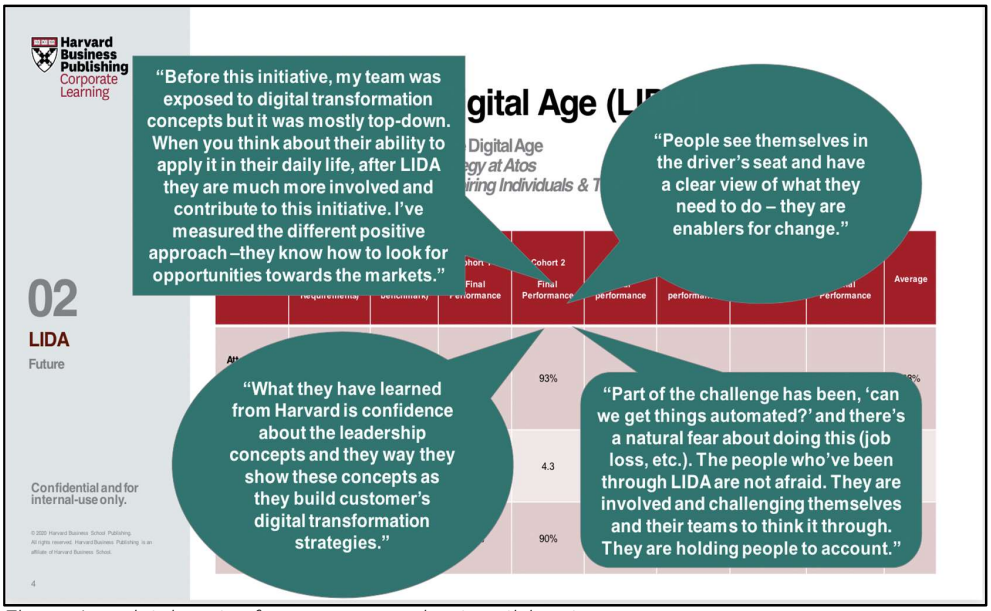



*Figure. Anecdotal quotes from managers about participants*

## Talent Management Outcomes

Promotion:

- Twenty-three percent of LIDA alumni have earned promotions, through the first six cohorts. This change is particularly noteworthy given that LIDA was not a high potential talent program. This number does not include alumni who gained increased responsibilities.

Attrition:

- Attrition among LIDA alumni is 6 percent as compared to 16.55% organization-wide attrition rate

## Select Alumni Testimonies

- I learnt the importance of daily communication with my team and receiving praise when it is well-earned and providing constructive feedback
- Helped me develop my personal leadership style: to be trustworthy approachable, agile, result-oriented, being passionate and committed so that I can deliver the highest quality and value to my customers
- An "Aha!" moment for me was the engagement and the commitment shown by the team despite the pandemic. We encouraged collaboration, sharing ideas and workarounds to any challenges. As a result, many excellent customer satisfaction surveys have been received allowing for possible opportunities in future
- I feel better equipped to lead in the digital age
    - By encouraging participation, involvement and contribution from everyone
    - By networking with others and embracing change
    - Being agile is imperative – one must adapt swiftly and move forward at pace
    - I am able to show the way forward amid transitions, disruptions, chaos and uncertainty

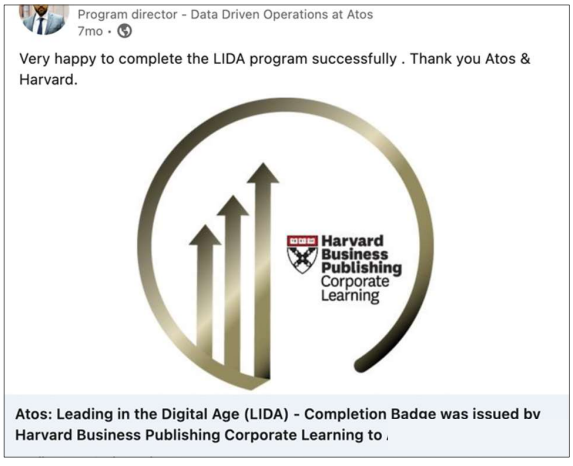
## Featured Participant

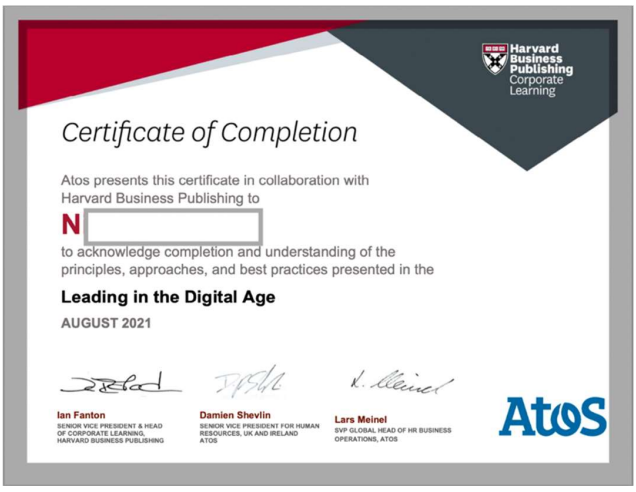
"There is not a single thing that you did in college that you couldn't do here...Almost a classroom experience. Of course, when you are working with a team and a cohort that has more than 100 people you can imagine the kind of arguments, the kind of discussions, the back and forth and getting aligned with consensus; it was all a labor of love. In a nutshell, if you are interested in **rediscovering Atos** and chalking out your **plan of action in the digital age** to be a leader and be better professional, this course is definitely for you, so go for it! "

– LIDA Cohort 1 Participant

*Figure. Participants in early cohorts shared their enthusiasm with their peers*

In addition, participants celebrated their completion certificates and digital badges.




*Figures. Posting digital badge on LinkedIn; completion certificate*

## Managers of Participants

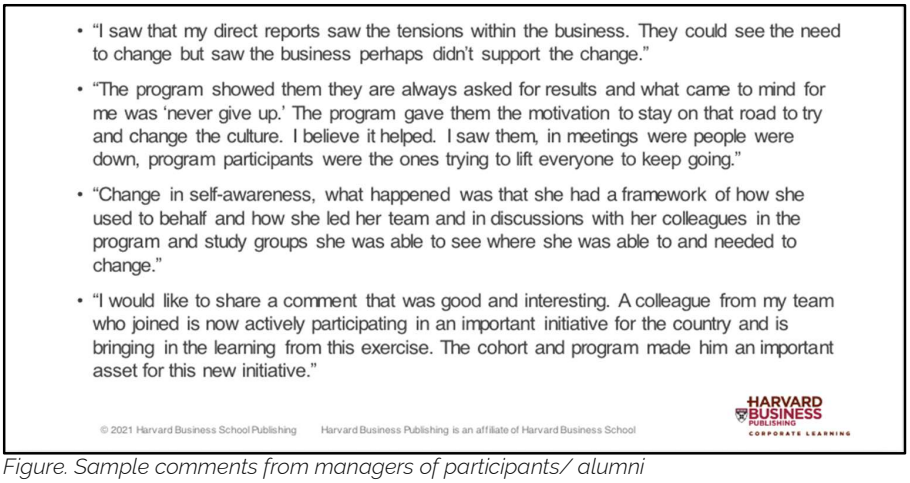



*Figure. Sample comments from managers of participants/ alumni*

## Culture

### Leadership Styles

Participants were asked before and after LIDA to describe the leadership style most valued at Atos in one word. Before, words like **Driven, Bureaucratic**, result rose to the top.

After, words like **Collaboration, Empathy, Leadership** stood out. This language is empowered and shows higher EQ; it reflects the conversations throughout the modules.

***Figure.*** *Leadership styles are shifting at Atos. Before LIDA and after.*

## Wider Organizational Results

### Great Place to Work Leadership Index

While the LIDA program does not take sole credit for wider organizational shifts, it contributed to the improved leadership index through the Great Place to Work survey. Over three years:

- Global leadership score improved **13 points**
- "My manager" score improved **10 points**

*Figure. GPTW leadership analysis 2018- 2021*

# Reflections

The exceptional results of LIDA are a function of a program design that defined strategic priorities and delivered outsized impact.

### Finely tuned design

The needs assessment uncovered the need for a deep **cultural change, which was not part of the original scope of the partnership**. Culture change is a long-term process. Because LIDA instilled a mindset and skillsets in this vital population with speed at scale, Atos is seeing a shift in culture that is **enabling them to succeed through transformation**.

### Integration into talent offerings

LIDA was conceived as a way to support dual digital transformation. Through its success, it became a key part of Atos' talent offerings. Because alumni of LIDA were leading and showing up in a different way, LIDA became a **core part of the organization's talent portfolio** after six cohorts.

The framework and structural topics of LIDA have been applied to other internal leadership and managerial programs such as 'Team Leader Curriculum' for first-time managers and provides continuity.

# Appendix

Atos and HBP have worked together for many years. Below are links to co-marketing initiatives.

Blogposts by Thomas Goetz, Group Vice President, Global Head of Technology Strategy & Transformation at *Atos:* : Successfully Leading Digitally Intelligent People, Developing and Sustaining Digital Agility and Eminence & Transformational Leadership

LIDA Learner Testimonial

Thought Leadership Webinar: How to Equip Leaders to Drive Digital Transformation

Client story: Sitting in the Driver's Seat of Digital Transformation at Atos

Client Story Webinar: Atos: Leading Through Digital Innovation Today, Tomorrow, and Beyond

# About Atos

Atos is a global leader in digital transformation with 109,000 employees and annual revenue of over € 11 billion. European number one in cybersecurity, cloud and high performance computing, the Group provides tailored end-to-end solutions for all industries in 71 countries. A pioneer in decarbonization services and products, Atos is committed to a secure and decarbonized digital for its clients. Atos is a SE (Societas Europaea), listed on Euronext Paris and included in the CAC 40 ESG and Next 20 Paris Stock indexes.

The purpose of Atos is to help design the future of the information space. Its expertise and services support the development of knowledge, education and research in a multicultural approach and contribute to the development of scientific and technological excellence. Across the world, the Group enables its customers and employees, and members of societies at large to live, work and develop sustainably, in a safe and secure information space.

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