



## GSK's Future Strategy Group Pushes the Limits of Transformational Leadership

GSK

Best Unique or Innovative Talent Management Program

October 2018



### Company Background



<b>Company-at-a-Glance</b>	
<b>Headquarters</b>	London, UK
<b>Year Founded</b>	2000
<b>Revenue</b>	£27.889 billion (2016)
<b>Employees</b>	99,300 (2016)
<b>Global Scale (Regions that you operate in or provide services to)</b>	130 countries
<b>Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)</b>	Providing healthcare and pharmaceutical products and services to consumers and organizations worldwide.
<b>Industry</b>	Pharmaceutical, biotechnology, consumer goods
<b>Stock Symbol</b>	LSE: GSK; NYSE: GSK
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.gsk.com">www.gsk.com</a>



## Budget and Timeframe

Overall budget	N/A
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	Three program team members (head, coach and program manager).
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	9-10 workplace coaches, HR support to participants.
Number of contractors involved with implementation	One external coach, one external agency for two days of training.
Timeframe to implement	Six months per program (January to July)
Start date of the program	2009

## Business Conditions and Business Needs

GSK’s mission is to “help people do more, feel better, live longer.” As such, innovation in the development and distribution of new pharmaceuticals, vaccines and consumer healthcare products is critical.

If GSK is to remain at the forefront of its industry, it must foster a culture of innovation and create a pool of transformative leaders who have the skills, confidence and behaviors needed to challenge the way it does things and ensure innovation runs through its veins.

This would require training and talent management far beyond a simple off-the-shelf course. GSK had to instigate a fundamental shift in people’s behavior and approach to leadership — one that would be sustained in the long term and be cascaded down by leaders to their teams and the wider business.

To do this, GSK took the bold decision to throw out the rule book and develop its own program from scratch. The resulting Future Strategy Group (FSG) was designed to be different. It would be like no other leadership development program — pushing participants to the limit, fully immersing them in the challenge and providing experiences that would stay with them for years to come. This hands-on program of self-discovery blends project delivery, personal development and career journey into one integrated, innovative and intense experience.

## Overview

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They say you never truly understand your strengths until you come face-to-face with your greatest weaknesses. The CEO's Future Strategy Group (FSG) program — the most ambitious and influential development program in GSK's history — takes participants through a journey of self-discovery, pushes them to their limits and hones their leadership skills to create a pool of transformational leaders.

There are no classrooms, no PowerPoints and no handouts. For six months, 10 participants from across GSK's global business put their jobs on hold to move to the company's London headquarters and become immersed in a challenging, fast-paced and practical experience that stays with them long after they graduate.

Personally conceived by GSK's former CEO and sponsored by the company's CET (corporate executive team), this unique program is designed not only to help leaders flourish personally and professionally, it also enables them to drive a cultural shift by challenging norms, unlocking innovation and ultimately keeping GSK at the cutting edge of the industry.

The program also serves as an innovation hothouse in which teams are challenged to develop solutions to real business challenges (set by GSK's CET), developing teamwork skills while driving forward its strategic agenda.

Before launch, GSK set goals to work toward, with measurable objectives to monitor the success of the program:

### Business Objectives

- Support business growth by tackling some of the organization's toughest challenges.
- Grow and retain a pool of courageous leaders committed to GSK's mission and goal.
- Change the organizational culture and increase employee engagement through those directly impacted by FSG alumni.



### Learning Objectives

Following the FSG program, leaders should:

- Progress professionally — whether that's moving vertically or horizontally across the business.
- Demonstrate GSK's values (patient focus, transparency, respect and integrity) and its expectations: courage, accountability, development and teamwork (below):

Figure 1: Values



Source: GSK



Since FSG began, 84% of participants have made at least one major organizational move, scores across key leadership behaviors have jumped dramatically (in some cases nearly doubling) and 94% of alumni would recommend the program. In the words of one alumnus: “FSG is truly life-changing.”

## Design of the Program

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### A Program Like No Other: Design and Content

“There was no way for me to get through our project without stretching my skill set and capabilities in these areas [strategic thinking and enterprise thinking]. ... That was fantastic.”

### FSG Alumnus

Forget everything you know about leadership development programs. GSK has thrown out the rule book and designed FSG from the ground-up, blending project delivery, personal development and career journey into one integrated, innovative and intense experience.

Running from January to July each year, the key features of FSG include:

#### 1. Project Delivery: Supporting GSK’s Strategic Agenda

- Each team is assigned a real-life business challenge/project which is set by the company’s CET. Just some examples include developing GSK’s global environmental sustainability strategy and improving access to medicines in emerging markets.
- The project work is used simultaneously as a vehicle to develop participant’s skills (as per the leadership behaviors cited earlier), while delivering real solutions to business-critical challenges. Teams work on their projects throughout the remaining five months of the program with continuous feedback from both team members and GSK’s FSG performance coach.



**Figure 2: Projects**

Each project includes, for example:

- Comprehensive qualitative and quantitative research from multiple sources, including academic literature, consultations with thought leaders and internal data gathered from stakeholders and subject-matter experts.
- Gemba visits to learn from other organizations around the world and to learn best practice. For example, one team traveled to the US to visit Facebook and another went to DHL (next page).



**Gemba visits to high-performing organizations help teams develop innovative solutions to business challenges.**

Source: GSK

- Project management coaching, for example, learning from high-performing teams.
- Personal project sponsorship from a member of the CET (see later). The team's role is to devise bold and innovative solutions, ensure that there is wide organization buy-in and to begin the work of implementation to ensure lasting impact. This ensures the teams take risks and are bold in their approach but can also point to tangible organizational impact. Above all, teams are encouraged to

approach their project with GSK's core leadership behaviors in mind: courage, accountability, development and teamwork.

### Personal Development

"We had some really tough conversations. For the first time, we had someone who told us what he thought of us. It was undiluted ... we were all on a journey."

#### Figure 3: FGS Alumnus.

Self-discovery sometimes means facing up to some uncomfortable truths. Equally, it can mean unearthing strengths participants didn't know they had.

Unlike other programs, FSG doesn't rely on observation followed by feedback after the event (requiring people to try and understand their actions/behaviors, retrospectively). Instead, it focuses on honest **"in-the-moment"** feedback (from teammates and coaches), allowing people to recognize unhelpful behavior as it happens, understand the trigger and how they can approach the situation differently.

Through high-pressure team tasks, which incorporate continuous (and sometimes brutally honest) feedback and coaching, FSG holds a mirror up to participants, highlights their strengths and the areas they need to improve and helps them to tackle them or harness them. Crucially, the FSG creates a step change in the participants' understanding of



**Above: Participants test their team, collaboration and leadership skills through treasure hunts and escape rooms.**



themselves and the impact they have on others.

The immersive tasks are designed to test listening, collaboration and leadership skills. These fun, experiential, yet highly challenging tasks are never classroom-based (so no one can hide at the back of the class). Rather, they are exciting experiences such as escape rooms or city treasure hunts.

By continually asking, questioning and challenging participants mid-task, FSG gradually reinforces positive leadership behaviors, making it more likely that they will carry on the behaviors long after they graduate from FSG.



**Above: Participants learn key skills such as mindfulness.**

Source: GSK

### **No 'One Size Fits All': A Personalized Experience**

The content of Future Strategy Group is fluid and changes depending on what is happening in the moment.

Instead of a rigid structure, the coach assigns key themes each week depending on the needs of the teams and/or individual's objectives. For example, one week the theme was change management. Rather than sit in a classroom hearing about change management theories, the teams were sent to the British Museum to research how different cultures approach change management (i.e., the Greeks vs. Egyptians); they then came back and presented to the other teams.

In another example, the theme was "high-performing teams." For this, teams were given the opportunity to meet with high-performing teams from across industries and distill the key principle and apply them real time in their ongoing project work.



## Career Development

“FSG allowed me to see myself as a leader and unearthed capabilities I didn’t know I had, which in turn has allowed me to take on leadership roles within the organization.”

## FSG Alumnus

FSG is not about helping people climb the ladder as high as possible or just for the sake of it. It is about finding the right leadership role for people in the right GSK business, one in which they (and therefore their teams and the business) can thrive.

Just as FSG encourages participants to be bold in their projects and tasks, it also encourages them to be bold in their career choices. (For example, to be unafraid to try something totally new.) FSG helps participants reach their potential through:

- Helping participants understand where they want to be in the business (this doesn’t necessarily mean a promotion — some may choose to move across to another role or business). For example, one participant always had worked in logistics, but following FSG moved into HR, something they had always been interested in. As one alumnus commented, “Professionally, [without FSG] I don’t think I would ever have had the opportunity to embed myself in R&D. I’ve always been in GMS [manufacturing].”
- Shadowing/visiting other areas of GSK and other functions (i.e., HR, tech, etc.).
- Improving their networking skills and expanding their contacts across the business.
- Support from both global and local HR teams to help them and the role they want.
- Fortnightly meetings with the chief of staff of the CEO who helps them to understand and navigate the organization and the position they want.
- Sponsorship from the home business line manager and senior HR who support the participant both during and after the program to reach their career goals.

## Delivery of the Program

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### Selecting Diverse and Committed Participants

Diversity is key to high-performing teams (according to a report by McKinsey, diverse companies are 35% more likely to have above-average financial returns), therefore, FSG is deliberately designed to bring diverse groups together to enable diversity of thought, sharing of skills/approach and to help elicit innovative ideas. It also increases participants' ability to understand, communicate with and ultimately lead, diverse groups of people.

Each cohort of nine to 12 participants includes people from various locations (33 countries globally), personality types and leadership styles, as well as a mix of ages and genders.

To provide a truly immersive and intense experience, participants are required to move to GSK's London headquarters for the full duration of the six-month program. This challenges them to find new ways of balancing work and life outside of GSK, therefore careful selection of candidates was essential.

#### This was done through:

- A global call for nominations to HR and talent leads across GSK.
- Nominations submitted by managers and endorsed by senior business and HR leadership. Candidates must be high-performing middle managers with high learning agility and the potential to progress significantly within the organization.
- Video interviews and live role play with the FSG team and shortlisted candidates.

### Preparing the Ground

FSG is deliberately designed be intense, throwing participants straight in at the deep end and asking them to take on difficult challenges. Added to this, many candidates need to adjust to a new home and culture, so preparing them for this potentially life-changing experience is key to retention and engagement.

GSK does this through a lively and interactive three-week induction. This is run by a team of alumni as this provides opportunities for them to share experiences and for the new candidates to ask probing questions. It also allows alumni to continue their development and give back to the program.

**Figure 4: Induction.**

The induction includes:

- Logistics on settling in for those new to the UK.
- An introduction and overview of the program.
- A deep — and sometimes uncomfortable — look at “Who am I?” and an assessment of what individuals want to develop (via a YSC psychometric questionnaire, 360, Myers Briggs Type Indicator profiling and line manager interviews).
- Initial relationship building with their team.
- A focus on high-performing teams and then real-time application of learning to set up the project teams.
- An introduction to the business project they will be working on and the key stakeholders involved.
- A working introduction to ADP (accelerating delivery and performance), GSK’s internal change management framework upon which FSG is based.
- Setting personal development objectives and a plan for how to achieve these.



**Interactive sessions and role play help participants get to know their colleagues/teammates.**

Source: GSK

### **Support From the Top and Beyond**

FSG is headed up by the office of the CEO with each project team assigned a sponsor from the CET. This sponsor regularly meets with the teams to discuss their projects and check on their progress.

In addition, participants are supported throughout the program by:

- The head of the program who is responsible for the overall success of the FSG, its projects and the success and welfare of the participants involved.
- A dedicated GSK performance coach.
- A personal job plus coach.
- An alumni buddy who supports them throughout.
- Lessons in innovation and creative thinking by an external expert organization.
- Feedback from peers and senior leaders (see later).
- Resources in the form of external contacts for whatever the projects require to deliver world-class research and recommendations.
- Regular meetings with the chief of staff of the CEO.
- A formal meeting every two months with GSK's CEO plus ad-hoc drop-in sessions.
- Feedback and input from a CET sponsor throughout the project.
- A family ethos: The entire FSG team and participants are referred to as the "family" to create a sense of belonging and support. ("We all win or lose together.")



## Measurable Benefits

### Impact on Participants

#### Participant Satisfaction

A survey of participants reveals high levels of satisfaction across all the program elements:

Figure 5: Survey Measuring Participant Satisfaction.

*Please rate the following aspects of the programme:*



Source: GSK



Additionally, 94% would recommend FSG to their colleagues.

### Relevance and Applicability

- Participants rated the extent that they are able to apply what they learned to their jobs as 8 out of 10 on average.
- 75% say they have had the support to embed what they learned on the program.

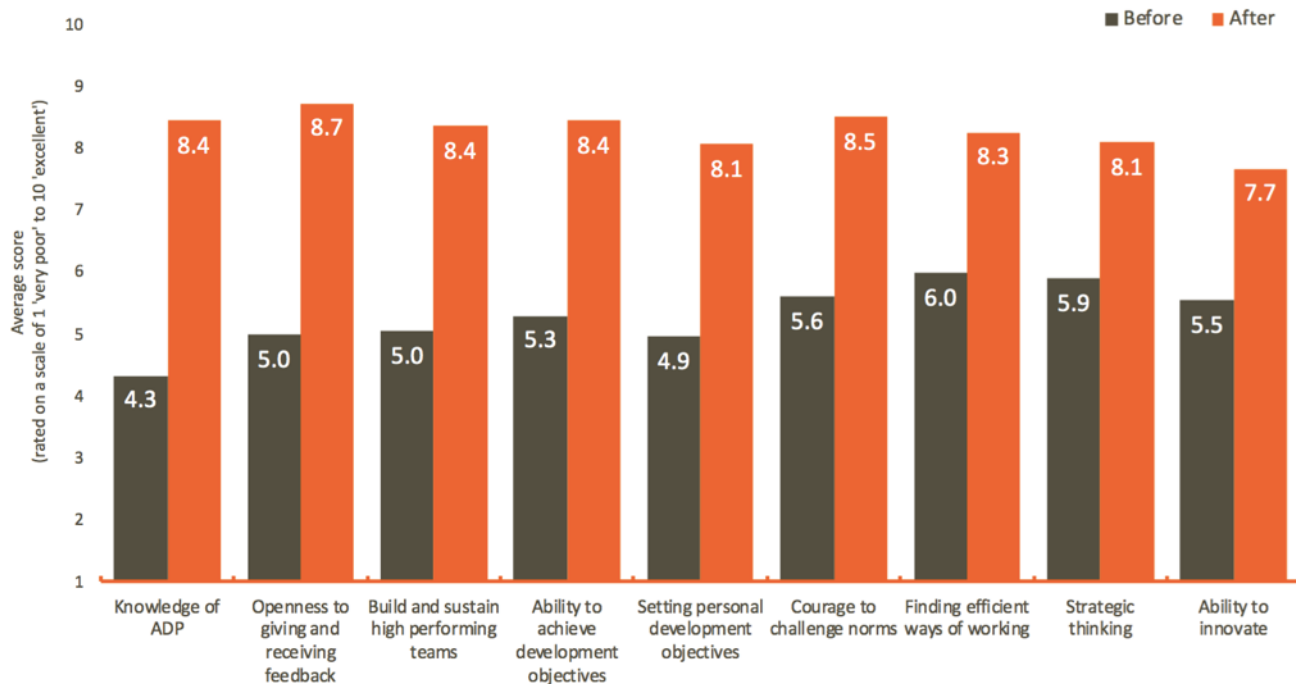
### Impact on Skills and Behavior (Outcomes)

GSK's participant survey shows FSG is achieving its program objectives, delivering against all four of GSK's leadership expectations and behaviors:

- 1. Courage:** Participants report huge increases in courage after the program, i.e., rating their courage to challenge norms as 9/10 (vs. 6/10 before).
- 2. Accountability:** After the program, participants rate their level of personal accountability for achieving results as 9 out of 10. Participants have grown their ability to set and achieve personal development objectives ± rated 5/10 before the program vs. 8/10 after.
- 3. Development:** 97% say that FSG helped them to become more self-aware and the program has increased participants' problem-solving skills, strategic thinking and efficient ways of working from 6/10 on average before the program to 8/10 today.
- 4. Teamwork:** After the program, participants rate their ability to build relationships as 9 out of 10, with 91% saying the FSG experience deepened their cultural awareness; 94% have cascaded what they learned to their team/colleagues.

Figure 6 Increase in Participants' Leadership Skills and Behaviors.

*Uplift in participants' leadership skills and behaviours:  
Before vs after programme*



Source: GSK

### What Participants Say ...

- “The FSG gave me a chance to re-invent my career, develop new skills and meet a whole ‘new’ network of colleagues.”
- “FSG is the place within GSK where I felt truly and genuinely stretched and challenged. I learned to trust myself and to work to unlock the best in others.”
- “It raised my self-confidence, improved my ability to communicate, involve and engage people.”
- “A truly transformational experience. I would do it again in a heartbeat.”
- “FSG is a unique, habit-changing, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you to get out of your comfort zone and question who you are as a professional and an individual.”
- “The insights gained from that have several times over helped me in different roles.”

### **Business Impact**

Changing organizational culture and increase employee engagement:

FSG is helping to build a culture of innovation and performance:

- Participants' ability to innovate grew from 6/10 before the program to 8/10 after the program.
- 100% of participants said that FSG has enabled them to perform better as a leader.
- Average scores for participants' ability to build and sustain high performing teams jumped from 5/10 to 8/10.

### **Growing and Retaining a Pool of Courageous Leaders**

"I feel more personally engaged and committed to the GSK organization as a result of the FSG experience."

- 84% of participants have since made at least one major organizational move (i.e., crossed business unit, geography or function boundaries).
- 74% have climbed up one or more grades.
- 78% say FSG has enabled them to achieve their career goals.
- 72% say they still will be working for GSK in the next 12 months.
- Loyalty is particularly high among female participants — 81% say they will be at GSK in a years' time; furthermore, they rate their likelihood to still be at GSK in five years' time as 8/10 on average.





### **Supporting Business Growth by Tackling Some of the Organization's Toughest Challenges**

The FSG has delivered tangible benefit and impact in a wide range of project areas including:

- Defining the GSK employee value proposition used to attract and retain talent.
- Creating and implementing GSK's first environmental sustainability strategy.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of global advertising and promotion spending and working hand in hand with finance to further optimize this.
- Defining GSK's strategies in the areas of access to medicine and neglected tropical diseases.
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By helping to retain and develop leadership talent and contributing to a culture of innovation, FSG is helping contribute to GSK's sustained growth. Annual revenue has grown by more than £3 billion since before FSG launched in 2009 and GSK is one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world.

## **Overall**

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### **Embedding and Sustaining the Change**

FSG isn't designed to teach people, it is designed to change people. Typically, leadership development programs fail as any change in behavior is not supported in the home environment in the weeks and months following the program. Key to the success of FSG is its sustainability. Learning and behaviors are embedded through:

- Requiring participants to produce a draft 90-day plan for when they start their desired new role.
- Support throughout the transition period, including sessions with an external coach for three months following completion. The sessions help them continue with the behaviors they learned in their new role.
- An FSG alumni network of 75 people who meet regularly to reinforce their learnings and share advice and experiences.
- The FSG alumni are also tracked/monitored using GSK's HR system called Workday.

### **The Future**

An article was written by Kim Lafferty and Steve Chapman and published in 2014 talks about accelerating leadership talent. It describes how FSG is an “impactful, edgy, state-of-the-art leadership development program.” The ambition is to create a systemic offering that guarantees a potent participant experience, ensures a professional transition into and out of the program and maximizes the short- and long-term value for participants, stakeholders and the business.

Now in its eighth year and 10th cohort, FSG has proven to have a profound impact still to this day on its participants. Additionally, the program is helping to contribute to a culture of innovation, supporting GSK’s continued business growth.

The ongoing success of FSG means that it has become a core component of the company’s leadership talent management strategy. Its intention is to continue to evolve the program to remain relevant and challenging to develop GSK’s talent for years to come.



## About Brandon Hall Group

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Brandon Hall Group is a HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management. With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 20 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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