

Accelerate Executive Insight

**A Unique Executive Education
Experience for Exceptional Leaders**





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Executive Summary



Oracle develops top-selling technological solutions that address complex business processes in a vast range of industries. The company reigns as industry leader in numerous sectors, including banking, education, finance, healthcare, manufacturing and retail.

In recent years, technological advances have dramatically altered how these sectors are defined and how companies compete and create value. Although the company had been operating within a vortex of change for decades, as a large, decentralized organization, it couldn't always respond to its customers' evolving needs with the necessary agility.

Starting in 2014, the company and its immense client base were faced with ongoing digital transformation that was disrupting industries worldwide. In this context, the challenge for Oracle was to ensure its leadership learned faster and better to navigate a world in constant flux.

To this end, Oracle's Organization & Talent Development leadership team sought to foster a common vision and nomenclature among its top performers and provide a platform to enhance their leadership potential in benefit of themselves, their teams and the organization as a whole. In keeping with Oracle's global outlook, they envisioned an innovative learning solution that leveraged two premier academic institutions, one in Europe and one in the United States.

"Accelerate Executive Insight"(AEI), now in its 21st edition, is the outcome of this forward-thinking approach. Designed by Oracle, IESE Business School and University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, AEI gathers participants from diverse business lines, regions, functions and cultures to learn together across two global venues and a virtual learning platform.

Through a highly engaging blended learning format, AEI broadens participants' strategic mindset and customer-centric approach, while boosting their capacity to align and inspire others as models of authentic leadership.

Introduction

IESE Business School



IESE Business School traces its roots back to 1958. Guided by a clear mission, the school seeks to develop business leaders who aspire to have a positive and lasting impact on people, business and society.

The school has a distinctly global dimension, with five international campuses and a vast network of academic alliances, including associated business schools across five continents. At the forefront of executive education, IESE has been ranked number one in the world for custom programs for four consecutive years.

University of Michigan Ross School of Business



The Stephen M. Ross School of Business of the University of Michigan (Michigan Ross) was founded in 1924.

Recognized globally among the world's best management schools, Michigan Ross aims to build a better world through business. Its educational portfolio includes undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees, as well as an extensive range of executive education offerings. The school is world-renowned as the creator of action-based learning and a trailblazer in the field of positive leadership.

Oracle



Established in 1977 in Redwood Shores, California, Oracle is the world's top provider of business software, with a global reach of 430,000 customers in 175 countries and 2018 revenues of \$40 billion.

The company aims to take the complexity out of IT, allowing its customers to focus on business innovation and new market opportunities. Oracle owns more than 18,000 patents, a testament to its mission of on-going innovation.

The Challenge

Oracle aspires to remove the complexity from IT decisions by engineering hardware and software to work together in the cloud and in the data center, freeing its enterprise and SMB customers to focus their efforts on business innovation and value creation.

The company has a complex organizational structure with multiple lines of business and global business units (GBUs) defined by sectors and product lines. Oracle is also very growth-oriented, continually expanding the breadth and depth of its operations by acquiring technology firms that complement its core business lines. Its vast global scope, numerous GBUs, diverse product solutions and on-going acquisitions put the company at risk of developing management silos and not fully leveraging its wealth of collective knowledge.

Several years ago, the technological revolution was reshaping traditional producer-distributor-customer relationships, business processes and decision-making frameworks. Specifically, cloud computing opened the door to new solutions for Oracle customers – and new competitors. While Oracle strived for simplicity, its ability to effectively and agilely adapt to a changing business landscape was far from a “said and done” proposition.

In this fast-moving and complex environment, how could Oracle become more adaptive to solving their customers’ changing needs? How might Oracle’s leaders evolve as the business shifted from a traditional on-premise product orientation to a cloud-based services orientation? What strategies would enhance its leadership pipeline and better prepare the company to navigate future challenges?

Oracle’s Global Top Talent Development Centre aimed to implement a multifaceted learning solution to address these critical issues. In the course of 40 years of market success, it had a proven history of spearheading effective executive education initiatives, including an executive education program for its top-performing directors and vice presidents in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA).

After conducting a thorough global needs analysis, the HR leadership at Oracle concluded that an organization-wide executive education experience across all lines of business and support functions and in all geographies would meet the critical development needs of the company’s top talent and boost its change agility and process of continuous reinvention.



The Top Talent Development Team decided the new offering should specifically target a strategic selection of top-performing directors and senior directors from a cross-section of lines of business and functions including sales, consulting, customer support product development, engineering, finance, marketing, communications, legal HR and accounting.

In an immersive and Oracle-focused learning environment, the program would prepare participants for the future by teaching positive practices to hone their strategic mindset, as well as boost their ability to lead and inspire their teams – especially critical in a context of uncertainty and flux.

On an organizational level, the learning solution aspired to stimulate networking, collaboration and knowledge flows and serve as a means to retain top talent and prepare them to lead Oracle into the future.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

- Foster communication, collaboration and networking across functions, lines of business, geographies and cultures
- Create a common nomenclature and a unified vision with regard to strategic and technological change
- Facilitate knowledge flows between senior-level and top-level management
- Boost the leadership potential of directors and senior directors to boost the corporate outcomes of their teams
- Increased engagement among directors and senior directors to catalyze their career progression

The Commitment

More than 10 years ago, Oracle began offering a residential executive education program for its senior directors in the EMEA region, in collaboration with IESE Business School. After successfully running the program for a few years, Oracle believed its organizational impact could be magnified by scaling globally.

To help with this endeavor, Oracle's Top Talent Development Centre decided to expand its scope by diversifying geographically and partnering with two business schools – one in Europe and the other in the United States. They ultimately entrusted IESE Business School and the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business as their academic partners. In addition to their status as top-ranked universities, both espoused a distinctly global outlook and highly collaborative approach.

As Jo Tilson, Global Head of Oracle's Top Talent Development Centre explains, "Developing a program with two learning providers is uncommon, yet we at Oracle are big believers in the power of collaboration. We felt this team would work exceptionally well together and bring in unique perspectives to the benefit of our participants. In a sense, our AEI development team mirrored the type of collaborative energy we hoped to inspire through the program."

"We felt that IESE and Michigan Ross would work exceptionally well together. Ultimately, the AEI development team mirrored the same type of collaborative energy we hoped to spark through the program."

Jo Tilson

Global Head of Top Talent Development Centre
Oracle





The first seeds of the Accelerate Executive Insight were planted on IESE's New York campus in a meeting room equipped with a standard flipchart and a fresh pack of markers. In intensive sessions, AEI faculty and program leaders from all three entities considered the following question: "How can we develop the highest-impact and most Oracle-relevant learning journey possible?"

From this co-creative process, the following framework emerged:

- Strategic selection of a diverse cohort of senior directors from different lines of

business, functions, regions, markets and cultures

- 8-month blended learning format comprised by two weeklong residential modules and virtual learning to accommodate participants' schedules and increase the learning impact
- Team projects on concrete business initiatives (BIs) to build cross-organization awareness and improve collaboration
- Oracle-specific content on strategic business challenges

- Participation of Oracle's top-level leaders to motivate participants and offer them exposure to senior leadership
- Virtual platform to keep participants connected and engaged with peers and professors for team projects
- Continuous fine-tuning to adapt to Oracle's changing needs and those of their global customer base

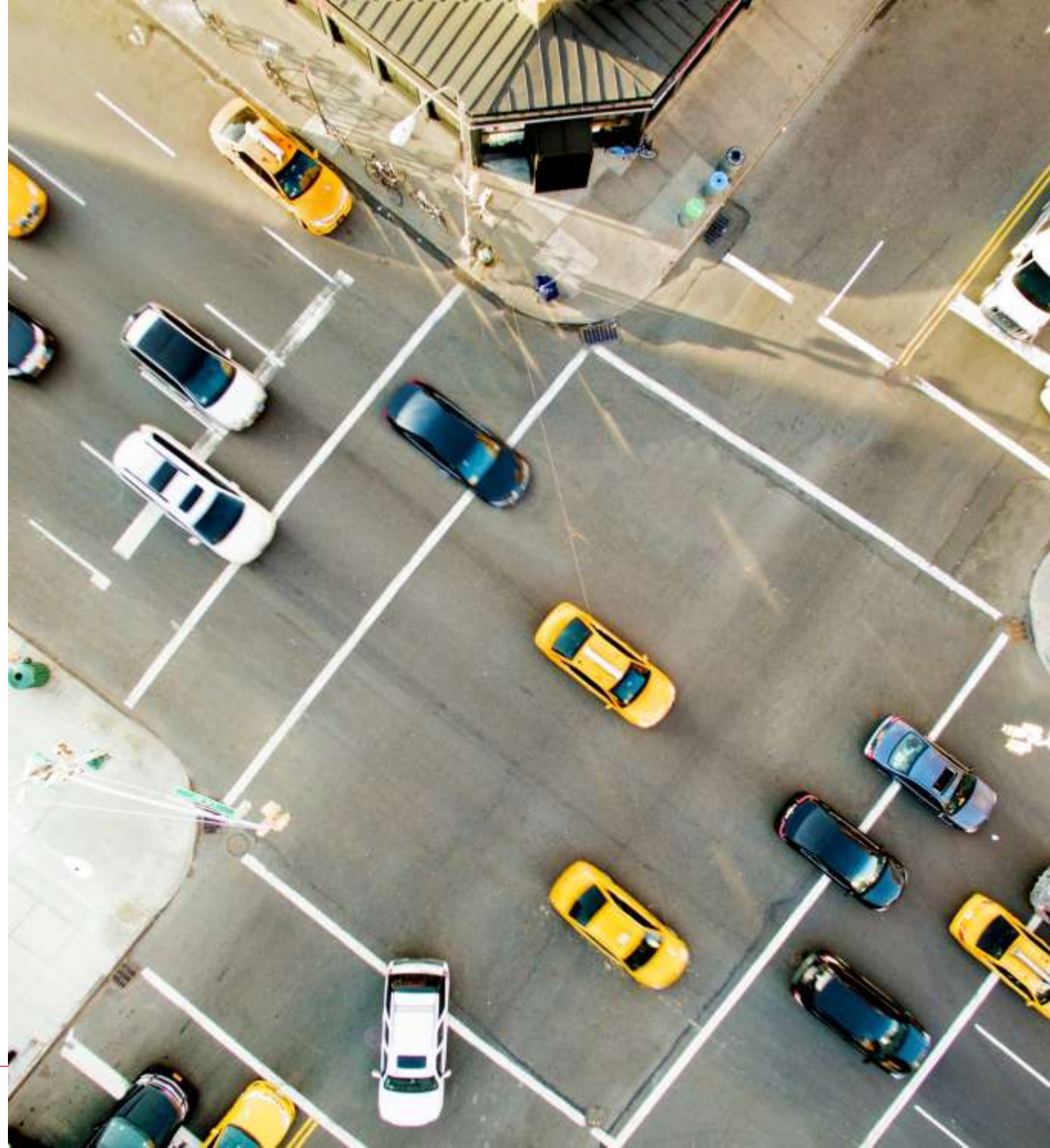
As Kip Meyer, managing director of custom partnerships at IESE and an AEI program director, remarks, "Business headlines these days often focus on how much technology has changed working relationships, yet people are naturally wired for human connection. Oracle's leaders are already extremely driven and future-forward. Our aim was to amplify these positives by bringing their top performers together in the same space and providing a forum for collaboration."



"Oracle is known for its engaged and future-forward approach. We amplified these positives by providing a platform for learning and collaboration for their top performers."

Kip Meyer

Managing Director of Custom Partnerships
IESE Business School



The L&D Initiative

The Accelerate Executive Insight program was launched in 2014. Each edition gathers 40 to 45 top-talent directors and senior directors for a multifaceted learning experience to help them elevate their leadership competencies and inspire their teams to innovate and execute with greater speed and agility.

The program aims to trigger positive outcomes for both participants and the organization by serving as a catalyst for personal and professional growth. To this end, one of the program's core components is the business initiatives (BIs) project. Defined by the cohort, BIs entail a team-based methodology that inspires participants to envision diverse corporate scenarios, articulate what could generate the highest benefit for Oracle and formulate strategies to make it happen.

Given its strong emphasis on teamwork, the program's success relies on a strategically selected cohort. Oracle's HR leadership utilizes an internal performance and potential talent review process to identify the top 5 percent of senior leaders who demonstrate outstanding performance, clear career aspirations and the potential to grow within the organization. The program is an equal-opportunity initiative to benefit the top-performing male and female employees in Oracle's senior leadership pool.

The AEI Learning Commitment

Participants are notified via email three months before the program begins to give them time to organize their executive agendas. Six weeks before the program launch, they are given access to the AEI virtual learning platform, which will serve as a critical channel for communication throughout the program.

The AEI program is intensive and its success relies largely on the commitment of both participants and their managers. For this reason, AEI participants define a learning contract with their line managers to articulate their explicit objectives and priorities during the AEI journey. As the program moves forward, they meet regularly to update the learning objectives and evaluate the participant's progress.



ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

Organizational Benefits:

- Elevated strategic insight through business initiatives project
- Leverage of knowledge flows to spur ongoing innovation and improvement

Team Benefits:

- Accelerated development and higher retention among Oracle's top talent
- Greater collaboration and networking across the organization to increase engagement

Individual Benefits:

- Evolved mindset from transactional to strategic and skillset to lead change processes
- Ability to lead with greater clarity and a renewed sense of purpose
- Deeper awareness into one's own leadership style
- Increased exposure to Oracle senior leadership

Program Structure

The program starts with a virtual introductory session six to eight weeks before Module I. Program directors from Oracle, IESE and Michigan Ross lead the call to communicate the program's learning objectives and core elements.

This online conference also introduces the virtual platform, where participants can find all materials for the course including pre-readings and learning contracts.



“The impact of the business initiatives far exceeded our original expectations. Oracle’s top-tier leadership recognizes their value as a source for new ideas and innovation.”

Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks

Professor of Management and Organizations
Stephen M. Ross School of Business
University of Michigan

Module I in Barcelona

IESE’s campus in Barcelona hosts the first weeklong residential module. Aimed at expanding participants’ strategic vision and customer-centric focus, it capitalizes on the school’s expertise in strategic management and digital transformation by examining market intelligence set within the framework of Oracle’s business and the ramifications of IT advances.

The business initiatives project is presented in Module I through multiple workshops that include a variety of prompts to spark new ideas on the future for both Oracle and its customers. Some incorporate the UN Sustainable Development Goals to challenge participants to think about Oracle’s social impact. They also examine the needs of Oracle’s customers by sector to better understand market shifts and how Oracle needs to adapt.

This “futuring” reveals strategic priorities for Oracle that are translated into a list of possible business initiatives. Guided by Michigan Ross Professor Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks of the Department of Management and Organizations, participants prioritize the five most important BIs and self-select into teams to work on them between Modules I and II. As important, relevant initiatives for Oracle, the methodology allows participants to sharpen their strategic thinking and expand their mindsets – mission-critical skills of agile leadership.

Although IESE hosts this module, Prof. Sanchez-Burks attends all Module I sessions in Barcelona and works side-by-side with IESE faculty on the workshops that define the BIs. This is just one of many examples that illustrates the two schools’ seamless collaboration.

Virtual Learning Platform

The virtual platform serves as a communication hub throughout the program and plays an especially important role for the business initiatives methodology. Grouped into five teams of nine members, participants work across oceans and time zones. At the midway point between modules, they attend a “check-in session” to update the cohort on their progress and receive feedback.

Oracle also employs a cybrarian, who provides information and guidance to help teams advance their business initiatives. The cybrarian attends program sessions to develop relationships with participants and offer them support, not only during the program, but continually in their respective roles at Oracle.

The third online conference lays the groundwork for Module II. Participants receive an overview of the upcoming module, as well as “leadership reflections” to motivate them to examine their career trajectories in depth and consider possible areas for growth.



Module II in Ann Arbor

The Michigan Ross campus in Ann Arbor welcomes participants for the second module. This weeklong immersion takes advantage of the school's pioneering work on positive leadership through in-depth examinations of participants' unique leadership styles. It also integrates Ross's trademark action-oriented learning to heighten their ability to inspire, engage and align their teams.

Throughout the week, participants put the finishing touches on their BI projects and present their conclusions to the cohort. They also discuss their potential for proposing them to Oracle's leadership.

While the program journey comes to an end, it is really just the beginning for AEI graduates, who emerge with deeper peer connections and a fresh perspective of their company and role as global leaders. Oracle helps graduates keep these ties alive by organizing annual AEI alumni reunions.

Cheri Alexander serves as a professor in Michigan Ross's Department of Management and Organizations, as well as an AEI program director. For her, collaborating on the AEI journey has also been deeply rewarding:

"Not a week goes by that I don't hear from an AEI graduate, either to update me on a project or get my opinion on a particular human capital challenge. Their reaching out to get in touch and jointly find a solution is hugely rewarding for me as an educator."



"AEI graduates regularly reach out to update me on projects or ask for my opinion on specific challenges. This is hugely rewarding for me as an educator."

Cheri Alexander
Chief Innovation Officer, Executive Education
Stephen M. Ross School of Business
Faculty, Management and Organizations
University of Michigan



Virtual Summit

Several weeks after the second module, participants take part in a Virtual Summit to reconnect with peers, share best practices and provide updates on their BI projects.

As Prof. Sanchez-Burks observes, business initiatives have far exceeded their original scope: "The BI project was initially framed as a methodology to enhance communication and collaboration, but its impact has been far greater. Some BIs have improved Oracle's corporate processes and top-tier leaders recognize their value as a pipeline for innovation."

The learning portal remains open for another 12 months, gathering all presentations and learning materials in a virtual library. The platform continues to serve as a connection point among the cohort, allowing Oracle to maximize the AEI alumni community as a core driver of culture change within the company.



WHAT MAKES AEI UNIQUE?

- A dynamic blend of learning methodologies:
 - action-based learning
 - experiential learning
 - case method
 - interactive lectures
 - Oracle-specific team-based projects
- Two schools working together in a unique and complementary partnership – modeling a successful collaboration as a lesson for Oracle participants
- On-going faculty involvement and guidance for business initiatives
- Oracle’s senior leaders featured as speakers
- Tours, sports activities and wellness boot camps
- “Break the ice” networking activities
- Blended format to optimize face-to-face modules
- AEI alumni reunions to nurture connections

Program Framework



- Virtual components
- Residential modules



The Impact

Since its launch, the Accelerate Executive Insight experience has welcomed more than 700 of Oracle’s top-performing directors and senior directors. Over the years, it has sparked a myriad of positive outgrowths that were unimaginable when the AEI team first gathered around a flipchart to define their vision. These repercussions include transformative changes on organizational, team and personal levels.

Organizational Benefits: Direct Business Impact

A few years ago, an AEI team decided to focus their business initiative on optimizing the buying experience. After presenting their conclusions in Module II, the AEI cohort decided these should be shared with Doug Kehring, executive vice-president of Corporate Operations. They soon learned that another team was working on a similar project and contributed to the effort with their findings. The end result: Oracle’s Accelerated Buying Experience.

Every AEI edition is a fountain of new ideas. For this reason, the IESE-Ross team continuously updates the process and prompts to ensure alignment with the company’s evolving business priorities.





700+
participants

85
business initiatives
analyzed

“The AEI experience broadened my strategic outlook and improved my ability to lead my organization and customers through this current period of transformation and innovation. It also helped me establish a strong and supportive network within Oracle, which will make us a more effective and efficient leadership team going forward.”

Mark Webster
Vice President of Global Sales
Primavera GBU

“We are all making thousands of ROI calculations from the minute we wake up. Sending good people to take part in AEI is an easy one. They come back better able to understand the business and solve problems.”

Andrew Sutherland
SVP Business Development
Technology License & Systems EMEA & APAC

9%

higher retention among AEI graduates compared to non-AEI participants

17%

higher career progression

47%

have been promoted or occupy new roles

Team Benefits: Stronger Leadership Pipeline

The program also strengthened Oracle's leadership pipeline, giving rise to a 9-percent higher retention rate among AEI alumni compared to the rest of director and senior director population. Similar results were observed in terms of career progression: lateral and vertical movements were 17 percent higher.

Equally gratifying are the program's unquantifiable benefits and influence, which far exceeded its initial scope. What began as a strategic leadership program for senior directors is now customized for two more professional categories: vice-presidents and individual contributors, who directly contribute to Oracle's performance yet work individually, without teams.

Like Prof. Alexander, Prof. Josep Valor of IESE's Department of Information Systems has taught at the AEI program since its inaugural edition in 2014. "The program's success has opened the door to the top levels of Oracle's leadership, who keep us informed on the most relevant market shifts and challenges affecting the company. This accessibility allows us to continually update the curriculum and adapt the learning experience. With every new edition, we aim to reach higher and elevate the learning impact for AEI participants."



"Oracle's top-level management keeps us up to date on the most relevant market shifts and core challenges affecting the company. This accessibility enables us to continually adapt and improve the learning experience."

Josep Valor

Professor of Information Systems
IESE Business School

Individual Impact: Personal and Professional Growth

The feedback from participants has been resoundingly positive, reflecting higher levels of engagement and collaboration among AEI graduates.

The query “I developed strategic relationships that will help me do my job more effectively” earned a 4.8 rating on a five-point scale across the life of the program – a consistently positive result for an enduring partnership. Oracle helps participants keep their connections alive by organizing annual AEI alumni reunions.



Participant Feedback

On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the following:

I would recommend this program to other top talent	4.9
I developed strategic relationships with participants and/or executives that will help me do my job more effectively	4.8
I gained knowledge and tools that will help me bring more value to Oracle	4.7
My manager supports my involvement in this learning experience	4.5
This program helped equip me to face key business challenges	4.6
My overall rating for this program	4.8

“AEI has been like an ‘MBA+ in a box.’ It has fundamentally impacted how I approach my business, leadership and life in general. I am a richer and stronger person for it and already see positive results from being more deliberate in my thinking.”

“This is an experience of a lifetime and I feel very privileged to be part of it. The buzz it has created among participants as a group and also individually is incredible.”

“This is the best training and educational experience I have had in my career. My perspective has widened and I feel re-energized to bring learnings back and applying them in my current and future roles.”

“Thanks to the program, I am much more aware of the IT environment and the role of Oracle and other major players within this global ecosystem. It got me thinking about my customers’ market positions and their current challenges, and how Oracle can help them moving forward.”

Conclusion

The Accelerate Executive Insight program has generated remarkable ripple effects that ultimately speak to the power of collaboration. By bringing together people whose paths would normally not cross, it has led to a wellspring for rich and enduring relationships, both in and outside Oracle.

As word of the program spread, it soon became a sought-after learning experience within the organization. As Jo Tilson remarks, “I am thrilled that demand remains high. Almost every day, I hear from someone aspiring to be invited, as well as from graduates who tell me how they are using the program’s concepts to deliver greater results for the business.”

By harnessing the expertise of two learning providers – as mentioned earlier, something quite unusual in executive education – the program has allowed IESE and Michigan Ross to forge a formidable relationship in benefit of AEI participants.

The schools collaborate continuously to fine-tune the program and extend open-door invitations to AEI graduates to attend their worldwide alumni sessions. At the same time, Oracle’s senior managers generously share their time and knowledge as guest speakers at IESE and Michigan Ross alumni events and academic programs.

Perhaps a former AEI participant says it best: “In a fast-paced digital world, analog is more important than ever.”

A photograph of a person walking up a wide, stone-clad staircase. The wall behind the stairs is made of large, reddish-brown rectangular panels. The person is wearing a dark jacket and is walking away from the camera. The lighting is warm, creating a sense of depth and movement.

“In a fast-paced digital world,
analog is more important than ever.”

