

EMPOWERING INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP FOR A NEW ERA

MILLIKEN LEAD ORGANIZATIONS PROGRAM



EXECUTIVE EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

*Provided by the University of Virginia
Darden School Foundation*

How do you transform your organization's leadership to drive innovation and meet strategic goals?



Since 2020, UVA Darden Executive Education & Lifelong Learning partnered with Milliken, one of the longest-established industrial manufacturers in the U.S. The goal was ambitious: to bring a new model of leadership to life by empowering key decision-makers with the innovation mindset and skills to drive sustainable change.

The Milliken LEAD Organizations program is a one-of-a-kind learning experience. Over four days at UVA Darden, Milliken's leaders are immersed in case discussions and experiential learning sessions with members of Darden's award-winning faculty. Sessions zero in on the themes of leadership, innovation, collaboration and sustainable growth that are central to the Milliken leadership model—core to the organization's vision and strategy for the next decade.

Milliken's leaders spend the week working in silo-busting teams. Together they explore new leadership approaches and how to unlock new pathways to growth through real-world case studies expertly adapted to their specific needs. The program culminates in an exciting team challenge. The learning activity, modeled on the popular television show

Shark Tank, brings Milliken leaders face-to-face with Darden faculty, senior executives and their CEO to present and defend a project they have developed over their week together: an innovation with the potential to unlock new markets, drive growth and help achieve some of the sustainability goals set by Milliken's senior leadership. The "Shark Tank" is also a moment to showcase participants' enhanced communication, collaboration and leadership capabilities.

With exceptional and unfailing support and active input from the organization's most senior executives, the Milliken LEAD Organizations program is transforming its leadership and organizational capabilities at scale. The first two years has already seen seven cohorts complete the program and share unanimously positive feedback. Milliken's dynamic CEO, Halsey Cook, has attended all seven "Shark Tanks" and provided feedback on teams' projects. Crucially, his support remains deep and steadfast as the program goes into its third year, delivering new levels of transformational impact.

This is how it works.

THE CHALLENGE: EMPOWERING YOUR ORGANIZATION TO LEAD SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION.

Milliken is one of the original industrial manufacturing in the U.S. Founded in 1865, the company is long steeped in tradition. But as times change, organizational culture has to adapt and modernize to address new challenges.

CEO Halsey Cook joined Milliken in 2018 with a clear mandate: to define, articulate and enact a new strategic vision for the organization; one that can lead Milliken into a new era of sustainability and innovation, while remaining steadfast in its founding purpose: to help save lives, to make the world a better place, and to create a healthier future for generations.

For Halsey, this new era will be forged on key values:

- Integrity: Doing the right thing.
- Excellence: Setting a high bar for performance.
- Innovation. Rewarding big thinking.
- Sustainability. Creating a healthy future.
- People. Empowering exceptional teams.

But executing this new vision and upholding these values will imply a fundamental shift in Milliken's organizational hierarchy and leadership model. For years, the company has operated a command and control system—one that has enabled the formation of silos and has the potential to slow innovation and hamper growth. Halsey and his team have developed a new Milliken leadership model: a model predicated on collaboration, ideation, experimentation, and the empowerment of teams. But it won't be easy.

Making the transition to a new mode of risk-taking and



innovation is a big shift for Milliken's leaders. Many of them come from different companies within its organizational ecosystem; they are diverse in culture, generation and background. Bringing them together, aligning them and empowering them to think and act in new ways will be challenging. And to do this effectively, with tangible outcomes and at scale, will call for a massive intervention. One that can:

- Challenge entrenched thinking and hierarchical behaviors.
- Open up mindsets and forge new ways of collaborating, communicating and creating.
- Align and mobilize a diversity of leaders, incumbents and high-potential, around the new vision of the future.
- Help create a succession plan as the organization continues to navigate new challenges and search for new opportunities.

Getting this right will also call for next-generation pedagogy and evidence-based expertise in leadership and organizational change. Getting this right, in short, will call for a world-class learning partner.



PARTNERING WITH DARDEN AND GETTING TO WORK

Milliken and UVA Darden Executive Education & Lifelong Learning have partnered since 2020 to build a far-reaching and transformational leadership program for the organization's senior decision-makers.

Working hand in glove with Darden faculty, CHRO Craig Haydamack and Sr. Director of Learning and Development, Ottilia Dill, outlined a schedule that married Darden research-backed expertise with Milliken's leadership model. A close, collaborative team came together to define the format, framework, content and timeline that would deliver the impact Milliken needed.

Led by Professor Sean Martin, Darden faculty brought thought leadership and robust academic frameworks that could be modified and customized to Milliken's needs. They also brought the pedagogical expertise to map an intensive, four-day learning experience that could be delivered swiftly and effectively across successive cohorts—yet with the flexibility to adapt and evolve as new needs emerged. Over several weeks of virtual and in-person sessions, the team worked in tight collaboration to co-design:

- A set of clear learning objectives and outcomes.
- A bespoke curriculum laser-focused on key topics.
- A set of real-life case studies that mapped perfectly to the Milliken model.
- A timeline for the learning to optimize delivery and scalability.

"We spoke to the top business schools, but every time we came back to Darden because this is where we found the values, the collaboration and the capacity to really listen to us and help us focus on our business outcomes. Darden professors were so focused on our success."

Craig Haydamack, Chief Human Resources Officer, Milliken.



"As education specialists, we are great at crafting programs at Darden. But this was something really special. From the start, there was such a strong connection and relationship in this partnership. We really came together as a team, Milliken and Darden, to create something truly bespoke."

Sean Martin, Donald and Lauren Morel Associate Professor of Business Administration, UVA Darden.

"Strategically partnering with a top business school brings you that invaluable external perspectives across industries and geographies—that's where you find the value. But what Darden faculty really bring is a unique immersion in pedagogy and a passion for what they do and how they put learners at the center of the experience."

Devin Bigoness, Chief Client Officer, Executive Education & Lifelong Learning at UVA Darden.

THE SOLUTION: MILLIKEN LEAD ORGANIZATIONS PROGRAM

The Milliken LEAD Organizations program was delivered to its first cohort at the start of 2021. Since then, six further cohorts have passed through the program. The learning experience, the transformation in thinking, the involvement on the part of senior leadership and the impact have been extraordinary. How has this happened?

The program is designed for and accessible to every executive and decision-maker in Milliken—its entire leadership cohort. The C-suite, SVPs, VPs, directors and high-potential executives pass through a learning journey that is broad enough to accommodate diversity, yet laser-focused on the kind of leadership that Milliken needs for the future. Over four intense days on grounds at UVA Darden, Milliken learners experience a place of psychological safety in which they are encouraged to think, reflect on their own leadership style—and to explore and experiment with new approaches, all of this centered around the pressing challenges of growth, innovation, sustainability and team empowerment.

To drive collaboration and forge new enterprise-wide networks, every cohort is hand-picked to optimize diversity of function and experience. For most, this will be the first time meeting, learning, exploring and working with diverse colleagues.



“Milliken realized the time was now. They had to make that leap: to innovate or stagnate. Partnering with them, witnessing the thoughtful involvement of senior leaders—how touching and human the connections are—to me, this is a shining example of how to deliver executive programs. How to work as a team – and to make it fun in the process.”

Sean Martin, Donald and Lauren Morel Associate Professor of Business Administration, UVA Darden.

THE SOLUTION: MILLIKEN LEAD ORGANIZATIONS PROGRAM



Learning Objectives

- Leadership styles and effectiveness
- Organizational alignment
- Responsible business without tradeoffs
- Growth with tradeoffs
- Team dynamics
- Decision-making and values
- Navigating the unknown
- Speaking truth to power
- Detecting the opportunities
- Integration with the Milliken leadership model.



Solution: On-Grounds Experience with UVA Darden Faculty and Expert Speakers

- Four-day immersion on campus with Darden faculty: Sunday to Thursday
- Daily schedule of faculty-led sessions on real-world cases mapped to Milliken leadership model.
- Teams from diverse functions form to ideate and collaborate—these teams go on to build a business idea and pitch it at the “Shark Tank”.
- The “Shark Tank”: Teams present their innovation idea to Darden faculty and senior leadership speakers, practitioners and subject matter experts



Results and Future Outcomes:

- Networking: Inter-disciplinary ties and bonds are forged between participants that endure long after the program.
- Sponsorship and support: Milliken SVPs and senior leaders host team dinners to conclude the program. CEO Halsey Cook flies in to attend and interact with participants for each “Shark Tank”. CHRO Craig Haydamack facilitates a discussion on how the cases and learnings apply to their leadership model.
- New approaches and ideas are embedded, new communication and collaboration skills forged, new networks of pan-organizational collaboration, deeper sense of ownership and engagement with Milliken and its future
- Program replicable and repeatable across successive and upcoming cohorts of senior officers and personnel

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Welcome to the “Shark Tank”

An integral function of the program is to enable new ideas, innovation, communication and collaboration to surface. From day one, teams come together to ideate and build a business proposition: one tied to Milliken’s sustainability goals and values. Supported and coached by Darden faculty, teams are encouraged to leverage their knowledge and expertise in new ways. They are challenged to build a compelling case, detailing the demand, capabilities, resources, strategy and cultural impact of their ideas. At the end of the program, each team makes its pitch, presenting their idea, their execution plan and how all of this ties to Milliken’s values. They have five minutes to present to a panel of Darden faculty and senior leaders and five minutes to answer questions. Themes that have emerged over successive cohorts include but are not limited to:

- Product innovation
- Materials recycling
- CO2 reduction
- Talent and community-building

“Each idea is welcomed and openly discussed with the panel and with CEO Halsey Cook, who makes it a priority to attend and interact with participants. Some ideas have already taken hold with Milliken’s innovation team: a proposition to replace a synthetic with a new material has sparked an entirely new conversation.”

Ottilia Dill, Sr. Director of Learning and Development, Milliken.

THE SOLUTION: MILLIKEN LEAD ORGANIZATIONS PROGRAM



The Secret Weapon: Senior Leadership Support

One of the most unique elements of the Milliken LEAD Organizations program is the extent and quality of support it received from CEO Halsey Cook. From its inception, Halsey has made it a priority to physically attend each “Shark Tank”, and to engage directly with team members. Being in situ, putting his money where his mouth is, so to speak, has won Halsey and his team respect and gratitude from Milliken’s leaders, while maximizing the impact of the program on its participants. His pledge to the program and commitment to the development and empowerment of his people models the integrity, excellence, innovation, sustainability and commitment to people that is core to the Milliken leadership model.

But Halsey isn’t alone. Each Tuesday of each new program, members of Milliken’s executive team(ELT) fly out to Washington to be part of the experience and to learn from their teams. These visits are informal. The ELT members invite their teams to dinner in Washington, giving them a chance to talk openly and get to know each other. What’s interesting is that this addition to the program—this new Milliken tradition—has happened organically. It is by no means a small feat in terms of time and cost alone, yet it has become a regular feature with each edition of the program and each cohort. It is, in the words of CHRO Craig Haydamack, a “measure of the success of this program. In how many big organizations do you get to spend quality, human time with the highest level of your vertical, knowing that they are not there to judge, but to learn with and from you?”

“The “Shark Tank” and the contact with the C-suite is a hugely empowering experience. In this sense our CEO really sets the tone. You don’t feel you’re up against people or that you have something to prove—instead you are made to feel like you’re part of the fold; that you have been selected to be part of the leadership of this company. And it’s fun! The gift that we are given is a space to be creative and to innovate. And that’s incredibly special.”

Betsy Sikma, Senior Director, Brand and Communications, Milliken.

Impact

The Milliken LEAD Organizations program is a bespoke capabilities accelerator geared expertly to Milliken's needs and aspirations for its incumbent and future leaders. The learning experience enhances creative and innovative thinking, collaboration and communication skills, and forges silo-busting networks across the entirety of the organization.

The scale of the program is such that these outcomes extend to Milliken's entire leadership. And the engagement, alignment and motivation that participants express as a function of the experience and the deep involvement of senior leadership are strong indicators of how robust Milliken's succession pool is becoming.

New skills, new ways of thinking and doing, new connections are built with each new cohort.

In two years, a total of seven cohorts have gone through the program. Milliken is seeing the benefits of:

- 252 leaders trained in partnership with UVA Darden, one of the world's foremost business schools.
- 85% say they will implement the new ideas and approaches in their role.
- Exceptional Net Promoter Score of 70.
- 43 new business ideas and propositions.
- A significant increase in retention and promotion among participants.
- New networking, brainstorming activities and new projects teams are emerging.

The Milliken LEAD Organizations program is now scheduled to run one session each year from 2023 onwards. CEO Halsey Cook has already signaled his continuing commitment to attend each program in person.

"The opportunity to learn from leadership experts, discuss with colleagues and meet peers from other divisions was invaluable to me. I greatly appreciate the opportunity and was able to immediately implement what I learned in a team building session with my group the following week. Thank you for investing in me and including me in such a well planned and executed event!"

Milliken LEAD Organizations program participant feedback 2022.

"The program has delivered outstanding results in satisfaction, succession pipelines, talent availability and engagement. We see the stickiness, the learning and the growing back in the organization. The star potential of our people is becoming evident. And it's gratifying to see the shift in culture – the breaking of old habits."

Craig Haydamack, Chief Human Resources Officer, Milliken.





UVA Darden Executive Education & Lifelong Learning partners with organizations to build the organizational capabilities and the leadership mindsets to find new pathways to sustainable growth. We pride ourselves on the caliber of our faculty, our thought leadership and our commitment to empowering people and businesses to do well, and to do good.

“There’s an old expression: give someone a fish or teach them to fish. At Darden, we don’t just teach people to fish or give them the fish. We teach them how to teach others and also how to adapt the teachings to different environments. This broad perspective and methodology is how to become a learning organization. To me, the partnership we have built with Milliken speaks to the true value and impact of executive education.”

Devin Bigoness, Chief Client Officer, Executive Education & Lifelong Learning at UVA Darden.

To find out more about the custom and customized learning solutions that we offer at UVA Darden Executive Education & Lifelong Learning, please head to:
darden.virginia.edu/executive-education

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