



# Driving the Jardines Momentum Shift: Flagship Leadership Development Programmes with INSEAD



# Contents

3 846 words

# Summary

Asian institution, Jardines, operates a vast and diverse portfolio of companies across Asia. In 2019, it had all the typical advantages of a successful conglomerate, but also some disadvantages.

The company's leaders were keen to strengthen what it means to be part of **Jardines** across its various business units – to build more of a common sense of belonging, a commitment to sharing expertise and leveraging scale, and in particular to build a common culture of leadership for those identified as corporate talent for the future.

As part of its new "momentum-shifting" Group and HR strategies, **Jardines** approached **INSEAD** to build a suite of world-class leadership-development programmes. The focus was on three core career transitions, where business units were losing or having to buy in talent. The resulting EMERGE, GROW and INSPIRE programmes formed a continuum of learning across a common curriculum, designed around **Jardines'** business priorities and differentiated for different levels of leadership.

The plan was to bring together high-potential managers, selected from across **Jardines**, to bond with each other and learn from **INSEAD** professors

on campus. Each participant would have their own personal action plan and be part of a group action-learning project. However, the onset of the pandemic, after just a few modules, required a swift pivot to virtual. Fortunately, the programmes were able to benefit from **INSEAD**'s innovative GO-Live technology, which simulates the face-to-face classroom experience.

One year after the first classes completed the programme, **Jardines** is already seeing results in terms of internal promotions and increased communication between business units. Some 60% of the action-learning projects have been implemented, and best practices acquired through the programmes are being applied throughout the group. There is also early evidence that Jardine's status as an employer of talent has grown. The impact has exceeded expectations, and the partners are now tweaking the programme content ready for the next cycle of learning – this time on campus.





# Introduction



**Jardine Matheson** (known as “Jardines”) is a diversified Asian-based group with unsurpassed experience in the region.

Founded in China in 1832, it has grown into a broad portfolio of market-leading businesses, all closely aligned to the needs of Asia's increasingly prosperous consumers.

The Group has over 400,000 employees in 30 countries and operates in multiple sectors, including retail, real estate, shipping and aviation, construction, automotive and hospitality.



**INSEAD – The Business School for the World® –**  
brings together people, culture and ideas to develop responsible leaders who transform business and society.

As one of the world's leading and largest graduate business schools, **INSEAD** offers participants a truly global educational experience. With locations in Asia (Singapore), Europe (France), the Middle East (Abu Dhabi) and North America (San Francisco), the school's education and research span the globe. Its 165 renowned faculty members from 41 countries inspire some 1,300 degree students and 11,000 executive education participants every year.



# The Challenge

# The Challenge

Far more than a company, Jardines is an Asian institution. Founded in 1832 in Canton, China, its history is woven into the economic fabric of the region.

The company has grown into one of the world's largest companies by market capitalisation and is a member of the Fortune Global 500.

**Jardines'** heart and headquarters are in Hong Kong, where its interests range from mining and agribusiness, through transport and construction, to retailing and luxury hotels. Anyone visiting the territory, however briefly, cannot fail to notice the company's flagship Mandarin Oriental Hotel or the historic "Noonday Gun", still fired by **Jardines** every day. Anyone who stays longer will almost certainly eat in its restaurants, shop in its stores, travel in its vehicles or ride in its lifts.



Nevertheless, twenty-first century **Jardines** is an increasingly pan-Asian, if not global, powerhouse, which operates under some of the world's biggest brand names. These include Ikea, Pizza Hut, KFC, Mercedes, Mandarin Oriental and Starbucks in multiple countries in Asia – selling everything from 50-cent cups of coffee in Yangon to hundred-million-dollar apartments in Beijing.

In short, this extraordinarily vast and diverse conglomerate is in almost every location and every industry in Asia.

There in lies **Jardines'** unique strength... but also a challenge.

#### The Sum of its Parts

Modern-day **Jardines** was created through geographical expansion and growth of its constituent parts. Although Hong Kong has always been the natural corporate centre, the independence of the seven business units has traditionally been sacrosanct. This creates a powerful advantage in terms of flexibility, agility and sector expertise but does not necessarily promote strategic synergy or group loyalty across 400,000 employees in 30 countries. Historically, very few managers have found a career path running between the different businesses. This means that talent has been lost and resources have been wasted on recruiting it from elsewhere.

By the mid 2010s, it was clear that **Jardines** was missing out not just on talent but on opportunities to build core standards of professionalism. Almost all learning and career development was the responsibility of the individual business units, which led to inconsistency in training standards and spending. The various HR departments did not share knowledge or buying power, let alone encourage managers to apply for jobs in other parts of the group. Some business units relied excessively on local training providers, which were not always of the highest international standards. Meanwhile, others were happy to send executives to world-leading business schools, resulting in sporadic high spending with little analysis of return on investment.



### Time for a Momentum Shift

Around 2015, then Group Managing Director, Ben Keswick (a fifth-generation member of the controlling family), decided to initiate a change. He introduced a new corporate strategy designed to leverage scale and create a dramatic move in thinking away from a loose portfolio of companies towards a more tightly knit group. At the same time, he sought to preserve the stability, consistency and continuity that investors greatly prized. The momentum-shifting strategy had four pillars:

- Collaboration
- Innovation – especially digitalisation
- Sustainability
- People – including diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Keswick recognised that the last of these, "People", was essential to making the other three work. Above all, he wanted employees to feel a sense of **Jardines** citizenship. The business units did not necessarily have a common culture, but they did have a core DNA: the group's 190-year history and connection with the region. The key was for the group's leaders and potential leaders to embrace that DNA.

Having already recruited some seasoned HR professionals with outstanding track records in multinationals, Keswick knew he had had the right team to build a group-wide learning and development function. Group HR Director, John Nolan's brief to Peter Attfield, Chief Talent & Learning Officer, was to "blow it all up and start again".



### Blowing it up, starting again

Attfield began by building a whole new learning and development strategy. He and his team instituted a company-wide programme of “education and training for all”, blending the right mix of face-to-face and online learning. They also developed function-specific academies and workshops for HR, finance, procurement and digital teams. An external benchmarking exercise with Spencer Stuart confirmed that they particularly needed to focus on the highest management levels. They therefore worked with London Business School to develop a programme called **IGNITE**, targeting their C-suite leaders.

At the same time, they did not quite “blow it **all** up”. Their analysis was that one element of their talent strategy was already in fairly good shape. Every year, the prestigious **Jardines** Executive Training Scheme (JETS) attracted a select group of young graduates from the top universities of Asia and the UK to **Jardines** for a three-year rotational programme. This programme was now further enhanced with **EMBARK**, a mirror image of IGNITE, but for the other end of the experience spectrum and developed with a specialist in early-career development.

However, that left a huge gap between EMBARK and IGNITE. There was no group-wide leadership development whatsoever for high-potential managers. As Peter Attfield puts it, “There was a disconnect between ‘talent’ and ‘learning.’” John Nolan adds: “And the new corporate strategy required a step-change in leadership if it was to work.” It was time to invest in mending that disconnect and moving to that next level.





# The Commitment

# The Commitment

Attfield's first decision was to approach the world's best business schools for solutions: "We wanted to create a sense of prestige and to be transparent about what counts as 'talent' at Jardines," he says.

His brief to these top schools was relatively open, but he asked them to focus on the **career inflection points** at which **Jardines** tended to lose or buy in talent – and to build a programme that would connect these points.

The curriculum specified in the brief was also fairly open. There were two key elements: **business acumen** and **leadership** – both tailored to **Jardines'** strategy and markets. These had to contribute to common standards and frameworks for leading across the group: a new collective wisdom.

Finally, the specified goal was to build a **network of talent** across the group – not so much a single pipeline as a fully connected pipe system that would create the desired leadership DNA and a **Jardines** glue. "We hoped these people would become carriers of a consistent culture as they moved around our businesses," says Nolan.



### A Long-Term Investment

Attfield and Nolan were under no illusions. This would be a major investment (of the order of €1 million) in a relatively small number of people to start with – initially a total of 90 or so handpicked participants across three cohorts representing three key career stages. The idea was that each “student” would go through a year of learning, including offsite sessions at the chosen business school’s campus to create a sense of groupwide bonding.

Ideally, in due course there would be a suite of Flagship Leadership Development Programmes that could take the former graduate trainees of EMBARK and High-Potentials talent across Jardines Businesses by sending them into the senior-management class of IGNITE, via a career-long continuum for nurturing and retaining talent. The initial commitment, however, was just for one single run of each the three programmes within the next two years.

In other words, this was a **long-term, up-front investment**. “Think of it as constructing a school and a curriculum,” says Nolan. “A lot of students will go through it over time and, because they’re our company’s leaders, it’s the spine of the entire strategy. It’s an absolutely critical investment.”

### A Meeting of Minds

The decision to deepen the conversation with **INSEAD** was relatively simple. The top US schools were too American. The top European schools were too European. Both were too far away. **INSEAD**, on the other hand, was a global institution with a campus in Singapore and professors steeped in Asian business: the only truly world-class business school that ticked the geographical and cultural boxes.

**INSEAD** also had strong expertise in hybrid delivery, which seemed a necessity for a programme lasting roughly a year. Some kind of online component would be essential for learning to be both maintained – and ideally applied – between the residential sessions.

Having made a provisional commitment, Attfield began to work with **INSEAD** professor, Philip Anderson, who had been researching and teaching on the Asia Campus for over two decades. Not only was Anderson a specialist in Asian business; he was also a recognised expert on strategy, leadership, innovation and change, and had taught executives at many multinational companies. It was an immediate meeting of minds. “And a hugely collaborative process,” adds Nolan.

Anderson conducted interviews with over 100 senior executives and potential participants across the entire **Jardines** group and invited Attfield to the creative lab at **INSEAD** for a detailed design session, along with potential faculty. “We spent two days in there and covered the walls with ideas,” recalls Attfield.

## A Structured Analytical Process

**First**, the team defined the key career transition points and key shifts in mindset and behaviour that the programmes were required to effect (see Step 1).

### Step 1:

Analysis of mindset and behaviour required for management impact  
at key career transition points

|                                 | "EMERGE"   | "GROW"   | "INSPIRE"   |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Key transition                  | Managing others for Grade 8–11 (junior executives)               | Managing managers for Grade 12–14 (executives)   | Managing across organisational boundaries for Grade 15–17 (senior executives) |
| Key mindset and behaviour shift | From individual contributor to leader of a high-performance team | From team leader to leader of other team leaders | From leading within a unit to leading across organisational boundaries        |



**Second**, the INSEAD–Jardines team defined the elements of business acumen required and built a core curriculum, reflecting the groupwide strategy, which could be taught at three different levels (see Step 2). “If there’s one word that sums up the content, as well as our new approach to learning and development,” explains John Nolan, “it’s modernisation.”

### Step 2:

Definition of business-acumen content linked to strategy

INSEAD
Executive Education

**Commercial Acumen Pillar – 4 aspects**

**Customer-centrity**

- Become much faster at reorienting Jardines around the needs of customers.
- Strengthen data analytics, CRM, and digital marketing (advancing away from old-school marketing)
- Shift from profit-focused to customer-focused, genuinely driven to serve our customers better, both online and offline.
- Engage customers more broadly, understand them better, develop strong insights and translate them into personalized communication and offers

**Innovation & Experimentation**

- Experiment and scale up what works using agile thinking. Constantly learn, adapt, and reshape yourself – fail quickly and often, then adjust.
- Display intellectual curiosity—turn over stones and shake trees. Do things differently—managing the status quo is no longer sufficient.
- Innovate. Each business has a handful of really hard issues. We need a culture that cracks them instead of suggesting small improvements. Prioritize, focus on real problems that make a difference.

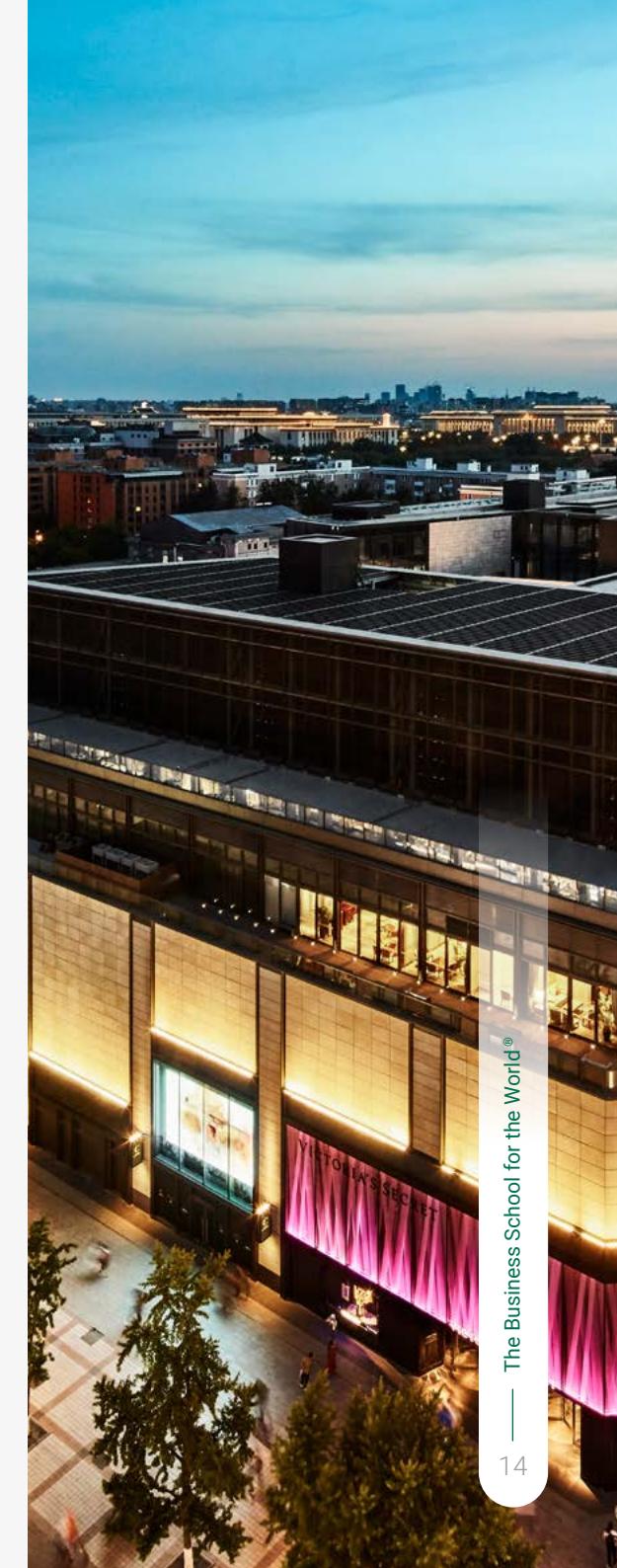
**Strategy**

- Understand how the environment is changing, deciding where to play and how to win to thrive in both the shorter and longer term.
- Diagnose environmental and competitive shifts.
- Understand value creation and capture.
- Build and defend a robust business case. Stand up for your convictions while being flexible and open to feedback.
- Prioritise and focus on the vital few.

**Digital Transformation**

- Understand digital disruption drivers and the key strategic drivers of digital disruption in Jardines businesses
- Explore how disruption happens, the new elements of digital strategy and how to profit from the platforms, ecosystems, and digital business models.
- Analyse the organisational and team capabilities needed to support digital-ready business
- Build the innovation capabilities to generate more insights and transform these insights into new businesses

3



**Third**, the team defined a leadership matrix, which would expose participants to managing at three different "altitudes". This concept would become the "red thread" running through the three programmes. As leaders progressed through the three programmes, they would work at different levels, with complementary content tuned to their level of seniority. The more senior the participants, the greater the emphasis on higher altitude, but all altitudes would be covered in each programme (see Step 3).

### Step 3:

#### The Leadership Red Thread Running Between the Flagship Programmes

|  | STRATEGIST   | ORGANISATIONAL ARCHITECT  | PACE SETTER   |
|--|--|---|---|
|  | <i>Adapt to a dynamic, uncertain environment</i>   | <i>Build and sustain context for high performance</i>   | <i>Mobilise swift, purposeful action in the face of change</i>  |
| <b>50,000 feet</b><br><i>Sustainable performance as the landscape shifts</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get ahead of the changing environment, adapt your strategy</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align organizational structures and culture to strategies and environmental context</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drive system performance from the customer in, lead adaptive change</li> </ul>     |
| <b>50 feet</b><br><i>High organizational performance here and now</i>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Execute strategy effectively, learning and adapting as we go</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get results via organization development levers and informal networks</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create clarity, drive people, innovation, collaboration, sustainability</li> </ul> |
| <b>5 feet</b><br><i>Enable self and others to be the best you can be</i>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus self and others on strategic priorities, clarify the why for individuals</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High-performance climate to get the most from talent; match strengths to roles</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create energy, make good decisions; convey meaning and purpose of work</li> </ul>  |

**Finally**, it was agreed that in terms of the Action Learning Projects, each programme would focus on a different strategic theme:

- **EMERGE** – People and Planet (including sustainability and DEI)
- **GROW** – Collaboration (within and between business units)
- **INSPIRE** – Digital and Innovation (challenging working habits and creating better solutions for customers).

With the parameters in place, it was time to put the pieces of the jigsaw together to create three **Flagship Leadership Development Programmes**.



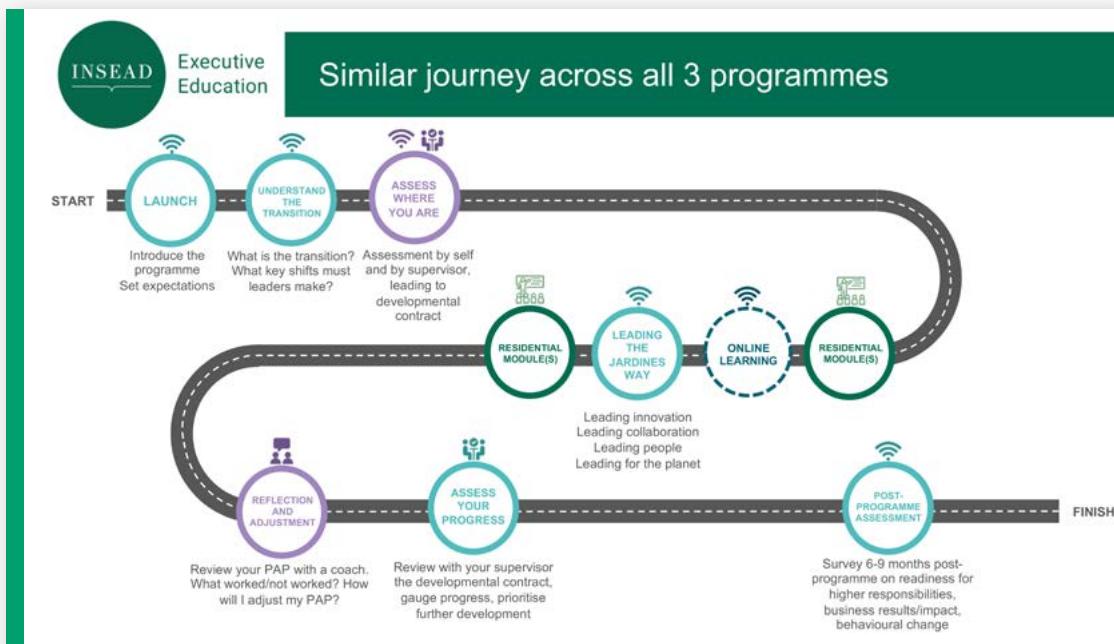
A photograph of a young man with dark hair, wearing a pink button-down shirt, standing in front of a whiteboard. He is gesturing with his hands and holding an orange marker, appearing to be in the middle of a presentation or lecture. The whiteboard behind him has some handwritten notes and diagrams.

# The Initiative

# The Initiative

In order to further harmonise content and continuity across the three programmes, the INSEAD–Jardines team decided that each should share the same learning journey – albeit with different milestones for different audiences. They therefore began the detailed design process by creating a “roadmap”.

Programme roadmap

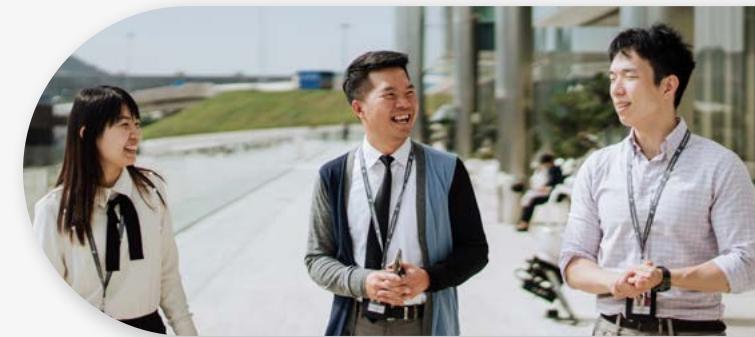


The journey would begin with **online learning and assessment** to maximise the impact of the **on-campus residential modules** at the heart of each programme. Each participant would have their own **Personal Action Plan** supported by a coach and reviewed with their supervisor. There would also be an online follow-up module and a survey 6 to 9 months out to cement learning and assess readiness for new responsibilities.

In addition, the **Jardines glue** would be strengthened by involving **senior executives as faculty** and through group **Action Learning Projects (ALP's)**.

Participants would choose and design their ALPs during the residential modules, with support from faculty. They would then evolve and implement the project between and after the residential modules. Towards the end of the journey, they would present their project to an appropriate group of **Jardines** leaders. Ideally, however, some ALPs would continue long after the journey had finished, leaving a tangible impact on the business.

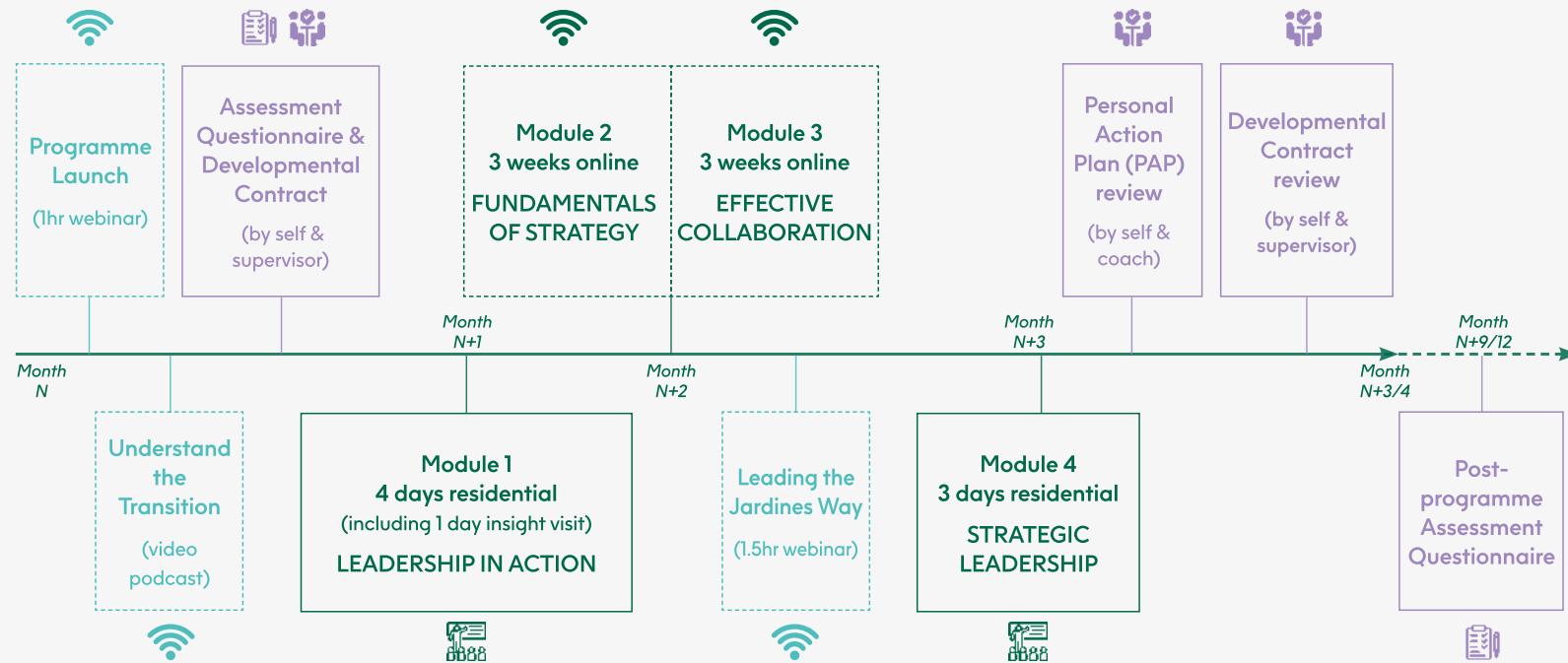
The process resulted in three programmes as follows.



# EMERGE:

February–November 2020

Strategic theme: **People and Planet**

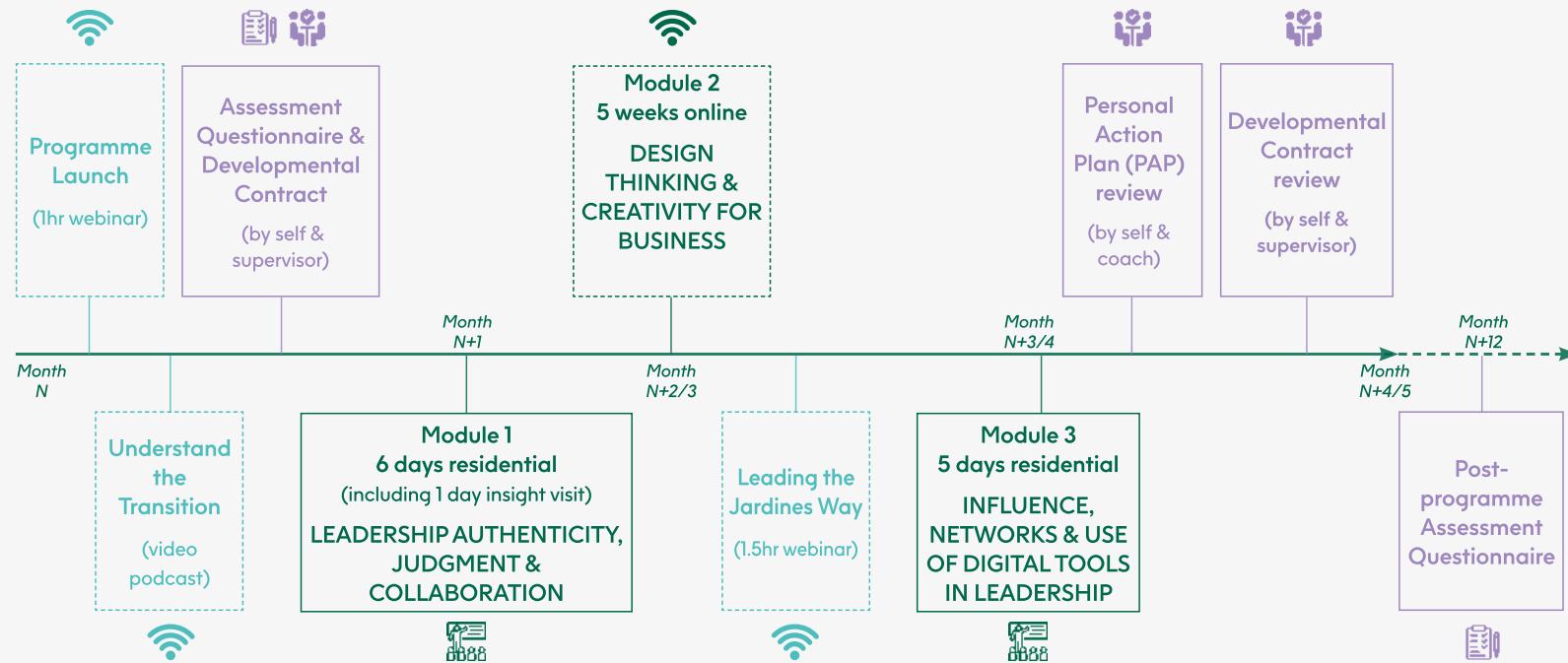




# GROW:

March–December 2020

Strategic theme: **Collaboration**

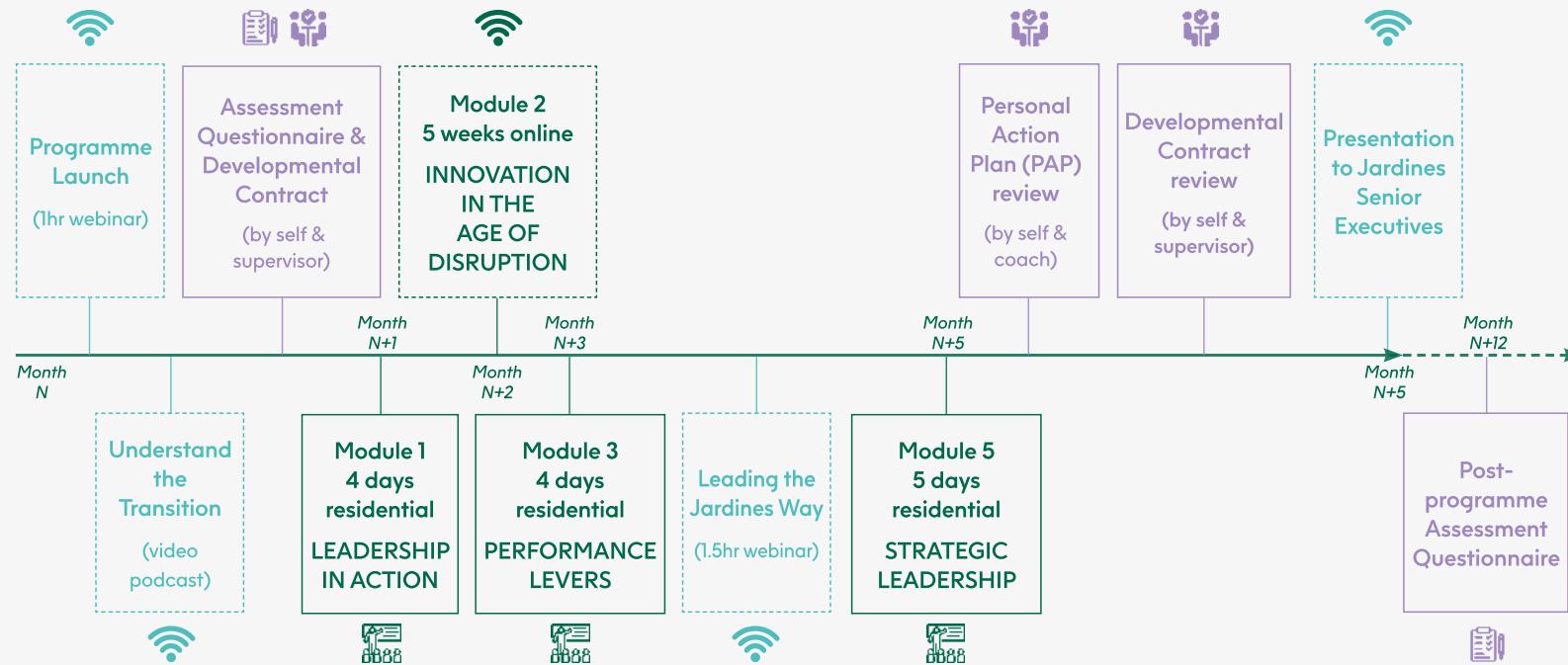


# INSPIRE:

October 2019–September 2020



Strategic theme: **Digital and Innovation**



### The Pandemic Strikes

In late 2019, with all details finalised, the Group HR department started promoting the flagship programmes throughout the company, and **Jardines'** business units started selecting their most talented high-potentials to attend.

As agreed, the bulk of the programme-development costs were covered by the Group budget. But to their great satisfaction, they found that the business units were enthusiastic about paying their allocated share of the delivery costs. This fact not only confirmed the need for the flagship programmes but also that the design met the requirements of the individual businesses.

Delivery began online and on schedule. Yet, no sooner had the first residential module taken place, late in 2019, than the pandemic struck. Hong Kong and Singapore were among the first countries to shut borders and impose lockdowns. This was a huge blow to an initiative that depended so greatly on a campus bonding experience.

With **Jardines'** geographical markets soon among the most tightly restricted in the world, it was tempting to postpone the rollout. However, for a programme partly focused on digital innovation, it also made perfect sense to pivot to virtual. **INSEAD** was particularly keen to practise what it preached and just happened to be pioneering some new technology of its own, called **GO-Live**.

### GO-Live to the Rescue

"GO-Live is a solution that comes about as close to a classroom as you're going to find," says Professor Anderson. This learner-centric technology combines the best of digital teaching tricks, such as polls and quizzes, with literally "face-to-face" delivery. The professor stands in front of a bank of screens, where participants' faces are arranged just as in a physical amphitheatre. Participants, on the other hand, have a greater range of options than in a classroom. They can opt to see the faces of their classmates, just the whiteboard, just the professor or a mixture.

**INSEAD** had already trialled the new technology and its newly adapted classrooms with selected degree students, but **Jardines** was one of the earliest corporate adopters. Jessica Ogilvie, Head of Group Internal Communications, describes the experience:

The shift to virtual was really positive. The platform gives you so much functionality around how you interact with the learning experience. INSPIRE class sessions were interspersed with offline and group learning, which helped us to get more out of our time.



# The Impact

# The Impact

John Nolan explains that, given the long-term investment of the Flagship Leadership Development Programmes, he does not yet expect huge returns.

Furthermore, he observes, some of the desired impacts are immeasurable: "We're the largest private-sector employer in several of the less-developed markets we operate in, so we need to set an example – providing learning is just the right thing to do." Nevertheless, **Jardines** is closely watching indicators of the programmes' success (or failure).

## Statistical measures

According to Peter Attfield, it is too early to analyse changes in retention rates or in the vital KPI of "bench strength" (number of potential internal candidates for each management post). Initial signs are good, but the pandemic has muddied the statistical waters, making comparisons between "before" and "after" the programmes problematic.

However, a recent survey – one year after the three programmes were completed – indicates that **32% of participants have already been promoted**.

In addition, the same survey suggests that **60% of Action Learning Projects have been implemented**. This surprisingly high figure embraces a wide range of possible business impacts. For example, one EMERGE project was about recycling more plastic and using more recycled packaging in **Jardines'** air-cargo operation. Another was about reducing waste in construction. Both have been implemented.

Project impacts have touched all functions within the company – from marketing to HR. One GROW project led to a collaboration in marketing BMW cars, while a second was a cross-**Jardines** evaluation of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Another completed project combined marketing and HR to improve **Jardines'** employer branding. One of this team's members explained that the impact on their own work was also considerable: "It enhanced my understanding of **Jardines'** positioning, and I gained lot of experience in teamwork, leadership, time management and presentation skills."



### One of the more senior participants from INSPIRE made a similar point:

I was on the Smart Cities project and I now lead our 'Yuu Rewards' [a Hong Kong loyalty programme connecting 10 brands and over 2,000 stores] team, which is very much about how we can improve the way our customers eat and live. So many of the initiatives we proposed during the ALP I am now actually working on in real life!

### Another INSPIRE student turned an ALP into a successful e-logistics pilot, with potentially far-reaching sustainability impact:

We started with two electric vans delivering parcels for IKEA. We also included marketing to increase awareness in the marketplace and among end consumers. We wanted the data from running this fleet, both for the use of electric vans and consumer receptiveness. So far, the project has run for 4–5 months and has received a very favourable response – with enquiries flowing in from various corporations.

The alignment of these projects with the original strategic themes is striking. However, perhaps the most impressive numerical indicator of impact with respect to the original goals is the strength of the cross-group "alumni network". An amazing **85% of participants say they are still in touch with classmates from other Jardines business units.**

### Anecdotal measures

The anecdotal evidence for this new "**Jardines glue**" is particularly convincing. Here are just a few comments from the recent survey:

- Getting to know other colleagues within the Group is GREAT! I can feel the togetherness and sense of belonging to **Jardines**.
- The diverse backgrounds of team-mates allowed me to gain different perspectives. After the course, if I need advice that they are experts in, I know who I can touch base with.
- Getting to know more people in other **Jardines** companies has enabled me to discuss and share knowledge across various industries and disciplines.
- As I was relatively new to **Jardines**, this was an amazing opportunity for me to meet others and understand the wider businesses, which has been hugely helpful, particularly now that I'm in a new role.

Other specific benefits mentioned by participants cover problem-solving, innovation, teamwork, negotiation, customer focus, self-awareness, leadership and even adapting to the "new normal".

Since the programme, I feel I have delivered more creative solutions to problems.

Creative thinking, in particular user-centred insights.

It made me think about the dynamics of the team, how to collaborate better and how to communicate better.

GROW has enabled me to be much sharper during negotiations with external stakeholders, while also inspiring me to shape my organisation using a more customer-led approach.

"Core values mapping" helped me to understand my motivations.

The biggest impact was navigating the 5, 50, 50,000 feet altitudes. This really stuck with me, and I try and take it to work every day!

Doing the course and the ALP entirely online helped me adapt to the new normal and made me ready to work with new contactors and colleagues in a short period of time.

From John Nolan's perspective the feedback from the business units is overwhelmingly positive: "Anecdotally, the CEOs have commented on the significant contributions now being made by their high-potentials who attended the programmes, and advocacy from participants themselves is also showing up in staff surveys."

Peter Attfield adds, "What we've proven multiple times over is the power of diversity in learning. Our leaders benefit by hearing perspectives from other business units, often in other industries or geographies."





# Conclusion

# Conclusions

**Professor Anderson** is modest but optimistic about the impact of EMERGE, GROW and INSPIRE: "We haven't changed the business yet, but we've started to change the mindset."



**Philip Anderson**  
Professor of Entrepreneurship  
at INSEAD  
The INSEAD Alumni Fund Chaired  
Professor of Entrepreneurship

**Nolan** is more bullish: "There is universal acceptance that the **INSEAD** programmes are driving transformation and connectedness in the company. Also, the perception of **Jardines** in the market – as an employer that invests in talent – has already changed."



**John Nolan**  
Group HR Director  
Jardines

**Attfield** is similarly positive: "What I feel good about, is that we've built a foundation – a curriculum and a learning infrastructure – for what leadership at a modern, international, 40-billion-dollar company should look like. It's a springboard for even greater heights."



**Peter Attfield**  
Chief Talent & Learning Officer  
Jardines

As the world began to emerge from the pandemic, early in 2022, that springboard was being fine-tuned. With a curriculum tweaked to a new corporate strategy and a commitment to come together on campus, come what may, three new classes of Jardine high-potentials will soon be primed for a momentum shift.

**Jardine Matheson Ltd**

48th Floor, Jardine House  
G.P.O. Box 70  
Hong Kong

**INSEAD Europe Campus**

Boulevard de Constance  
77305 Fontainebleau Cedex, France  
Tel: +33 1 60 72 42 90  
Email: [INFO-CSP.fb@insead.edu](mailto:INFO-CSP.fb@insead.edu)

**INSEAD Asia Campus**

1 Ayer Rajah Avenue  
Singapore 138676  
Tel: +65 6799 5288  
Email: [execed.asia@insead.edu](mailto:execed.asia@insead.edu)

**INSEAD Middle East Campus**

Al Khatem Tower, ADGM Square, Al Maryah Island  
P.O. Box 48049, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
Tel: +971 2 651 52 00  
Email: [execed.mena@insead.edu](mailto:execed.mena@insead.edu)

**INSEAD San Francisco Hub for Business Innovation**

224 Townsend St., San Francisco,  
CA, 94107 United States of America  
Email: [execed.usa@insead.edu](mailto:execed.usa@insead.edu)

[www.insead.edu/executive-education](http://www.insead.edu/executive-education)

