

Financial Times Learning Solutions

- **The challenge.** Business acumen is increasingly seen as a critical factor in helping organisations adapt to a rapidly changing environment. Formal learning courses and curricula are struggling to keep pace
- **The solution.** A Financial Times licence offers a convenient digital learning resource for new hires, client facing teams and senior leaders to understand critical changes in finance, markets and business strategy
- **The benefits.** The FT helps people at all levels of an organisation develop their business acumen for more effective decision-making, improved communication across silos and better client service

A missing link

Employers around the globe regularly highlight a lack of available skilled talent as a drag on business performance. The pressing skills shortage is exacerbated by an ever more complex and changing business environment, which leaves formal learning courses and curricula struggling to keep up.

In an effort to determine how organisations might tackle the skills gap, a survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit¹ of 300 senior business leaders identifies a lack of business acumen as a key limitation when executing organisation strategy.

Business acumen or commercial awareness has become a critical factor in the success of individuals and organisations, but it's often a capability most in need of development.

Developing business acumen

Business acumen provides a foundation to individual development across all levels of an organisation. Defined by the FT Lexicon² as a “keenness and speed in understanding and deciding on a business situation”, business acumen can be further broken down into the following components:

- **Market awareness:** an in-depth knowledge of the industry and markets in which the business or client's business operates.
- **Strategic perspective:** the ability to take a 'big picture' view of the business, its strategic objectives and the connections between customers, suppliers and competitors.
- **Financial understanding:** an understanding of the financial flow of the business, performance metrics and the commercial pressures facing a business or industry.

Building the required competencies in this area has implications for how organisations hire, train, advance and incentivise employees.

“A crucial problem was that financial groups were so fragmented that it was almost impossible for managers, regulators and employees to connect the dots – and see risks.”

Gillian Tett, FT markets and finance commentator

How the FT can help

As part of Pearson, the world's largest education provider, the Financial Times is used by organisations to address gaps in these areas. It is a proven learning resource within graduate or induction programmes, fast track schemes for high potential employees and senior leadership courses.

By reading the FT, individuals develop a comprehensive understanding of their markets



and industries, learn about the world of finance and help 'join the dots' across multiple disciplines and jurisdictions to put together the big picture.

And, as learning has become more informal and digital in nature, the FT has introduced new digital platforms and tools to help employees gain the know-how they need from the convenience of their own office or on the move.

Irrespective of the way people learn, they can rely on the FT as a source of accurate, well researched information for understanding pertinent business topics and forming opinions.

FT Learning solution

The foundation of our learning solution is the FT's award-winning journalism. Our ongoing dialogue with top business leaders and policy-makers puts the FT at a distinct advantage when it comes to understanding the key issues that businesses face. And in today's connected economy, the FT's wide reach helps readers learn about international as well as domestic markets.

FT news is complemented by comments and article annotations by professors and faculty from leading business schools around the world. These notes help explain current events and bring the FT into a learning context.

Our flexible licensing model means FT material can be integrated into learning management systems and organisations can tailor access according to the timing and numbers of each programme. Importantly, customers pay once for the rights to access FT information and they can then access it across multiple platforms.

Finally, as part of our learning service, we offer training and bespoke materials to help individuals make full use the FT to meet their learning objectives. HR and L&D professionals receive reports at regular intervals to monitor whether the resource is being fully utilised.

How customers are using FT Learning

Organisations around the world are using the FT to address learning goals around business acumen. For advisory firms, such as lawyers and accountants,

"When I talk to law students they inevitably ask me, 'What do I need to do to get hired?' I often tell them to read the FT."

John Tucker, partner, banking practice, Linklaters

the FT is providing a practical step to help their fee earners develop a more commercial skill set in addition to technical competencies.

The FT is working with banking clients to integrate our content into their graduate induction programmes, thereby helping associates to better understand the global financial markets and client businesses. The FT is also playing a wider role in changing behaviours and mindset by providing

teams with a more holistic view of the risks and opportunities that might lie outside their immediate responsibilities or silo.

Since business acumen is seen as a critical competency for managers and leaders, many corporate enterprises are using the FT within their leadership programmes, as well as integrating the FT within learning systems and portals.

FT.com learning solutions

Topics: Filtered information on the most important issues impacting businesses around the world.

Unbiased: an independent and neutral perspective to inform decision-making.

Coverage: daily business briefing to help 'join the dots' and develop a strategic perspective.

Case studies: extensive archive of material to build case studies and understand trends.

Newsletters: notes and comments from leading business school faculty from around the world.

FT Mobile: access to FT journalism on the move and for learning outside of office hours.

Explainers: custom starter guides for key topics/site sections based on your requirements.

Implementation: demos and training sessions to help your team to support the service roll out.

Tracking progress: regular reporting so you can understand how much users are engaging with the material.

For early/mid career: use induction and training programmes to help new hires understand the business across multiple disciplines and regions.

For client facing teams: take advantage of user workflows and systems to create on the job learning materials that build the confidence and credibility of sales executives.

For technical specialists: complement technical expertise with a broader commercial skillset to make a bigger impact on your or your client's business.

For leadership: ensure your senior managers and rising stars have the business savvy skills to take your organisation forward and lead effectively.

¹ 65% of surveyed leaders agreed that insufficient business acumen limits their organization's ability to realize strategic goals to a strong extent. EIU report, 2013 ² FT Lexicon is the FT's online glossary of economic, financial and business terms

Find out more

To find out more please contact one of our product specialists on licensing@ft.com or +44 (0)207 873 4001 or +1 877 843 3399 (US toll free).