

Holcim Advanced Leaders Program

Driving Green Growth, Engagement, and Connection.

COLLABORATION PROGRAM



1. Context: A History of Partnership and Evolution

Holcim, formerly LafargeHolcim, has a longstanding relationship with the Ivey Business School's Executive Education team stretching back to the company's post-merger days. Around 2018, in the wake of the Lafarge–Holcim merger, Holcim's global leadership recognized the need to unify two corporate cultures and accelerate performance. This initial effort led to a series of executive education programs at Ivey, starting with a Senior Leaders Program, subsequently followed by an Early Career Leaders Program and an Emerging Leaders Program.

Over time, the partnership deepened. Ivey's faculty developed customized materials, designed immersive case studies, and collaborated closely with Holcim leaders and HR teams. As Holcim continued to expand, so did the range of programs. Eventually, it became clear that a critical leadership group in the middle—those between “Emerging” and “Senior” roles—needed specialized development. In 2023, Holcim and Ivey launched the [Advanced Leaders Program](#) to fill this gap and further catalyze Holcim's broader strategic objectives.



“We always believed in the power of learning to transform and to drive strategy. Our collaboration with Ivey started at the very top, and from there, we cascaded leadership development programs to multiple layers in the organization.”

URSULA STOCKER
Holcim Global L&D Partner

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2. The Challenge: Advancing Green Growth, Engagement, and Connection

From the start, Holcim identified three fundamental leadership challenges:

1. Advancing Green Growth

Holcim has pivoted from its traditional role as a cement producer to becoming a global solutions provider, developing sustainable building materials and expanding into new areas like recycling. Leaders needed to champion environmental innovation, guide operational changes for greener solutions, and bring teams along this sustainability journey.

*"We're **not just about cement anymore**. We want to drive green growth—reducing CO₂ emissions, providing greener solutions, and shaping the future of construction."*

URSULA STOCKER
Holcim Global L&D Partner

2. Fostering High Engagement

In the years following the Lafarge–Holcim merger, the organization saw restructuring, new strategic priorities, and cultural shifts. Engagement had slipped, and the company launched a large-scale engagement survey for the first time. The Advanced Leaders Program thus focused on equipping mid-to-senior managers with the leadership skills to develop, motivate, and inspire teams—and ultimately improve engagement.

"After the merger, many people were disoriented. We needed to re-energize everyone and show them that Holcim is going places. We see engagement as a key lever to attract and retain top talent."


URSULA STOCKER
Holcim Global L&D Partner

3. Facilitating Networking and Connection

With over 70 countries in its global footprint, Holcim's leaders were dispersed geographically and often specialized in local operations. The company needed them to learn from one another, share best practices, and break down silos. This cross-functional, cross-border collaboration is vital for Holcim's dynamic strategy.

"A particularly valuable aspect was the chance to strengthen my network and collaborate with colleagues on addressing various organizational challenges. This type of cross-functional collaboration is often difficult to achieve, and the program provided a structured environment to foster it."

HOLCIM ADVANCED LEADERS PARTICIPANT



"We take a 'deep dive custom' approach. Because of our seven-plus-year relationship with Holcim, we understand their industry, strategy, and culture at a granular level. We interviewed country CEOs, tapped into engagement survey data, and built real-time modules on green strategy, engagement, and diversity."

PROF. TONY FROST
Ivey Business School

3. The L&D Initiative: Designing the Advanced Leaders Program

Building on years of collaboration, Ivey faculty members **Prof. Tony Frost** and **Prof. Martha Maznevski** led the design of Holcim's Advanced Leaders Program. While referencing earlier programs' successes, they tailored this specific initiative to the reality of mid-to-senior leaders who:

- Often have profit-and-loss accountability or oversee functional areas critical to sustainability goals.
- Need to move from an operations-focused mindset to a more strategic view, balancing green growth initiatives, talent engagement, and global collaboration.

Key facets of the Advanced Leaders curriculum included:

- **Case Studies and Simulations:** Drawing from Holcim's actual challenges. The "Greenerland" custom case, for instance, combined data from multiple regions to illustrate how leaders can drive green growth in local markets while balancing cost structures and stakeholder expectations.
- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Module:** This session helped leaders explore identity, unconscious bias, and global perspectives on diversity.
- **Engagement and Change Frameworks:** Using Holcim's own employee survey data, leaders analyzed gaps in their engagement practices and discussed "Buddha vs. Hercules" leadership archetypes to become more balanced, empowering managers.
- **Practical Workshops with Dramatic Resources:** Participants practiced real-world scenarios—such as having difficult performance conversations or championing new sustainability initiatives—in small-group role plays with professional actors, in partnership with Dramatic Resources (<https://www.dramaticresources.co.uk/>).

This blended approach also preserved variety in delivery—cases, simulations, group discussions, reflection exercises—all in a virtual-friendly format to accommodate Holcim's dispersed cohort.



"We adapt the DEI session so it truly resonates with Holcim's male-dominated industry and the variety of cultural contexts—from Colombia to Canada to Germany."

**PROF. MARTHA
MAZNEVSKI**

Ivey Business School

4. Impact and Results

From February through March 2025, Holcim administered an **impact evaluation survey** to participants of the Advanced Leaders Program. Fifty-five participants responded, providing quantitative insights and rich commentary



APPLYING NEW SKILLS

- **92.7%** of respondents indicated they were already applying what they learned.
- **Average rating of 5.9/7** for “I am successfully applying what I learned in the program.”

Many pointed to “leading change” and “team engagement” frameworks as immediately useful for day-to-day leadership.

ADVANCING GREEN GROWTH

- 64.1% agreed they have begun to see positive results toward green growth due to the program.

"We grew our ECOPact concrete sales; it was important to understand emotional intelligence and strategy to bring the team along,"

HOLCIM ADVANCED LEADERS PARTICIPANT

FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT

- **88.5%** said they have already improved engagement within their teams thanks to techniques and mindsets learned.
- “Confidence in leadership role” reached an **average rating of 5.6/7**.
- A **strong 94.3%** rated the program a “worthwhile use of my time.”

“The big difference is that people come out of the program more able to motivate teams, set goals, and drive results. Our engagement metrics show improvement, and the Advanced Leaders Program definitely plays a role.”

URSULA STOCKER, HOLCIM GLOBAL L&D PARTNER

EXPANDING NETWORKS

- **78.9%** reported they have “expanded their interpersonal network,” supporting cross-regional connections.

“For the first time, I have direct connections in North America and Latin America. We launched new initiatives together, and it’s creating better engagement and improved results.”

HOLCIM ADVANCED LEADERS PARTICIPANT




PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE:

A CEO's View



Leaders like **Lena Belsi**, CEO of a Holcim entity (Geocycle Greece) with over 200 employees and contractors, described how the program helped shift from top-down task management to empowering her teams:

"I used to focus on solving problems for everyone, but now I realize I need them to own the tasks. People feel more motivated and engaged knowing they're part of something bigger—like our recycling expansions."

LENA BELSI

CEO of Geocycle Greece (Holcim entity),
and Holcim Advanced Leaders Participant

5. Conclusion

From Early Career to Advanced Leaders, Holcim's leadership development story is one of continuous evolution, guided by a longstanding partnership with Ivey Executive Education. The **Advanced Leaders Program** represents the latest milestone—filling a crucial gap in the organization's leadership pipeline and delivering directly on Holcim's strategic imperatives.

By focusing on **green growth, employee engagement, and networking**, the Advanced Leaders Program has already produced tangible impact. Surveys show significant boosts in leadership confidence, application of new skills, and team engagement—all while expanding participants' global networks. Participants perspectives underscore the real-world value: bridging sustainability ambitions, unifying teams, and sharing best practices across far-flung markets.

Ultimately, the partnership between Holcim and Ivey exemplifies how a deeply customized, co-created learning journey can transform leadership capacity. It aligns leaders with strategic priorities—be they sustainability targets or cultural integration—and equips them with the mindset and relationships to navigate ongoing change. As Holcim continues to expand its footprint and advance green solutions, the Advanced Leaders Program remains central to shaping the next generation of impactful, globally connected leaders.

