Overview

**Sharpening Your Business Acumen**

The Café is a short blended learning experience oriented around the concepts and skills found in the Harvard ManageMentor Sharpening Your Business Acumen online course. The course will help learners:

* *Define business acumen and understand how it benefits them at work.*
* *Describe and discuss the basic building blocks of business success.*
* *Read key financial statements and gain insight into their organization’s financial health.*
* *Understand business models and how their organization creates, captures, and delivers value.*
* *Learn about business strategy and how organizations gain competitve edge.*

The learning experience has three components:

*60 to 90 minutes 60 minutes Ongoing*

Part 1: Pre-work (self-paced, individual)

Before the live Café session, participants are expected to:

* Review all lessons in the Harvard ManageMentor Sharpening Your Business Acumen course.
  + Why You Need Business Acumen
  + Learn What Makes Organizations Thrive
  + Build Your Financial Skills
  + Business Model Basics
  + Know Your Organization’s Strategy
* Complete the online assessment for the Harvard ManageMentor Sharpening Your Business Acumen course.
* Identify what their organization’s customers, employees, and suppliers need or value, and how this shapes the work the organization does.

Part 2: Café session (live, group)

The Café session represents the core element of the learning experience. The session provides an opportunity for learners to:

* Exchange ideas and questions with others.
* Discuss the context of how concepts and skills apply in the workplace.
* Practice and begin application of those concepts and skills.
* Build momentum and support for applying the concepts and skills in the workplace.

The Café session focuses specifically on the following concepts and tasks from the Sharpening Your Business Acumen topic:

* Explore the benefits of business acumen
* Understand the building blocks of business success
* Analyze your organization’s business strategy

Facilitating the Café session as outlined should take approximately 60 minutes. If the facilitator prefers a shorter session or wishes to spend more time on a specific concept or activity, they may want to cover only those concepts and activities that are most relevant to the group.

| SECTION | ACTIVITY | TIME |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction** | * Show icebreaker question while participants are arriving to the session: What is business acumen and why is it important? * Introduce facilitators. * Review tips for using technology during the session. * Debrief icebreaker question. * Review session objectives. | 8 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Explore the benefits of business acumen** | * Define business acumen. * Reflection activity: Learners identify areas of the organization they are most knowledgeable about. * Introduce three benefits of business acumen. * Facilitate practice activity: Asking valuable questions. Participants:   + Consider a scenario and questions that can help align work to company goals.   + Generate additional questions that reflect cross-functional thinking. | 12 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Understand the building blocks of business success** | * Review the four building blocks of business success. * Discussion: Learners describe the organization’s customers and the customer needs the organization responds to. * Discussion: Learners discuss why cash flow is important and actions that help manage cash flow. * Reflection activity: Learners consider ROIC and what types of spending might have a high ROIC. * Discussion: Learners discuss what profitable growth looks like and what happens when an organization is growing profitably. | 18 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Analyze your organization’s business strategy** | * Define business strategy. * Facilitate practice activity: Creating value. Participants:   + Identify what could impact customers’ willingness to pay and how much they are willing to pay.   + Identify what impacts employees’ and suppliers’ willingness to sell, and the price at which they will sell. * Reflection activity: Learners identify which of the three groups (customers, employees, suppliers) may have the most opportunity to create value. | 18 minutes |
| **Apply what you’ve learned** | * Review session objectives and skill areas discussed. * Review directions for completing the On-the-Job section of the online Harvard ManageMentor topic, including the action plan. * Close the session. | 4 minutes |

Part 3: Application (self-paced, individual)

After the live Café session, participants are expected to complete the following assignments:

* Complete the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Sharpening Your Business Acumen course. The section provides learners with an opportunity to choose a skill to focus on and create an action plan for applying and developing the skill. *Note:* If your organization does not include the On-the-Job section in your configuration of Harvard ManageMentor, ask participants to think of two things they can do over the next 90 days to further apply and develop their skills in this area.
* Execute their action plan over a specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days).
* After the specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days), access the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Sharpening Your Business Acumen course to update the action plan and reflect on the experience.