

The DELIVER programme

Robert Dann asks Sue Scholes about the IR Society's leadership development programme, currently running in partnership with HSBC.

In terms of the structure, how does the DELIVER programme differ from a training course?

The word programme is extremely important here. DELIVER is a programme of different activities, which requires the participants to engage with the content in very different ways.

There are the three formal, classroom-based days, where we first of all look at capital markets, then IR skills and then leadership. These sessions help participants to build their own skill base and then think about leadership, because the people coming onto this programme are thinking about their future careers – identifying where it is they're trying to get to and how they develop all those skills and experience that they need to demonstrate to get there?

In addition to the three formal days in the programme, the informal ad hoc events in between the formal sessions add a huge amount of value – for example, an earlier programme I arranged for our chair to come along and chat casually for an hour about his role. This kind of relaxed interaction is really special.

“Our first DELIVER session was wide-ranging and informative, while our cohort of IROs was a great mix of personalities and backgrounds. I'm looking forward to learning more from my peers across the rest of the programme and seeing what the IR Society team and HSBC have in store for us”

Jim Ryan, head of investor relations, Balfour Beatty



Sue Scholes is an honorary fellow and former chair of the IR Society.

What challenges did you face in terms of moderating day one of the programme?

The role of a moderator is to keep everything running smoothly and to facilitate the interactions between the participants and the guest speakers. At the very least you need to make sure that sessions run on time that you start when you're supposed to and you finish when you're supposed to!

It's also about making sure that everybody in the group is contributing and no one person is dominating, as this really helps to get the most value out of the speakers that we have. As the moderator, I was delighted to be involved in the early discussions about the programme, and help ensure that we built in plenty of space for discussions between the participants – right at the start and at various stages afterwards.

For there to be no speakers very early on day one, to allow the group to start interacting and building trust with each other, was particularly important. Ideally, you're going to be sharing things that you find really challenging and really difficult and you can't do that if you've got your game face on and you're not showing your vulnerabilities to others.

... and in terms of key topics or takeaways from the sessions so far?

The speakers that we had on day one were looking at what the capital markets had been doing over the last two-to-five years because there have been so many

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Simon Alexander, head of corporate broking at HSBC, commented:

“We are very pleased to be partnering with the IR Society on the DELIVER programme and look forward to working with the talented investor relations officers who have been selected to participate.”

changes. They then considered what they might be doing in the next couple of years, so setting up the conversation nicely to think about what these changes might mean for investor relations in two years, five years, etc.

We know that the role of the equity analyst has been changing and will continue to change. We know that fund managers are operating in different ways.

And we know that the role of AI is going to have an enormous impact on how the IR role is performed. But we didn't just focus on the day-to-day IR role, we also learnt about changes in where and how shares are traded and the potential impact of quantum computing. And we started a discussion about how IR roles are changing as a result of the evolution of the equity markets, discovering some interesting examples from amongst the participants.

How would you summarise the DELIVER programme?

The main thing with a programme like this is that you will get out of it what you put into it. If you just turn up and listen, you're not going to get enough out of it, but if you turn up and engage, then it will be invaluable. It's such a great opportunity to share with, and learn from, your peers and others in the industry. ■