

# Cambridge Leadership in Transition Programme

Advocating for brave, innovative  
and system-focused leadership

25th - 27th September 2026



# Cambridge Leadership in Transition Programme



The Cambridge Leadership in Transition Programme (CLTP) is designed for leaders who sense the world requires a new leadership cadre to emerge.

Have you noticed that traditional leadership techniques are increasingly failing to deliver organisational success, engaged colleagues or loyal external stakeholders? Then perhaps you are sensing the zeitgeist that we are...

## Vision

In today's world, big forces of social media, politics and economics can encourage an insular approach by individual stakeholders. As leaders we need to keep a complex system of stakeholders (employees, partners, customers/citizens) aligned behind a compelling vision.

## Momentum

Humans resist change. It is all too easy to keep repeating the old approaches to leadership, as the momentum of received wisdom is a significant force to challenge. History tells us that significant change is created through a movement of committed people. It just takes a few to start the process.

## Discussion

Life is busy as a senior leader or as an entrepreneur creating a new organisation. We all sense we need a different way for leaders to lead. But how often do we take quality time to discuss what this really means, with like-minded people who are open to new ideas and to putting themselves in the vanguard?

## Trust

This CLTP will facilitate discussion between a small number of committed leaders who select to participate in the programme. Chatham House rules will apply. Excellent facilitators and exceptional subject matter experts will ensure the discussions are vibrant, focused and inclusive.

# Combining the art of innovation and science of leadership

The CLTP is delivered by organisations committed to world-class innovation, world-changing leadership and world-leading brain science:

- **St John's Innovation Centre:** Europe's first and highly successful innovation incubator that supports ambitious entrepreneurs and leaders on a mission to change the world.
- **St John's College, Cambridge University:** An historic, inspiring institution, committed to supporting future leaders to leave a positive legacy in the world.
- **First Ascent Group:** A world-class leadership development specialist that supports behaviour change in leaders who are ambitious to have greater impact.
- **Emergenetics:** A global brain-science based company focused on helping people collaborate more effectively in the workplace through utilising cognitive diversity.

The programme will unlock your creative imagination (art) to visualise a better world of work. It will build on knowledge from relevant research (science), that you can apply to innovate your leadership approach.

Art and science combined, in pursuit of a new leadership approach.

# Programme structure

The programme structure is designed to encourage a focus on the leadership opportunities ahead of us.

1

## Pre-Programme Reflection

Once your place on the programme is confirmed, our Programme Leader will meet with you to discuss your current reflections on leadership and your hopes for the programme.

2

## Residential Experience

The programme is residential in Cambridge, from 13.00 on Friday to 13.00 on Sunday. Based at St John's College at the heart of the University of Cambridge, there will be four core discussion sessions, each led by an expert speaker and our programme facilitators.

All accommodation and meals are included.

3

## Post-Programme Collection

Our 2026 cohort will be founding members of the programme alumni group that will grow over time. We will invite alumni together annually to discuss and connect over the leadership issues of the moment. You will also have lifetime membership to our Leadership Foundation and our Women4Technology network (all genders welcome!).

# Welcome

For centuries, Cambridge has inspired and educated great leaders of technology, art, sport and society. This programme seeks to provide such inspiration to today's ambitious leaders and entrepreneurs.

The move to transition leadership requires us to go beyond short-termism, by cultivating empathy, authenticity, and a commitment to societal well-being.

At St John's Innovation Centre, we know that technology will be our partner on the journey, assisting with operational tasks and freeing human leaders to focus on strategy, creativity, and perhaps most importantly, judgment.

We truly believe the future of leadership is about fostering a sustainable, human-centric approach.



Barnaby Perks

CEO, St John's Innovation Centre



David Sales

CLTP Programme Leader

The future belongs to leaders who connect their work to a larger purpose, creating inclusive environments where teams, organisations and systems are supported to succeed.

Structured discussion and reflection is essential for navigating complexity and building resilience in the high-stakes environments that we operate within.

The ability and confidence to innovate through ambiguity is rare and valuable. It helps greatly, if leaders can be part of a collective endeavour, acting as "stewards" for their people.

Purposeful leadership involves profound self-awareness and aligning personal values with action. If our vision is exciting to you, we'd love you to join us on the programme.

# Become part of a movement



Becoming part of a movement involves going beyond intellectual support to active engagement in a shared cause. This programme offers the opportunity to play your part in providing more purposeful leadership to your team, organisation or system.

You will gain courage and understanding from the programme. You will build new relationships that make you feel part of something larger than yourself. We will share ideas and best practices to apply in your own workplace.

## Who should attend?

If you truly believe there is a role for leaders to improve the world, then this programme is for you.

You also have to be willing to be an active purposeful leader, not someone who waits for others to step forward.

You will be seeing the need to transition or even disrupt your organisation, sector, or system, to enable it to be future ready.

Curious? Motivated? Energised? Then please apply for a place on the programme.

## Residential methodology

During the residential element of the programme, spanning 3 days, the following components will be integrated to create a fully immersive experience:

### Seminar workshops

We will cover four key topics, including expert input and facilitation for each. Seminars will include input on research and best practice, combined with engaging discussions based on your own experiences and ideas for leadership. These will each last 3 hours and take part in the impressive Lightfoot Room at St John's College.

### Cambridge vibe experiences

You will have an optional guided punt experience on the River Cam and a guided walking tour of historic (and rather controversial) Cambridge. We may also include other experiences to free your brain and have some fun!

### Emergenetics leadership profile

You will be provided with a personal Emergenetics Profile as part of the pre-programme orientation, to help you frame your personal perspective on the various topics covered in the residential.

### Cohort dinners

Evening dinners will include further conversations on the topics covered during the programme and interaction with inspiring practitioners of purposeful leadership. One dinner will be a traditional college dinner in the historic Wordsworth Room of St John's College, the other in one of Cambridge's lovely restaurants.

### Reflection lunches

These will be provided each day, allowing a choice of peer-group networking or quiet personal reflection.

# Your learning experience

This year's programme will focus on four key seminar topics that are central to effective, sustainable leadership, interspersed with other activities to stimulate your leadership brain:

## Seminar summary

Seminar 1  
The changing nature of work and the new leadership frontier

Led by  
Dr Leanne Case

Seminar 2  
Social-neuroscience informed leadership techniques for influence and impact

Led by  
Marie Unger

Seminar 3  
Creating a sustainable innovation-capable organisational culture

Led by  
Dr Steven Roberts

Seminar 4  
Resilience and mindset to thrive amidst guaranteed global turmoil

Led by  
Dr Shai Vyakarnam

### Seminar 1 - Friday pm

#### The changing nature of work and the new leadership frontier

In recent years the relationship between work and personal life has shifted, and the expectations of leaders has equally evolved. A new approach to leadership is needed – a “new frontier” in which collective intelligence is the power that leaders need to nurture in organisations.

##### At the end of this seminar you will:

- Have reflected on your own personal relationship with work
- Have gained insights into how your organisation and system stakeholders perceive work
- Compiled your personal reflections and key learnings from the seminar

- Cambridge vibe experience: Guided punt trip on River Cam
- Fireside chat with a forward-thinking experienced leader
- Cohort dinner in the Wordsworth Room, St John's College

### Seminar 2 - Saturday am

#### Social-neuroscience informed leadership techniques for influence and impact

Today, we benefit from some exceptional science that helps leaders understand how to better motivate, engage and align people behind a purpose. Practical techniques are emerging.

##### At the end of this seminar you will:

- Have an understanding of the science behind people's workplace interactions
- Have appreciated different approaches to use for change-focussed system leadership
- Compiled your personal reflections and key learnings from the seminar

- Reflection lunch in St John's College

### Seminar 3 - Saturday pm

#### Creating a sustainable innovation-capable organisational culture

Innovation is often left to an imaginative few, unintentionally conspiring to make the majority of an organisation feel like change resisters. We'll discuss how to make innovation core to an organisation's culture.

##### At the end of this seminar you will:

- Have reflected on the innovation-readiness of your own organisation
- Have discussed options for increasing cultural innovation appetite in organisations
- Compiled your personal reflections and key learnings from the seminar

- Cambridge vibe experience: guided walking tour around central Cambridge
- Fireside chat with a forward-thinking experienced leader
- Cohort dinner in a central Cambridge restaurant

### Seminar 4 - Sunday am

#### Resilience and mindset to thrive amidst guaranteed global turmoil

No-one denies the unprecedented turmoil that is being injected into the world, from social, environmental, political and technology perspectives. We will consider how to maintain resilience, hope and positivity in ourselves as leaders and our teams.

##### At the end of this seminar you will:

- Have discussed how the media, politicians and technology companies stoke turmoil
- Considered personal and organisational tactics to build resilience and optimism
- Compiled your personal reflections and key learnings from the seminar

- Reflection lunch in St John's College

# Staying connected



Our 2026 cohort will be founding members of the programme alumni group that will grow over time. We will form a private LinkedIn group for ongoing connection between cohort members.

We will invite programme alumni together annually to discuss and connect over the leadership issues of the moment. This will be on the Thursday evening before each year's new cohort commences their programme.

Alumni will have lifetime membership to our Leadership Foundation (several online events per year) and our Women4Technology network (all genders welcome).

Alumni will be able to access preferential rates for any future programmes in leadership, innovation or related topics, that they may require inside their own organisations.



"We have been consistently impressed with the quality of facilitators and their willingness to adapt. They are fondly discussed by our leaders who have experienced their memorable learning environments. We are getting everything we could ask for."

Talent Manager, SIKA

"The programme was the best learning experience that I have had. It aligned well with the challenges that we were facing and I have changed in my entrepreneurial approach. It has been a journey of self discovery. The knowledge, the insights and the people I have met have been so important."

Scale-Up Entrepreneur,  
Royal Academy of Engineering,  
LIF Advance

"The most flexible, responsive, creative and open-minded partner that we have worked with. Their positive, expert, can-do approach is a demonstration of true partnership."

Head of Learning Strategy  
and Development, Santander



# Speakers and facilitators



**David Sales**

*BA, MA, MBA, CDir*  
**Programme Leader  
and Facilitator**

David is an experienced programme leader in executive development, following an initial career in global technology. He works with executives and boards across the world, to evolve their approach to leading their organisations for success. He is a Chartered Director, an Emergenetics Master Practitioner and an Associate of the Cambridge University Institute of Sustainability Leadership. He is a director of First Ascent Group and Head of Training at St John's Innovation Centre, working with a range of leadership and entrepreneur development partners globally.



**Vanessa McNiven**

*MSC, PGCert, CEng*  
**Programme Facilitator**

Vanessa is a Chartered Engineer and Fellow of the Higher Education Academy with a career in global manufacturing, and entrepreneurship. She is Course Director for ISMM engineering master's programme at the University of Cambridge Institute for Manufacturing. She creates evidence-based learning experiences in executive education, focusing on emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, resilience, and high-performance teamwork. She supports and facilitates leaders to think differently, lead better and perform at their best.



**Dr Leanne Case**

*BA, MSc*  
**University College London**

Known as the “Architect of Possibilities”, Leanne has held a number of Board/NED roles. She has worked in the UK, Brussels, Baghdad and Dubai. She has led transformational change and growth strategies in challenging markets. Leanne has navigated international expansion and investment in politically and culturally sensitive contexts. She has advanced sustainability and long-term value by aligning risk management with reputation and impact. Leanne provides intelligent challenge, so leaders can make informed, accountable choices and has a track record of turning “this is just how it is” into “here’s what we do next”. She mentors and supports senior teams in large organisations, as well as ambitious start-up entrepreneurs.



**Marie Unger**

*BA, MA*  
**Colorado and Phoenix**

As CEO of Emergenetics International, based in Denver USA, Marie works with organisations and partners globally, to support improved leadership and collaboration within the private and public sector. Her early career experience was in education as a teacher, principal, human resource director and director of education. Her degree in Speech Communication from Northern Colorado University, previewed a career where the value of human communications is the foundation for innovation, social benefit and organisational effectiveness. Marie is an inspiring and thought-provoking contributor to a range of leadership forums, including Forbes.



**Dr Steven Roberts**

*BA, MA, PhD*  
**Cambridge**

After his degree and PhD in Geophysics, Steve had a successful career at Barclays, rising to COO of the UK Bank and its Vice-Chair. His other roles included Head of Culture and Transformation and Strategic Change Director. He led Barclay's digital transformation in the mobile-first era. This led to his creation of Digital Eagles and Eagle Labs, to support UK startup ecosystems. Steven holds a number of NED roles and co-founded ConceptionX. He serves as Visiting Professor of Technology, Behaviours and Information Strategy at Huddersfield University and is an Institution of Engineering and Technology Fellow. He founded SR&F, to provide free support to start-ups with potential for world-changing innovation.



**Dr Shai Vyakarnam**

*PhD*  
**Cranfield**

Shai is an educator, mentor, investor and company founder. Or, as he says, a “pracademic”! He has taught at Cambridge, Reading, Cranfield and Nottingham universities. He was founding director of the Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning at the Judge Business School, Cambridge. He was Director of the Bettany Centre for Entrepreneurship at Cranfield. Shai is the Co-Founder and CEO of TerraWaste. He has provided advice to policy makers, institutions and advisory agencies. He is a Trustee of The Gen-Initiative which supports income generation and bottom-up community development in India.

# Why come to Cambridge?

## Cambridge leadership credentials are world renowned.

The university itself is over 800 years old and boasts 126 Nobel Prize winners. Many influential Prime Ministers, literary greats and cultural leaders formed their world views here.

Its mission is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

St John's College fosters academic excellence within a tolerant, inclusive community, promoting intellectual curiosity, research, and sustainability.

Global organisations such as ARM, Microsoft and Wellcome Sanger Institute (genetic research) have their global or European HQs in Cambridge.

Cambridge is home to one of the world's leading innovation ecosystems, with a continuous stream of visiting government representatives seeking to understand the Cambridge formula.

And of course, whilst we might be biased, it is the most beautiful and vibrant historic city in England!



## Contact

### If you would like to apply for a place on the programme, please contact us.

Places will be filled in order of application, subject to acceptance of each application by our programme team and payment of the programme fee (£5,995 + VAT).

Please contact David Sales, the programme leader, to express your interest in joining the programme:

[david.sales@stjohns.co.uk](mailto:david.sales@stjohns.co.uk)  
+44 (0) 7802 467148

# Advocating a new approach to leadership



## CLTP Programme Office

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