

Agenda

# UNICON Directors' Conference 2026

Leading in the Age of Intelligence:  
Executive Learning in a Fragmented World

Lausanne, 14-16 April  
IMD – Lausanne, Switzerland

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## Conference Overview

The executive education industry is being disrupted from both sides simultaneously. AI is reshaping what we teach and how we teach it. Geopolitical fragmentation is reshaping who we serve and where. The schools that thrive will be those that turn this double disruption into a double advantage.

### **The three days move through a deliberate arc:**

Coffee and networking on the terrace overlooking Lake Geneva and the Alps.

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Day 1:

#### **STRATEGY FOR TODAY**

The current operating environment: AI, geopolitics, trade, and what clients need now

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Day 2:

#### **STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE**

Where the demand is heading, where the growth markets will be, how to reach them, and a strategic foresight exercise

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Day 3:

#### **MANAGING THE ENTERPRISE**

The portfolio, talent, culture, and building the organization to deliver

## Day 1 “Strategy for Today”

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08:15	<b>Arrival and Registration at IMD Campus</b> Coffee and networking on the terrace overlooking Lake Geneva and the Alps.
09:00	<b>UNICON Welcome</b> <i>Melanie Weaver Barnett, UNICON Executive Director</i> Brief welcome, framing of the three days ahead, and logistics.
09:15	<b>SESSION 1: AI meets Executive Education</b> <i>Misiek Piskorski (Dean of Executive Education)   90 minutes</i> In this session, we examine the most recent developments in the field of AI, and immediately apply them to developments in executive education. Where is the industry deploying AI versus just talking about it? What do custom solutions look like when you combine AI-powered personalization, real-time analytics, AI coaching, agentic administration, GenAI sandboxes, and serious games? You will see live demonstrations of tools you can try yourself, and work through a rapid diagnostic of your own institution’s AI readiness across four dimensions: program design, delivery, operations, and research/content.
10:45	<b>Coffee Break</b>
11:15	<b>SESSION 2: What the Learning Function Needs Today</b> <i>Moderated by Anna Dunand (Chief Business Development Officer)   75 minutes</i> In this session, we hear directly from the people who run corporate learning. How are the AI changes reshaping the learning agenda inside major corporations, and what does that mean for what they need from external providers right now? CLOs and Heads of Corporate Learning join for a focused conversation about the current state of play: what capability gaps can business schools fill that companies cannot fill internally? What has the learning function stopped buying? What would make a CLO double their spend on external exec ed today?  Format: Panel conversation with audience Q&A woven throughout.
12:30	<b>Lunch</b>
13:30	<b>SESSION 3: The Geopolitical Chessboard and the New Economic Order</b> <i>Karl Schmedders and Richard Baldwin (Professor of Finance and Professor of International Economics)   90 minutes</i> In this session, we will explore the fundamental shifts in the global economy that are already affecting our clients and changing the face of executive education: US-China decoupling, the hardening of regional economic blocs, the pluralization of management paradigms, and the fact that 87% of global import demand sits outside the United States. We will then examine how the most recent events, in particular the Middle East conflict and the disruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, have the potential to create serious short and medium-term economic consequences, and what that means for our industry.

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## Day 1 “Strategy for Today”

15:00

### Coffee Break

15:30

### SESSION 4: Peer Exchange – Speed Consulting

*Facilitated by Anna Dunand | 75 minutes*

Bring your hardest problem. Every participant submits one pressing challenge in advance. Challenges are clustered into themes and assigned to tables. You rotate through 3 x 15-minute rounds of structured peer advice, each with a different group of colleagues who have faced similar issues. You leave with concrete ideas from people who understand your context.

Each round: 2 minutes problem statement, 10 minutes peer advice, 3 minutes capture.

16:45

### Day 1 Wrap-up

## Evening: Dinner at the Olympic Museum

17:00

### Walk or short transfer to the Olympic Museum, Ouchy | (15 minutes from IMD)

A private evening at the Olympic Museum on the shores of Lake Geneva. The connection to executive education is natural: both are about developing human potential under pressure.

Private access to the museum's exhibitions

Cocktail dinner on the museum's lakeside terrace, with views across to the French Alps with keynote on “performance under pressure” and what the corporate world gets wrong about high performance.

21:30

### Finish of evening and short walk back to hotels

## Day 2 “Strategy for the Future”

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08:30 **Coffee & Networking (optional)**

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09:00 **SESSION 5: Future-Back Exercise**

***Knut Haanaes (Professor of Strategy, Lundin Chair of Sustainability) | 90 minutes***

Two parallel scenarios. In one room: “It is 2035, and executive education has had its best year ever. How did it happen?” In the other: “It is 2035, and executive education no longer exists. What happened?” Groups work backward from these futures to identify the decisions, innovations, and pivots that made the difference. Timelines are presented and synthesized into the fork-in-the-road choices that separate survival from irrelevance. You leave with a concrete picture of the strategic bets that matter most.

Format: High energy, tight time-boxes, visual outputs (timeline posters), competitive element between groups. Sharing back in plenary.

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10:30 **Coffee Break**

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11:00 **SESSION 6: Global Growth – Where Are the Blue Oceans?**

***Mark Greeven (Dean of Asia, Professor of Management Innovation) | 75 minutes***

A data-driven map of where exec ed demand is growing fastest and where it remains underserved: India (fastest-growing market globally), the Middle East (sovereign wealth fund investment), Africa (most underserved continent), Southeast Asia (new battleground between Western and Chinese management models), and Latin America. For each region: market size, growth trajectory, competitive landscape, partnership models that work, and mistakes to avoid. UNICON directors with on-the-ground experience in these regions join the conversation.

Interactive. In groups map your own global portfolio and identify one “blue ocean” market for the next 24 months. Sharing back in plenary.

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12:15 **Lunch**

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13:15 **SESSION 7: Are you Future Ready? Strategic Talent Solutions**

***IMD Strategic Talent Solutions | 90 minutes***

Having discussed where the ExEd industry is potentially heading in the next years, are your organizations future ready? Are you as a senior leader in these organizations future ready? In this session, we introduce IMD’s Strategic Talent Solutions assessment tools and apply them directly to your institution. Where does your organization stand on the capabilities that will matter most over the next three to five years? The assessment provides a structured, data-driven picture of your readiness across key dimensions, giving you a baseline to work from as you plan for the future.

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14:45 **Day 2 Conference Wrap-up**

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## Day 2 “Strategy for the Future”

## Afternoon/Evening: Excursion to Gruyères

15:00

**Coach departs IMD for Gruyères** | (approximately 1 hour)

One of Switzerland's most beautiful destinations: a medieval hilltop town, a 13th-century castle, a 900-year-old cheese tradition, and dinner together in the town square.

16:45

**Visit of Maison Cailler**

Visit of Maison Cailler, in nearby Broc, the oldest chocolate factory in Switzerland, for a sensory chocolate experience and unlimited chocolate tasting.

18:00

**Dinner at the Restaurant**

Dinner at the Restaurant “Le Chalet de Gruyères”. The group dines in the medieval town square, with fondue moitié-moitié (the local specialty, a blend of Gruyère AOP and Vacherin Fribourgeois cheeses), meringues with Gruyère double cream, and local wines from the Fribourg vineyards.

21:00

**Coach returns to Lausanne**

## Day 3 “Managing the Enterprise”

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08:30 **Arrival and Coffee**

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09:00 **SESSION 8: Building Strategic Partnerships at Scale**

*Led by Anna Dunand | 90 minutes*

The schools that win in custom programs over the next decade won't be the ones with the best faculty or the strongest brand alone. They'll be the ones that figured out how to extend their reach and relevance through partnerships without losing what makes them distinctive.

- How do we make school-to-school partnerships work for real? Peer schools are simultaneously your best potential collaborators and your most direct competitors for the same corporate clients.
- How do we make partnerships work with non-school providers? Consulting firms, tech platforms, coaching networks, and specialist content providers can fill genuine gaps, but they also blur what “business school value” means and can commoditize the relationship.
- What are the blind spots we do not talk about and what do we do with them? Can they be solved?

Group Workshops and sharing in plenary

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10:30 **Coffee Break**

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11:00 **SESSION 9: Your own personal resilience**

*Susan Goldsworthy, Affiliate Professor of Leadership, Communications, and Organizational Change | 90 minutes*

In this session, we shift from strategy to the human dimension. The disruptions discussed throughout this conference are not just strategic challenges; they take a personal toll on the leaders who navigate them and on the executive professionals who serve them. Drawing on research in neuroscience, sport, and organizational behavior, and on her own experience as an Olympic finalist, Goldsworthy explores what it takes to sustain high performance under sustained uncertainty. How do you move from survival mode to a place where creativity and collaboration are possible? What does “healthy high performance” look like when the ground keeps shifting?

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12:30 **Lunch**

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## Day 3 “Managing the Enterprise”

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13:30

### **SESSION 10: Building your team resilience**

*Katharina Lange, Affiliate Professor of Leadership* | 45 minutes

Finally, we move to examine how you take all the lessons and inject them into your team. Most exec ed organizations run on hero cultures: a star faculty member, a rainmaker relationship manager. This does not scale and it does not survive. What should the skills profile of a program director look like in 2026? How do you help faculty integrate AI without making them feel obsolete? Why do exec ed leadership teams replicate the silos they teach their clients to break? Are we rewarding the behaviors that drive growth?

Interactive: Complete a rapid “organizational health check” and identify one structural change to implement within 90 days.

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14:30

### **Closing Session: Commitments and Community**

*Misiek Piskorski, Anna Dunand, Melanie Weaver Barnett* | 30 minutes

Wrap up by IMD and UNICON of this years Director’s conference.  
Short introduction by MIT for the Summer 2026 Workshop.

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15:00

### **Conference Ends**