

Institution: 10007140 Birmingham City University		
Unit of Assessment: 17 Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Accelerating the Multi-Unit Leader and Service Chain Growth		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Christian Edger	Professor of Multi-Unit Leadership	2010-present
Scott Lichtenstein	Associate Professor	2012-present
Alexandros Psychogios	Professor in International Human Resource Management	2017-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
Summary of the impact <p>Multi-unit leaders (or area managers), who work in service chains, directly impact organisational growth. The research of the Business School has provided the intellectual backbone through which successive cohorts of area managers have been developed. Dissemination enabled over 800 multi-site managers, in 22 organisations, to use research results, models and frameworks, to enhance their practice, progression and performance. When surveyed, 94% agreed the programme improved their impact and performance, with 97% agreeing that AMUL research was integral to this success. Testimonials from service chain business leaders confirmed multiple qualitative and quantitative impacts on their organisations' culture, sales and growth.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>The AMUL has drawn on the research expertise of three academics who have delivered the Multi-Unit Leadership (MUL) Programme. Edger, who is lead of AMUL, instigated this research (R1), with a comprehensive study of area management practice in 21 service chain organisations (including Sainsbury's, Lloyds Bank, Rank, Greggs, Mitchells and Butlers, and Greene King). This used a mixed-methods approach (including qualitative case study, and secondary quantitative survey data), to establish what constituted high performance multi-unit leader impacts on service chain growth. The outcome was an 'Effective MUL Model', which provided (a hitherto lacking) framework for outstanding area management practice. The underlying typology highlighted how three key activities (service-led sales, systems implementation, and standards enforcement) were driven through three dominant behavioural practices (commitment, control and change), underpinned by three critical personal characteristics (emotional intelligence, expertise and energy). Central to this model was the notion of Portfolio Optimisation through Social Exchange (POSE). This established that upper quartile operators consistently outperformed their peers by reducing geographical and psychological distance between themselves and their followers. This was achieved through outstanding local leadership practice. The 'Effective MUL Model', and its attendant notions of POSE and local leadership, helped participants to extend their practice, beyond 'managerialism', accelerating their development into high performance multi-unit leaders.</p> <p>Further research by Edger (R2) has elaborated on this, and explored franchising as a specific form of multi-unit operation. This was based on an examination of 19 case studies, exclusively concentrating on service-based franchise-chain leadership.</p>		

This MUL content has been enhanced by the research of Lichtenstein. Initial work explored emotional intelligence (see also **R1**) and the relationship between executive decision-making and personal values. This has been delivered to AMUL cohorts, focussing on how personal values — the framework of beliefs that guide one's actions — influence decision-making at work (**R3**). Using mixed-methods and focus groups, this work demonstrated the efficacy of a behavioural strategy approach, and offered support for Maslow's motivational theory, which is a foundational model in the AMUL programmes. This analysis was extended (**R4**) to consider multi-unit leadership in public sector organisations, exploring the usefulness of strategic planning in the UK police force. This work offered a deeper understanding of the planning-performance relationship in a more "formal" multi-unit context.

The research of Psychogios (**R5**, **R6**) has also been a strand in the leadership CPD offered by the AMUL. Psychogios's research, based on in-depth qualitative investigation in various companies, suggests that managers are frequently reluctant to use formal mechanisms to provide constructive feedback about, for example, changing existing processes. Instead, they prefer informal methods of feedback that work better in enhancing the achievements of targets, as well as in organisational change. More specifically, two features of feedback are proposed as enhancing this process: benefits-oriented (performance) and confidence-oriented (motivation). As such, Psychogios proposes a three-fold form of feedback through which managers in multi-unit organisations, and more generally, can expand their perspectives of feedback from feeding-back to feeding-forward, thereby enhancing the confidence of employees and their resilience in dealing with turbulence.

The strength of this collective body of work lies in its emergent frameworks, which area managers, and managers in general, can use to enhance their multi-site leadership performance. Edger's monographs are recognised by practitioners (see **S10** below), with **R1** being republished by Routledge (a leading international academic publisher). **R2** was shortlisted by the Chartered Management Institute/British Library for their 2016 Management Book of the Year Award. **R3** was published in a journal considered "internationally excellent" by the Chartered Association of Business Schools Academic Journal Guide, and **R4** and **R6** are in journals recognised internationally by the Guide. Finally, **R5** was a refereed conference paper at the world's most prestigious management conference.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. Edger, C. 2012. *Effective Multi-Unit Leadership: Local Leadership in Multi-Site Situations*. Farnham: Gower (reprinted in 2016 by Routledge. ISBN 978-1138257788).

R2. Edger, C. and Emmerson, A. 2015. *Franchising – How Both Sides can Win*. Oxford: Libri. ISBN: 9781909818606

R3. Lichtenstein, S., Lichtenstein, G., and Higgs, M. 2017. Personal values at work: A mixed-methods study of executives' strategic decision-making. *Journal of General management* 43 (1), pp.15-23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306307017719702>

R4. Elliott, G., Day, M., and **Lichtenstein, S.** 2019 Strategic planning activity, middle manager divergent thinking, external stakeholder salience, and organizational performance: a study of English and Welsh police forces, *Public Management Review* <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2019.1635194>

R5. Psychogios, A., Antonacopoulou, A., Nyfoudi, M, Blackori, F. and Szamosi, T. L. 2018. How does feedback matter for the sustainability of organizational routines? *Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management*, August, Chicago, Illinois, US (Conference Proceedings – Paper 16801). <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2018.16801abstract>

R6. Psychogios, A., Blakcori, F., Szamosi, L. and O'Regan, N. 2019. From feeding-back to feeding-forward: managerial feedback as a trigger of change in SMEs. *Journal of Small*

Business and Enterprise Development 26 (1), pp.18-42. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-01-2018-0034>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

AMUL research has informed, and was disseminated through, a suite of postgraduate programmes. Since its inception, the programmes have been delivered to over 800 delegates, and 22 UK organisations, including the following.

- Four of the leading pub-restaurant chains in the UK: Stonegate Group (**S01**); Greene King (**S02**); Mitchells and Butlers; and, Marstons.
- The UK's largest hotel chain, Premier Inn.
- Builders' merchants, including the UK's largest, St Gobain (**S03**), and cohorts through the Builders Merchant Federation (**S04**).
- The UK's largest land-based leisure gaming company, Rank Plc (**S05**).
- Other fast growing SMEs (including Oakman Inns **S06**).

Impacts from the cohorts which studied prior to 2014 are still being felt. Indicating the commercial sector's confidence in the significance of this work, and willingness to pay accordingly, the programme generated income of £775,500 to the Business School over the REF period. Moreover, many clients had commissioned successive cohorts 2014-2020, thereby demonstrating the ongoing value that these companies attached to the unique content of the programmes.

4.1. Managerial Impacts

There are various AMUL models, which have impacted managerial practice. Most significantly, the conceptual 'Effective MUL Model' was formulated while researching at the outset of the programme, and published shortly thereafter (**R01**). It provides an overarching framework for participants in the programmes to enhance their practice and performance within industry (evidenced in 4.2 below). In a 2020 survey of participants (**S07**):

- 97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that AMUL's research was integral to the success of the AMUL programme; and,
- 94% of respondents acknowledged that their day-to-day management practice, as middle managers, continued to be informed by the knowledge and understanding gained from this research.

Respondents also pointed to the support this framework provided in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, benefitting them with the structure it provided. Significantly, 94% of respondents confirmed that their business impact and personal performance had improved as a result of participating in the research-informed AMUL programme (**S07**). Also, 85% of respondents agreed that attending the programme had enhanced their chances for progression. 57% confirmed that they had been promoted in this REF period, with 93% agreeing that the programme gave them greater levels of aspiration.

Other frameworks were used to good effect by organisations. For example, the three-fold feedback framework has been adopted by 11 organisations, and 89% reported they used three-fold feedback often. All respondents stated that managers' feedback had improved, with 77% reporting feedback had improved very much, or considerably (**S08, S09**). This attests to the AMUL impacts on management practice.

4.2. Organisational and Sector Impacts

Written testimonials from the service chain clients of the MUL Programme — who commissioned a succession of multi-site manager cohorts from 2014-20 — also support its growth impact on their organisations.

The CEO of Stonegate (**S01**) stated that, from 2015-2020, the MUL Programme had 'substantially strengthened the operational middle' of the organisation (decreasing area manager turnover from 40%, to single figures). It had assisted their £69M to £145M EBITDA growth (growth in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization), which is a 15% compound annual growth rate. This placed Stonegate in a strong position for its subsequent £1.25Bn takeover of the Ei Group, making it the largest pub company in the UK.

The MD of Greene King stated that the Multi-Unit Programmes supported its 'vital multi-site cohorts'. This enabled his company to outperform their 'competitive set by up to 2% in like-for-like sales over the period', adding that 'without exception, I saw the individuals grow in both expertise and confidence, thinking and acting more strategically' (**S02**). The CEO of St Gobain (**S04**) stated that the programmes had contributed to their 'relative industry outperformance' over the duration, with its Head of People Development and Career Management stating that the courses' impact extended beyond developing staff, to 'addressing issues vital for the company', such as digitalisation (**S03**). In addition, the Chairman of the BMF stated that the programme 'accelerated the growth ambitions' of its member firms (**S04**).

The Chairman of Rank stated that the research-informed post-graduate programmes ensured 'that we continued to outstrip the competition' (**S05**). Also, the Operations Director of Oakman Inns maintained that the MUL Programme 'greatly assisted the organisation's growth from 8 to 24 units' over the period 2015-2020. Furthermore, he added: 'in my view the MUL Programme has been pivotal in increasing the 'smarts' of our multi-site leadership in Oakman Inns ... It is the only programme in the UK that is focused on improving the capability and performance of multi-site operators — something that has had a very positive effect on the financial and unit growth of Oakman over the past five years' (**S06**).

At a sectoral level, the Founder and MD of Propel, which organises the London Multi-site Leader Masterclasses (attended by hundreds of leisure executives), has attested that the books and industry-related articles produced by AMUL have 'provided thought leadership at all levels of the (leisure) sector' and its programmes have had a 'ripple effect' as many of the area managers 'who have graduated from the courses ... gravitate to the senior echelons of the UK food and beverage sector' (**S10**). This overarching testimonial demonstrates the profound impact from the Academy for MUL on the sector, triangulating the evidence of research impact from participants and senior executives.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S01 Stonegate Group Corroboration

Testimonial from CEO, Stonegate Group [**Named Corroborator 001**]

S02 Greene King PLC Corroboration

Testimonial from MD, Greene King Plc

S03 St Gobain and BMF Corroboration

Testimonial from CEO, St Gobain and Chairman, British Merchants Federation [**Named Corroborator 002**]

S04 St Gobain Corroboration

Testimonial from Head of People Development and Career Management, St Gobain

S05 Rank Plc Corroboration

Testimonial from CEO and Chairman, Rank Plc [**Named Corroborator 003**]

S06 Oakman Inns Corroboration

Testimonial from Operations Director, Oakman Inns [**Named Corroborator 004**]

S07 AMUL Participant Survey

Multi-Unit Leadership Programme Participants: A Follow-on Survey, 2020

S08 AMUL Company Survey

Applications of Three-Fold Feedback: A Company Survey, 2020

S9 European Business Association Corroboration

Testimonial from Deputy Director, Corporate Development, European Business Association

S10 Propel Corroboration

Testimonial from Founder and MD, Propel (ranked by Allegra Strategy as the 2nd most influential person in UK Hospitality) **[Named Corroborator 005]**