

How Credit Managers Can Step into Executive Leadership

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In business, leaders guide teams to achieve goals beyond individual capabilities. But what sets a leader apart is their ability to envision and execute long-term goals that drive sustainable growth and organizational success.

The Executive Leadership Workshop at NACM's 128th Credit Congress in Las Vegas, NV, led by Dr. Jeremy Graves, equipped credit professionals with essential tools and strategies to embody their full leadership potential.

Why it matters: At the upcoming 129th annual [Credit Congress](#) in Cleveland, OH, NACM will welcome back Dr. Jeremy Graves to lead [two workshops](#)—one about change leadership and another about leading intergenerational teams. Participants can choose to attend either one, or both, workshops based on their preferences and schedules. Enjoy a discount by enrolling in the Workshop Bundle!

Here's what previous Leadership Workshop participants have to say:

Change management skills and knowledge of multi-generational teams are key for executive level leadership. "To be a true executive leader, you must effectively engage your team and help manage any change," said Mark Speiser, [CCE](#), director of credit, N. A. and global nutrition at Archer Daniels Midland Company (Decatur, IL). "When communicating the change to executives, make sure they know the return on investment for making that change."

In today's rapidly changing world, there's no space for complacency. Leaders must constantly adapt to changes to ensure continued success and relevance in business. Being adaptable also helps the company tackle challenges early, seize opportunities and stay competitive in a rapidly changing business environment.

Open-minded leaders create a dynamic, adaptive workplace where creativity thrives, problems are solved efficiently and teams achieve common goals through open communication and cohesiveness. "I believe one should be an independent thinker," said Donise Gabbert, accounting/office manager at Kilgore TEC Products Inc (Spokane, WA). "In addition to adaptability, leaders should be team builders, developing and leading high performance teams and encouraging others to continue improvement."

When leaders actively listen and remain present, they unlock essential benefits that enhance their leadership effectiveness and influence their teams. Whether your team is on-site, hybrid or remote, active engagement with staff boosts productivity and efficiency. "Most of the time, my office door is open for staff to drop in for urgent matters, quick updates or casual chats," Speiser said. "I'm also talking three to four times a day to my staff in person rather than Teams, which allows me to be more present and engaged."

Executive leaders must engage in strategic planning to mitigate short and long-term risks, creating a unified, future-oriented vision. "They must have a passion and commitment for future goals and objectives," said Anne Scarcella, [CCE](#), [CCRA](#), territory credit manager at Crawford Electric Supply Company, Inc. (Houston, TX). "Overall, they must be proactive—not reactive."

Strategic planning also provides clarity on the roles and responsibilities of different departments and individuals within a company. "I feel a strategic, executive leader sets goals for a long term vision for the future of their organization and the person is focused and courageous," Gabbert said.

Emotionally intelligent leaders are not only self-aware and self-managed, but they are socially aware with strong relationship management skills. "Executive leaders must communicate effectively and frequently while caring about their team," said Scarcella. "They should collaborate well, ask questions and act accordingly. They must also be dedicated and eager to learn and grow."

Collaborating with other departments within a company helps leaders solve problems and make sound credit decisions. "Before making a decision, collaborate with your commercial teams on how to address a particular situation and for additional understanding," Speiser said. "Not only are you looking at the credit risks and the benefits, but you're examining the overall business case."

By spending time with upper management, leaders can stay informed and communicate more effectively. "I get more involved in high-level discussions with our business units presidents, CFOs and executives to stay informed and learn how to present higher level information," said Speiser. "Back when I was an analyst, a previous boss had me participate with him on the creditors committee for a bankruptcy as well."

The bottom line: The Leadership Workshops at Credit Congress equip credit professionals with essential skills and strategies needed to reach their full leadership potential.