



Live Learn

Roche embeds leadership throughout the company

Roche is one of the world's leading research-focused healthcare groups in the fields of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. As an innovator of products and services for the early detection, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, Roche aims to make a contribution to people's health and quality of life. Roche is committed to high performance. The only way to stay ahead of competition in a rapidly changing market is to create an organization that can reinvent itself over and over again.

Jochen Friedl is training & development manager for Roche Netherlands. He characterizes the pharmaceutical and diagnostics giant as a learning organization. "To consolidate our leading position in the world, we need to constantly innovate our products, our research and our business.

Innovation requires an open mind, a certain kind of vulnerability. If you don't have the guts to try something that you've never done before, your development will come to a standstill. If you can't accept that you don't know all the answers, you deprive yourself of the opportunity to learn new things."

Jochen continues. "We want patients to receive the best possible treatment for the disease they are suffering from. That's exactly how we always operated:

we treated the disease. Our business strategy was purely content-driven. Now we treat the suffering. If breast cancer is cured leaving a woman disabled, disfigured, or with any other discomfort, have we really cured the woman? Roche, today, is patient-oriented. Besides providing highly effective therapies we focus on enhancing the quality of life. This is what distinguishes us as a healthcare company and how we increase our lead over the competition."

A learning organization calls for a different kind of leadership. Particularly an organization that specializes in healthcare innovation, a field in which improvising generally leads to nothing. However, when science is connected to sales, and revenues determine the research budget, taking a non-traditional standpoint can prove to be remunerative in many ways.

The success of the company is strongly related to the combination of talent and performance. For this reason a new talent management approach was implemented. All employees write their own professional development plan. The message conveyed is: take every opportunity to learn and become the person you want to be. Jochen: "We want to help our people bring out the best in themselves. We want to reveal their ambition and trigger entrepreneurship. Our aim is to develop leadership in all our employees."

It is not easy to create the right learning conditions. "I don't believe in conventional training methods, really," Jochen says. "I see very little inspiration going round in a room with a white board. Better Future and Hay Group suggested a leadership development program away from the so-called comfort zone.

I share their conviction that people can only be truly open-minded and susceptible to change when you take them out of their comfort zone."

The leadership program was built upon an already existing sponsor relationship between Roche Netherlands and the Angelsfound Foundation. With the Newlifestyleresort as the training location and the foundation's mission as a the business case, the personalized setting generated an open atmosphere

in which a reciprocal learning process could flourish. The courageous effort of Rob and Sibyl demands respect and made the learning curve even more effective.

With the programs evolving around the entrepreneurial challenges in hospitality management, Rob and Sibyl were empowered with priceless business know-how. At the same time it made the Roche team members more disposed to try a different perspective. The real life business case propelled their personal development and professional effectiveness.

Jochen: "At the Newlifestyleresort we went through a unique learning process. The Roche employees took a chance with the component of vulnerability in personal development. They all took the opportunity to learn and to become who they want to be. This requires courage and it appeals to a leadership mentality. And that is exactly what keeps Roche in leading position."

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