

New Strength from Global Classroom - Case Study on a Corporate MBA Programme from Danfoss

The Danfoss MBA is helping managers to share ideas and collaborate globally

DANFOSS managers JiJian Jiang in China, Tichomir Fürjes in Austria, Andrei Rykov in Russia and Hamilton Mantz in the USA all have different country issues and specialist disciplines. They are separated by geography and their everyday responsibilities. But with the introduction of the Danfoss Diploma/MBA, they're now all part of the same class, learning to link Group strategy to management thinking, sharing the challenges and building networks. Many organisations will boast of their international credentials and the way their separate parts work together – yet how many are actively encouraging their managers to actually do it? A group of 21 managers at Danfoss, the Danish-based electronic and mechanical component giant, sat their first exams this year on their way to gaining an MBA with Henley Management College. Besides what has been gained in terms of management skills and broad business understanding, the international programme has created a platform for Danfoss managers to see and think about the business as a global entity with constant opportunities for collaboration and sharing their strengths. Hans Schjær-Jacobsen, Head of the Danfoss Management Institute (DMI), sees management development as a fuel for the future progress of the company.

“The idea was to join forces across Danfoss and put more focus and energy into the management training and development process. This initiative also has to be seen in the context of HR in general gaining in status and becoming regarded as a strategic focus area for Danfoss on a global scale. Danfoss wants to be a global leader in its business areas, and helping to develop strong leaders will be a crucial prerequisite for this,” he said. The Danfoss Diploma/MBA was tailor-made to suit the needs of the business by Henley, alongside the DMI and with the ongoing involvement of Henley’s local operation in Denmark. For example, all the assignments were based on Danfoss scenarios and strategic goals so that the insights gained would be directly relevant to the everyday jobs of the participants. Henley’s experience of delivering distance learning and e-learning programmes and support to a global audience was important in ensuring each module would have maximum impact. “Danfoss does not want to build up a large ‘department’, but rather a virtual kind of high-performance team involving a number of partners to develop and co-ordinate activities. At the DMI we have to be at the forefront of knowing where to find the best external partners, and how to integrate them effectively into our network,” said Hans Schjær-Jacobsen. “Henley was chosen for several reasons. The college appeared to have

“Successful globalisation of Danfoss greatly depends on the skills, efforts and commitment of our managers on all levels. It is my opinion that we take learning within Danfoss extremely seriously. The Danfoss Diploma/MBA Program me complies with our strategic goals and deals with Danfoss-specific issues.”
– Jørgen M Clausen, President and CEO of Danfoss

the pragmatic approach to management that we like at Danfoss. It had experience of blended learning, the combination of distance learning and workshops that suited our needs to offer an MBA to all Danfoss managers no matter what their location, and demonstrated expertise in setting up corporate programmes. The local Henley office in Denmark, headed up by Leif Bergmann, turned out to be of great help in building up the required mutual trust between Henley and ourselves, and provided an excellent service. Leif even travelled to Russia to organise a quick workshop ahead of the exams in June.” One participant, Andrei Rykov, said: “Henley offers highly-qualified tutors and a very well-prepared programme. We are given great support. For example, the personal tutor from Henley is able to give support on any personal development issues if needed.” The programme is made up of three parts, each of which can be taken in approximately a year, and includes two five-day module workshops, intermediary study, assignments and project work, all supported by e-learning resources. The structure of the programme was intended to allow managers to combine busy work schedules with serious, in-depth study. The Diploma/MBA has already started to see some results. Svend Arne Volden is one of the managers who were quick to see how theory could be turned into innovation in his own work. He used one

of his assignments to develop a new Systems & IT strategy for his unit, including tools for customer relationship management, knowledge management and supply chain management, which is expected to support growth and save costs.“ It has been 16 years since I last took formal education, so I felt the need to dig into details again and focus on an issue, which you are forced to do on an MBA programme. The best part is to ‘re-learn’ how to use business models and apply in-depth analytical techniques to my work.” Birgitte Holdt, Senior HRM Consultant, worked out a ‘self-service’ portal option for employees as a means of improving stores of personnel information. Elena Chulkova, Logistics Manager, said: “I never before thought of managing information as a subject for study in itself. But after my assignments I have become aware of the influence and advantages of well-structured information in day-to-day business.” Just over a year since it first began, the Danfoss Diploma/MBA has become an important part of the life of career development within the company. “The DMI is now broadly well accepted in Danfoss and has a good reputation of delivering good quality programmes and supporting the learning processes in leadership development. Henley’s input has been well received as part of this,” said Hans Schjær-Jacobsen.