

## Growth the smart way – Case study of Dangaard Telecom

**PERHAPS** no sector sums up the challenges facing modern business better than today's telecoms industry where the ability to stay in front of the competition and deliver growth is consistently challenged by a volatile market place.

Danish telecoms firm Dangaard Telecom is one company which has managed to establish the position of market leader as the biggest value added distributor of services to the mobile telecoms sector over the past 15 years. Not surprisingly, having grown to be a leading player across 14 European countries with 1,250 staff in this time, Dangaard Telecom's board wants to make sure its staff can deliver the growth which will keep it out in front of the competition.

It is within this context that HR Manager Marianne Schrøder went out into the executive education market to find a business school which would meet the business need of equipping its top management with the learning and skills which would put Dangaard Telecom's growth on track. Although training and development were already an integral part of the Dangaard Telecom approach to human resources, there was a need to complement its three existing company schemes for managers with a programme which delivered the top level commercial skills it needed to measure up to its global competitors.

"As the leader in our sector we have to be first movers commercially. We are in a complicated market and a competitive business where most of our competitors are multinational. To underpin our

business strategy of high growth, global leadership and staying at the highest level we need to get all the competitive advantages. That means we need the skills to achieve that at head office level in Denmark and among our European country managers," says Marianne Schrøder.

Having decided that choosing a business school partner was the best way to meet this commercial need, Marianne Schrøder was clear on what she wanted that partner to deliver. "What we needed was a Dangaard Telecom-specific programme and not a generalist business course. As this was a big investment for us we had a shopping list of specific qualities we wanted from our MBA partner. We wanted to find a management school which could be flexible in terms of programme dates, remote study and examination as well as being able to deliver the topics appropriate to our company's commercial needs," she says. "After contacting five business schools, Henley was selected on the strength of its ability to deliver around Dangaard Telecom's specific needs and its reputation as a leading European school. One thing which helped the process a great deal was being able to meet with Henley representatives in requirements and how they could be met." In the end Dangaard Telecom chose a one year Executive Certificate leading either to a Diploma or further MBA studies. It is effectively a mini-MBA which is delivered to its senior management across Europe in bite-size modules remotely and on the Henley campus. The idea was that managers

would get quick bursts of learning to equip them with the skills they need in the day-to-day business. "We are a practical hands-on company and we wanted our executive education to reflect that. The demands of our managers mean that after studying a course unit they must be able to go back and use it immediately in the business. That's why the distance learning element is so important," says Marianne Schröder. The practical side of the MBA is already paying off for Dangaard Telecom: the business planning elements of the mini-MBA learnt in April are coming into practical use as the company comes to its current year end in October and into the commercial planning phase for the next financial year. Marianne says that apart from delivering a common frame of skills, language and business planning tools across the senior management at Dangaard Telecom, another important output of the mini-MBA is a strong cohesion and understanding across this important group of people who are meeting and working together as a result of the Henley programme. "We now see our people from all over Europe come together through the mini-MBA. This is helping to forge strong relationships across the company because senior

managers are getting together in a different context, getting to know each other better and understand their business units." Marianne sees the cross pollination of ideas across the organisation facilitated by the mini-MBA as yet another important gain. Dangaard Telecom is now approaching the halfway point of the programme and its managers have responded well to the mini-MBA. The 25-30 managers who wanted to participate were whittled down to 15 who have given positive feedback about the practicality of the content. In terms of advice for companies who might be considering such a programme, Marianne Schröder says it is vital for the success of the programme to make sure that people understand the commitment involved with the course. "People need to know what effort it takes to make the course work. It takes a lot of time and effort, and with a heavy business schedule and family, you have to really commit to it – but the benefits are compelling," says Marianne Schröder. "As a company it helps you retain the best people, it strengthens the psychological contract you have with them beyond work and it gives employees a sense that as the company grows in stature and improves, they will too."