

## Management First – to Ensure the Customer is the Winner

**ALL** businesses say they put their customers first. But with the intensity of telecoms competition, an emphasis on customer relationships is shaping the management approach. “Our service to customers is one of the primary areas where we can differentiate ourselves. Prices are low and we are restricted by government legislation, so our success largely depends on our ability to focus our efforts on customers,” says Henrik Christiansen, Senior Consultant for Group HR at Denmark’s TDC Group. TDC Group is one of Scandinavia’s largest telecoms companies and operates across Europe. Its offerings include TDC Solutions which provides landline services and internet access, with a popular Internet portal TDC Online, a cable TV firm and mobile communications services. TDC has a development culture. 700 employees every day take part in training and development programmes (out of a population of around 17,000 staff). The relaunch of the TDC values and vision at the beginning of 2002 highlighted the central role of customer service to both its business and residential customers, and was the spur to launching a new development initiative. The aim was to ensure that the business was being actively managed with the customer in mind at all stages and, instead of confining the initiative to just sales and marketing, it would include managers from every functional area. TDC picked out 30 managers from a pool of ‘corporate talents’, identified in its talent management programme as having a

strong leadership potential. The TDC Customer Orientation programme was delivered over a six-month period, including three workshops of three days each in the UK, regular assignments and individual projects on TDC issues. The programme helped managers to apply specific methods to the process of identifying and understanding specific customers, and to develop more customer-oriented business processes. Tasks included research into TDC marketing practices, as well as wider marketing case studies that could offer new perspectives. A final workshop in Copenhagen put the group into teams, each with the challenge of solving critical customer orientation issues. The findings were presented to TDC’s senior management team in order to demonstrate learning and practical new directions for the business.

Henrik Christiansen said: “Henley is already one of our preferred suppliers for part-time MBAs, and running the workshops in the UK gave our managers the chance to get away from their everyday pressures, with more time to focus. It was also important for the group to be together in the evenings, to have a chance to network.” The programme leads to a formal marketing qualification, but the real value has been the impact on company culture. “It has already made a difference, in that the managers ensure they are always thinking of the customer in all activities, and some of the ideas in individual projects have been picked up by directors as being very useful for

future development,” said Henrik Christiansen. “Two more events have been planned internally to follow up on the primary learning points and to keep the momentum of the project.”