

Getting the Business Mix to the Right Consistency

Henley working from Denmark: case studies demonstrate how business acumen and forethought combine to establish commercial balance

CONSISTENCY is a business imperative. Consumers demand it. Partners and stakeholders rely on it. And exactly the same kind of consistency in terms of approach, outlook and contribution from managers is needed within organisations. As a world leader in public safety certification and product testing, with an extended network of local affiliates in 20 countries worldwide, UL Underwriters Laboratories Inc. understands this better than most. Philip Kaes, President of Operations for Europe, Middle East and Africa, says: “When I joined the company I found varying levels of management knowledge across Europe. Many of our managers had come from an engineering background, some had been given formal management training, others not. We needed to establish a good common level, a base from which all managers can work. If managers are not taking the same informed, strategic approach, it can lead to varying standards.”

UL Europe is an expanding part of the global UL family. Based in Frankfurt, UL Europe has a presence in eight European countries. It is structured as a matrix organisation, with country managers and some primary and secondary functions managed across borders, for example by the sales or marketing manager. It was these two groups of senior managers who were targeted for development as a platform of management knowledge and skills. Henley was chosen as a partner because of its strong presence across Europe and its focus on practical application. The programme was structured around three workshops covering strategy and business transformation, management of financial and human resources and customer orientation, with two being held in Germany and one at Henley.

Philip Kaes highlights the emphasis placed on making each module directly relevant to the daily work of the organisation. “It was a tailor-made programme. In the strategy module, for example, the tools for strategic analysis and direction setting were demonstrated by appropriate business examples and immediately followed by exercises based on UL Europe. With the tutor working as facilitator, this meant the discussions quickly focused on areas for further internal development. “We’re seeing a big impact from this element of the programme already. It helped to pull together quite different opinions of what a strategy is, and has led to greater contributions to this year’s strategy. The programme also allowed us to open our eyes and see beyond the obvious. We thought we knew exactly who our core customer was, but new insights showed us they weren’t our core customer at all.

“It was important for the managers to spend time together. The programme was squeezed into three modules as we couldn’t afford to be away from the shop for too long. So we’d be working from 8am to 10pm each day, which is certainly a good way to build relationships and some rapport,” says Philip.