

Management development from Vladivostok to Cape Town

In partnership with Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School, Bayer Schering Pharma has developed the European Leadership Programme. The main aim is to familiarise non-Western managers with the business culture, management standards and management techniques that are prevalent in Western Europe. We spoke to Markus Baltzer, Head of 'Region Europe II' at Bayer Schering Pharma.

Bayer Schering Pharma employs 40,000+ people worldwide in more than 100 countries and has its head office in Berlin. Like many multinational companies, Bayer Schering Pharma is faced with the challenge of ensuring that its corporate strategy is fully understood by its employees and that everyone is pulling in the same direction, particularly its managers. Not always an easy task when the business culture is based on Western values and management insights.

Eliminating barriers

The European Leadership Programme was designed for Bayer Schering Pharma managers in 'Region Europe II'. Markus Baltzer explains: "This region extends from Vladivostok to Cape Town and includes Turkey, the countries of the former Soviet Union, the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa. Westerners often lump these countries together as 'the rest of the world' and look on them as being less important. That's where they're mistaken. However, because this region actually includes the fastest-growing countries with an average GDP growth rate clearly in excess of 6%, compared with just 1-3% in Western Europe. Our managers in this region are often highly educated, but are not familiar with Western management techniques or skills. In the Middle East or Africa, for instance, it would not occur to many to organise 360-degree feedback. This lack of theoretical background means that these managers feel less self-assured in meetings with their Western colleagues. We want to eliminate that barrier."

Tailor-made solution

Bayer Schering Pharma considered numerous institutions and consultancy firms for the task of developing the programme.

"Out of all the candidates, we selected four per module," explains Markus Baltzer. "The first module focuses on economic management, with topics such as strategy, accounting and brand management. The other module, on people management, emphasises leadership style and skills. At the time we didn't really know much about Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School, but their proposal was very convincing. One key point was that we had a say in the programme and could tailor it perfectly to our own specific target group. The international team of Vlerick professors did their groundwork thoroughly using appropriate case studies and familiarised themselves with our company jargon."

Mixture of cultures and jobs

Region Europe II is extremely heterogeneous in terms of economics, politics, religion and culture. Markus Baltzer again: "We know from experience that these differences inspire people. Working in groups with participants from Africa, the Middle East and Russia, you can see that the same problem is solved in different ways. We also bring together managers in different types of jobs, which gives everyone a better understanding of how the company really works. A doctor, for instance, rarely asks himself questions about the challenges in controlling. During the training course, however, he's forced to delve into the company's economic background, as well as into marketing and strategy."

Moving mountains

Markus Baltzer: "By the end of the programme the participants feel that they can move mountains. It's a real boost for them to be able to meet colleagues from all corners of the globe, all employed by the same company, and to work with them to make the company more success-



Markus Baltzer, Head of 'Region Europe II' at Bayer Schering Pharma.

ful. Since the training was introduced, I've noticed that management teams are more professional in their approach and that managers are more aware of their management style and feel more self-assured. The final evaluation consistently shows that the participants are extremely satisfied with the programme, but it's the effect we see in practice that's the real measure of success, of course."

Facts & Figures

- 7th programme
- 2 one-week modules (one week in Berlin, one week in Ghent)
- average of 16 participants
- at least 8 nationalities