

Management and project development at Copenhagen University, Faculty of Life Sciences

'I sense a significant increase of responsibility in the management group. In relation to institute, disciplinary and project managers.'

Søren Hartz, CEO, Faculty of Life Sciences

CHALLENGE

As a result of the new legislation on universities, in 2005 KVL (now Faculty of Life Sciences) decided to anticipate development by merging the large number of institutes into two centres and 12 institutes. KVL's management was convinced that good management is and will be an essential competitive resource in the educational area.

Therefore the new university law from 2004 was used as a starting point for the creation of a real change mentally and culturally in relation to management and strategic understanding in KVL. The leading parallel elements in this development have been the management development of the disciplinary managers and training in project management .

DIAGNOSIS

In Danish universities in general there has not been many examples of greater management processes. This was also true to KVL where the value of good management has been overshadowed by professional competences aimed at research and teaching.

Therefore KVL was facing a situation where management could be divided into two groups: one, whose management responsibility and tasks should be expanded, and another group with the completely opposite prospects for the future. Thus, it was very clear that the disciplinary managers constituting the layer of management just

below the Heads of Departments needed to develop their management competences. The fact that it was necessary to create an alternative career path for the relatively large group of middle managers, who would experience a decrease in their management responsibility due to the new structure with fewer organisational units.

SOLUTION

Action Learning as motivation

In order to create the right conditions for the implementation of the new forms of management and project management, the project was based on the Action Learning principles combining the participants' reality, theoretical input, test and 360° feedback thus forming the starting point for learning and competence development.

In order to take both groups of middle managers into consideration the task was divided into a management and a project management track. Other than training the organisation in working in a more project-oriented manner, the project management track also helped creating a more disciplinary career path as an alternative to the organisational path.

The management track

The management track was divided into a team course and an individual course. The team course consisted of three modules. Before each module the involved managers were given the task to prepare their presentation of an actual management issue, which then

was discussed, in smaller groups, with the other participants on the module. In between the modules, the teams met on a voluntary basis.

The individual course was based on a preliminary talk where the managers presented their management challenges to the consultants from Implement Consulting Group. Based on this, each manager worked on activities aiming to meet his/her individual wishes, needs, learning and development targets. Later in the course this was supplied with a personality test.

Approximately nine months into the two courses a 360° feedback was conducted, in which the manager received feedback from employees, peers and the day-to-day manager in relation to his/her management behaviour. This feedback combined with impressions from solving the task formed the basis of the individual coaching during the course.

The project management track

The founding principle in the project management track was a focus on the tools related to working with projects, and on the project manager's role as manager in relation to the project participants, project owners and other stakeholders. During the course the participants worked on home assignments which were relevant to their everyday projects. In practice this



Implementation of a new business model

took place on three modules: 1) Purpose and plan, 2)

Active control and management of the group and 3) The project manager as a communicator and 'live' training in project management. Coaching and the subject-oriented home assignment was connected to this. In the best Action Learning style this project was already in use after module one. Through practical learning and the possibility to continuously draw on knowledge and experiences from the Implement Learning Institute, the project managers kept adding new layers to their project competences.

RESULTS

The effects of the project have been many and diverse. Some of the most significant are:

- A significant increase of responsibility in the management group
- An understanding of it is just as

important to show you care in being a leader as in researching and teaching

- The managers experience that their role as a manager is taken seriously
- Across the board the employees experience managers who really care about their personal and disciplinary development
- A positive development in the employee satisfaction
- An increased strategic understanding among managers as well as employees
- Much more independence across the entire organisation
- A unified management well-equipped for contributing actively in the upcoming merger with Copenhagen University and University of Pharmaceutical Sciences.
- A new career path (the project management course) for managers who do not participate on the management track

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