



DEVELOPING MSD FUTURE LEADERS IN-HOUSE

It might sound as a bit of cliché, but we in MSD believe it is true: Talent development is one of the key drivers of successful companies. It leads to higher employee engagement, new career opportunities, development of learning culture and therefore accelerates success of the organization.

A question we asked ourselves was how to successfully accelerate development for the roles that are needed in the world of limited time and resources (both financial and human)? How to do it within lean country structures, limited back-ups and therefore limited possibilities to train newly promoted colleagues and to help them to adapt to more complex roles?

Various approaches and solutions were tried in the past (external programs, rotation programs, individual trainings on selected topics, shadowing...). But then we've opened a new chapter!

In 2018 we launched our internal cross-border development program named "Ready to Lead". This development program for CEE talents covered Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary and aimed to develop marketeers of the future.

At that time all four countries were dealing with a lack of marketeers meeting the requirements of the company. When promoting colleagues from specialist roles in sales, customer service or other departments, they showed a gap in knowledge and experience (but not in potential!). There was also a lack of resources to help them to jump on board. In their previous roles they were too specialized and, again, due to a lack of capacity not able to dedicate enough

time to development for future career.

External hiring was an option, but we believe it is better to use the talent we already have in the organization. We built an application-based, internally organized program to develop selected talents while they were still performing in their original roles. The program was designed to deliver fast-track experience with all the pieces of the puzzle a marketeer needs to know and experience, in just 12 months and using only 10% of their time.

The results were very pleasing. Out of ten colleagues in the first cohort, seven are still with the company, six were promoted to various roles and two are now, three years after the program, members of the country Leadership Team.

Thanks to these results and great feedback from sponsors as well as cohort members the information about the program has spread. Therefore, in the second year we included also the Balkan countries. Also, the objective of the program has been broadened from raising marketeers to raising future commercial leaders. Again, the program was a success.

The 2021/2022 cohort is even broader! We are now running an employee development program for 24 European countries, developing 30 future

commercial leaders. "Ready to Lead" has become a famous brand internally.



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The program's curriculum has been further improved over time – adding new aspects and emerging topics, and transforming to a more virtual format due to the pandemic and increased geographic scale.

SO, WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM THAT SEEMS TO WORK FOR OUR CHALLENGES?

Target group:

The program is targeting specialists and early middle managers from any division (even noncommercial divisions) who are motivated to grow their career in commercial roles in the future.

Applications:

The program is application not nomination driven as we believe that only those who have ownership over their development and are

ready to overcome steps of selection process (online assessment, HR interview, business case study and interview with business leaders) have the right motivation. In 2021/2022, 25% of applicants made it to the program but individual feedback and consultation have been offered to all.

Main pillars of the program:

The first pillar is the learning curriculum which consists of learning sessions; all ran by internal subject matter experts from MSD across Europe who volunteer to share their expertise and real experience in the subjects. The topics cover all the departments of the company (Finance, Human Resources, Medical, Market access, Marketing, Sales...) and also soft skills topics that are essential for successful leaders of the future (ways of leading, communication, personality profiles, presentation skills, personal branding...).

To complement theoretical learning, each cohort member is also involved in a real business project locally. The role in the project team is not part of his/her daily job role and expertise. This experience helps cohort members to understand all the aspects of our business much better. Very often, it also helps the project team to bring in different points of view and fresh thinking.

The program's third pillar is Mentoring. In contrast to project involvement,

which is takes place in the home country, the mentor is always from a foreign country. It is clearly set that this relationship must be proactively driven by the cohort member, not the mentor. Based on experience, the relationships between cohort members and mentors continue also after the program is finished, being beneficial for both sides.

Networking and visibility: All participants of the program enjoy the opportunity to network and to be visible outside their usual networks – not only cohort members but also all the involved subject matter experts and volunteers. Opening and closing ceremony with Managing Directors of involved countries and many of the company's senior leaders further endorse the networking part.

Additionally, the cohort also has social media platforms to network and share experience. In pandemic times, when meeting face to face is difficult, we also added voluntary networking events. These have informal character and are meant to build personal relationships.

We believe Ready to Lead 2021/2022 will be even more successful and the program has potential to expand outside of Europe based countries. We are also proud that an initiative which started in our small region is recognized across so many countries now.