

SWIFT in-company programme

"A great networking opportunity"

SWIFT is the industry-owned cooperative supplying secure, standardised messaging services and interface software to nearly 8,000 financial institutions in 206 countries and territories. As a knowledge-intensive organisation, SWIFT gives top priority to training. It asked Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School to develop an in-company programme specifically for its senior management. The programme is called 'Leading for high performance' and has been run four times to date. We spoke to Mark Waller, SWIFT's head of Human Resources.



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■ Was there any specific reason why you wanted to organise this programme?

"In today's changing environment, inspirational leadership is key to developing a shared mindset that can help take an organisation forward in the same direction. A few years ago we recognised the need to develop a common framework for leadership and change management and to enhance the business acumen of SWIFT's senior managers. One reason to organise the programme in-house was that it provided a great networking opportunity for our people from all over the world. We also wanted it to be a platform from which to convey important messages and values and to address the key decision-makers in our organisation. The downside is that you don't have the opportunity of bench-

marking yourself with the outside world but we try to compensate for that by working with an academic faculty that can bring this external dimension."

■ Why did you choose Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School?

"SWIFT is very international, with a great deal of talent that sets and demands high standards in all that we do. So, we wanted to work with a leading academic institution, but at the same time make sure that the programme had a strong SWIFT flavour to it. SWIFT people were actively involved both in designing the programme and presenting some of the subjects, thereby translating the theory back to the reality within SWIFT. Vlerick was the business school that best suited our needs. Some of the bigger business schools were not really prepared to customise a great deal, whereas Vlerick was much more willing to partner with us, combining high-quality teaching staff with a tailored solution."

■ What management issues are covered and what is the target group?

"The programme targets management from all functions and countries. In each programme we have some 20 participants of which a third are from amongst our senior leadership team, and two-thirds are aspiring leaders. The programme combines insights on individual leadership style, starting with a 360-degree feedback. There are then three residential modules. The first one concentrates on business and functional mastery with a view to

improving strategic thinking skills and functional knowledge to help link strategy to action. The second module is about leadership and personal mastery, focusing on leadership, change management and the skills to optimise individual and team performance. The programme culminates with a business simulation module that brings together the learning. Another important feature of the programme is a strong emphasis on individual coaching."

■ What did you think of the overall quality of the programme?

"One good thing is having faculty staff who stay with the programmes throughout. You see how they come to appreciate SWIFT and understand our values. They have assimilated that in a pretty effective way and certainly the participants recognise that they are being taught by people who have a certain empathy with the organisation. We have some very experienced people who have benefited from similar programmes in other organisations, and who rate this training even more highly. One very rewarding aspect of the programme was that participants valued it as providing a unique opportunity to exchange views, to develop a shared understanding of both customer needs and technological challenges and to appreciate issues from different perspectives. It was a dynamic interaction we had not anticipated, but it was a huge benefit in terms of reinforcing our internal network." ■

Source:
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