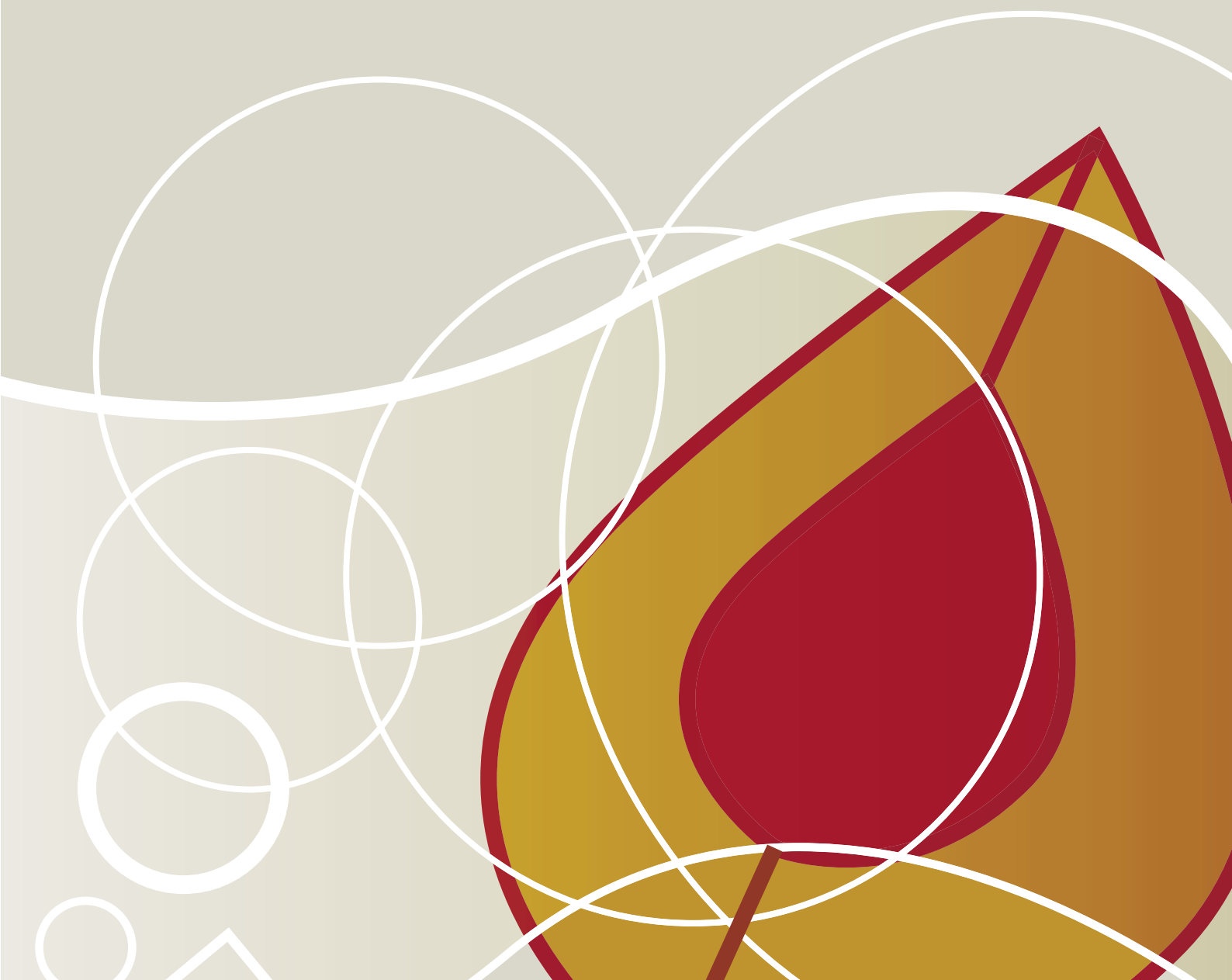


MiL Concepts 3/2007

**Improved Business through Personal Development
– A leadership programme with an unusual starting point**

Kristina Elliot
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MiL Concept 3/2007

Improved Business through Personal Development – A leadership programme with an unusual starting point

Authors are Kristina Elliot, then consultant at Nordea's internal consulting group Leadership Development, and Göran Wiklund, Senior Associate, MiL Institute.

This MiL Concept – Improved Business through Personal Development – gives a rear-view mirror perspective on a large-scale intervention in one of the business units of Nordea; Savings and Wealth Management (SWM).

During the whole course of the programme we made many, many reflections some of which we will share with you here. Hopefully we will get a chance to share them with you in dialogue form. Then, together we can inspire each other how leadership can be strengthened in our organisations, how leaders can handle their situation today and in the future and fully understand the importance of having a strong focus on people and on their own personal development.

Kristina and Göran

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Summary

This MiL Concept is a description of a leadership programme that was carried out in Nordea Savings and Wealth Management (SWM) from spring 2006 until summer 2007. The program was a result of a close teamwork between HR-partners, the Management Team, managers in SWM, Leadership Development in Nordea and MiL Institute.

SWM is the savings and private banking unit in Nordea which serves all private clients on savings product and private banking services. It is a fast growing business unit and the aim for the leadership programme was to ensure that the organisation had a general leadership capacity to handle both a larger number of customers and a larger number of employees.

There were many different methods for learning and development in the programme. Here are the major components:

- Kick-off meetings, bringing in the changing outside world. Why do I need to change?
- Café dialogues about global changes and personal changes
- Leadership workshops with Richard Scase and Gareth Jones
- 360 degrees interviews done by the managers themselves
- Myers Briggs Type Indicator
- Exercises to expand self-awareness
- Self-Managed Learning - Individual coaching in groups.
- Action – Reflection – Learning
- Articles and documentation about leadership.
- Individual coaching for each participant based on ICF standards
- Modules with different topics and exercises

The report describes the programme, our own reflections and learning from the process of designing and delivering a complex leadership intervention and we also share some of the participants' feedback.

The focus for the programme has been the individual leaders: Who am I? What do I deliver? Why is it important to know myself? Why is emotional intelligence important in leadership? What do others think of me?

Many inspirational phrases have been used for reflection about oneself. Here are some examples:

If you can't manage yourself you can't manage anything.

You must be the change you wish to see in the world.

Be yourself more with skills.

Why should anyone be led by you?

We believe leadership quality is a major success factor in all businesses regardless of situation. As a representative from SWM said: "As the management team we

cannot secure the development on our own. The reason to have the programme is that we also need support to develop our managers. This program shows a way of handling the situation where the future is unclear but still the need of development in leadership is strong”.

Background

“It is very rare that you get such a clear-cut brief that the job is about personal development.”

(Kristina and Göran)

The Management Team of Nordea Savings and Wealth Management (SWM) was convinced that leaders’ personal development would be of crucial importance when planning for the future growth of their business and for the coming changes for the Nordea bank.

Another conviction was that a business thrives when leaders learn more about themselves and put the learning into practice in their own business areas.

These were the assumptions when Nordea’s internal leadership consulting group (LD) and MiL Institute were given the assignment to deliver a leadership programme concurrently for all SWM’s leaders, 165 persons.

Stakeholders

Nordea Savings and Wealth Management (SWM) provides financial advice to private savings clients and Private Banking clients and designs products for that purpose. At the time of the programme SWM had 1000 employees, distributed over the four Nordic countries.

Nordea offers training programmes for its management staff according to the level and experience of leadership. The programmes cover different topics from learning about the Nordea organisation and the Nordea way of leading to training management skills, coaching and leadership practices and skills. In this case, SWM wanted a new leadership programme aimed at all leaders in the organisation regardless of organisation level. It should focus on personal development and be designed especially to meet SWM’s needs.

The head of SWM was then Eira Palin Lehtinen who initiated the programme¹.

SWM’s Management Team was consulted and involved in the development and design of the programme.

¹Eira Palin-Lehtinen retired in the autumn 2007.

The HR-partners in all Nordic countries were also involved in developing the programme. A contact person was assigned, Thomas Tuborgh, head of HR in SWM.

Leadership Development (LD) is an internal consulting organisation within Nordea organised as a staff function, which covers all Nordea business units. LD consists of 14 consultants, 5 in Denmark, 4 in Sweden, 2 in Norway and 3 in Finland. The head of LD is based in Denmark. LD designs and delivers different kind of leadership education and development as well as coaching training. Kristina Elliot was Project Manager for this project.

The LD unit trains over 3 500 managers in the Nordic and Baltic countries each year. One of the core competences is carrying out training for large groups of managers. From a Nordea perspective the SWM programme was not one of the largest. For instance, the Branch Manager Academy, which was run over the same time period, involved 1500 managers in the Retail organisation in Scandinavia.

SWM's Management Team was open to involve an external partner for this programme. It was also a practical way of handling the amount of work hours within the programme, since LD's resources were booked also for other assignments. A partnership with MiL Institute would give new knowledge, provide the cross-border teams with external consultants and also get the extra resources required.

MiL Institute is a consulting organisation that offers business, organisation and leadership development based on the customer's specific need. MiL Institute entered into a preferred partner contract (ramavtal) with Nordea in autumn 2006. This contract gives MiL Institute together with some other consulting companies in the other Nordic countries the position of preferred partner for consulting jobs related to leadership training and development.

In the SWM programme, MiL Institute's role was different from what is usually the case in so far as the contract partner was not SWM, but LD. This meant that one consulting organisation contracted another consulting organisation and a co-operation was established. Göran Wiklund, senior associate in MiL, was responsible for MiL Institute's part of the programme, which included providing expertise in running leadership modules, leading cross-border coaching groups, individual coaching, and participating in the on-going design work.

Reflection & Learning

Often, the success of leadership development depends on who the originator is and from where the initiative comes. In this case, it came directly from the head of SWM. This explains why it was possible to take a relatively high risk by designing a widespread intervention throughout the whole organisation, rather than for instance taking one group after another, which would have been a safer way and given opportunities for continuous adjustments.

What MiL Institute brought to the programme, in addition to staff resources, was the experience of all aspects of leadership programmes focused on personal development and the know-how of coaching, especially in a group setting. Both MiL Institute and LD had a background in using experience-based training. In MiL Institute this concept is called:

Action – Reflection – Learning

This is a cornerstone in MiL Institute's pedagogic approach. In MiL Concepts 1/2007 the principles and elements of Action, Reflection and Learning (ARL) are presented in detail. The ARL method is described in 10 key elements. Here is what the authors say about reflection: *“The process of being able to thoughtfully reflect upon experiences is an essential part of the learning process, which can enable greater meaning and learning to be derived from a given situation”*².

Contracting and programme development

Eira Palin-Lehtinen and her team were involved in the design of the programme, which was called **Leadership Programme – Personal & Values Based Leadership**. During the design process some programme goals were added and some taken away. At the start of the design process Kristina Elliot interviewed SWM's HR-partners and each member of the management team in all the Nordic countries to get an understanding of the needs of the organisation and to relate the programme to what kind of leadership development and other strategic or organisational activities the managers had previously participated in. It turned out that SWM had recently carried out a values-process in order to interpret and create ownership of the overall Nordea values, which were “Speed, Focus and Performance”.³

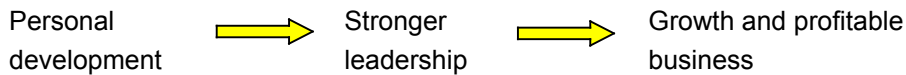
It was important to get the involvement of all HR-partners, especially as they were responsible for the continuation and for refining ideas and creative suggestions, which resulted from all dialogues and conversations the programme triggered. The HR-partners formed a coaching group among themselves where this particular task was emphasised.

With a strong focus on personal development it was necessary to create a context as to why personal development improves leadership and the business. Our assumption was that this would not necessarily be accepted at face value and that maybe the connection was not obvious for everyone.

² MiL concept 1/2007 Roberts, Rimanoczy, Drizin: The principles and Elements of Action Reflection and Learning

³ When Nordea's new CEO Cristian Clausen took over in July 2007 a re-framed set of corporate values were communicated. They are: “It's all about people”, “Customer Experience” and “One Nordea Team”.

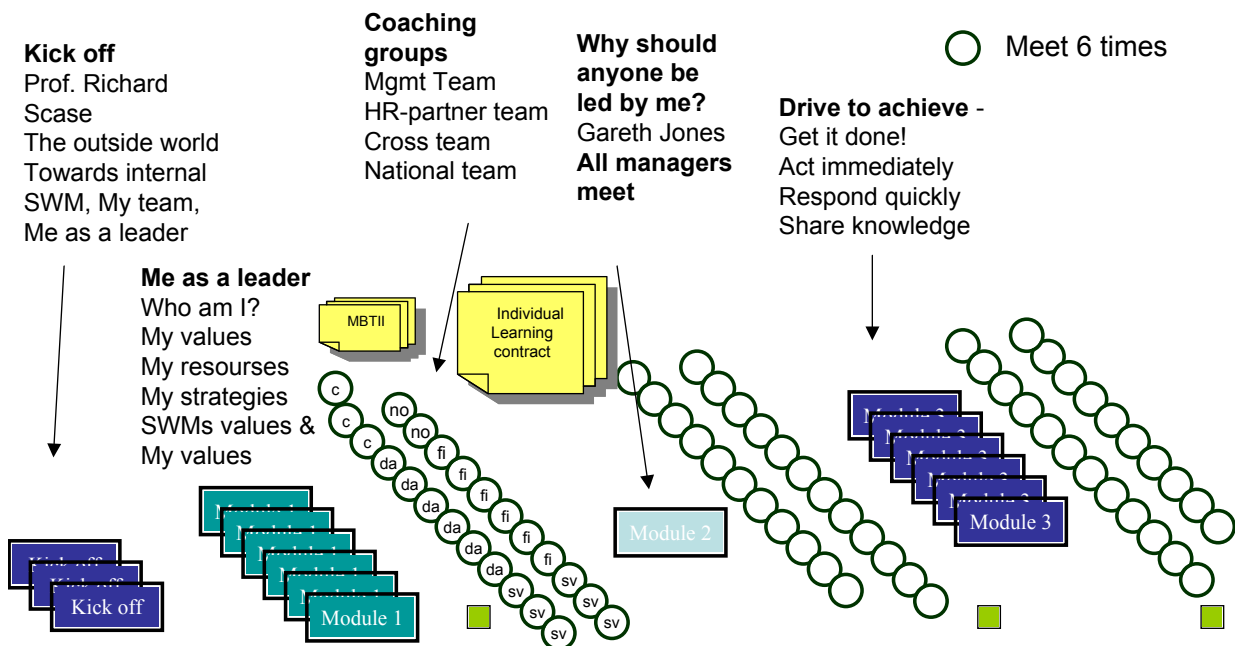
In order to focus on the connection...



...the management team wanted to give the program a high profile and they wanted some of the best international speakers on leadership to give presentations and elaborate on the connection.

Both LD and MiL Institute considered that the use of coaching groups was an important programme component for teaching coaching skills and for focusing on each manager's development. SWM wanted to make sure that there were sufficient opportunities for learning about oneself, and therefore individual coaching meetings with the group coaches were also added.

Below is a diagram showing the flow of the programme. To handle the complexity of it was a challenge. Administration, for instance, became an important quality aspect. Travels, planning, hotels, dinner seating, room and facilitation, all had to be dealt with.



Adding individual coaching to the programme also added a substantial cost, as it meant approximately 1 400 work hours equal to 35 work weeks. However, SWM's management trusted that the investment was worth the money.

Reflection & learning

It was important to involve the top management group in the contracting phase and the general design of the programme. The contract with SWM was thoroughly discussed with the result that the contract was strong and re-contracting, changes and additions to the contract were avoided. However, the involvement, which included several trips to all the Nordic capitals took a long time and resulted in a delay of the programme start.

Involvement from many parties in the design phase is very common in Nordea. It is not unusual that managers want to have detailed descriptions of each step of the programme. Sometimes managers or steering groups take an interest even in trainers' guides and exercises. Involving an ambitious and excited management team in the design work can easily get out of hand in so far that there might be many opinions, sometimes in opposition, and too much time gets spent on accommodating and planning. Even a very elaborate design and detailed manual unfortunately is illusionary in the sense that it does not take into account all that will happen once the process starts. A question becomes: Is such interest a need of control in disguise?

Is it instead possible to move the managers' interests towards a different question, i.e. how to link oneself to the programme? Each manager in a leading position is a symbol. By that we mean the obvious fact, which sometimes is forgotten, that the way the top managers participate affects the outcome positively or negatively. In this case the link was secured through full participation including individual coaching for the top team members, which signalled that they also had something to learn.

The question "is it for real?" was never really asked. Early on the management team decided to take part in the same way as others and it was followed with one exception. Eira herself participated and, as mentioned, was the welcoming host at all the Kick-offs. She clearly said: "This is a program with a format that means the more you give the more you get. You are the program yourself!" This full involvement in the modules, including the exercises, some of which were quite deep, no doubt created trust and a strong support from the other managers.

In order to accommodate the management's interest and perhaps need of control, manuals were produced showing the flow of the modules, concepts and contents as well as time allocated for different activities. For the first module a more detailed manual including all graphic presentations and the participants' documentation was produced and accepted. The original plan for the second module, which was designed as an open space interaction got changed several times in near collaboration with the

contact person in the management team. The third module, on the other hand, was run very much in the way it was planned from the beginning.

Compulsory or voluntary?

An important issue which was discussed a lot was whether participation in the programme would be compulsory or up to each individual. The decision was to make it compulsory but without control. Eira Palin-Lehtinen at the welcome speeches at the Kick-offs, elegantly pointed out at the first coffee-break: *“The ones who come back to the room after the break I will consider having freely decided to participate in the programme”*.

It turned out that all 165 managers in SWM participated. During the programme new managers were recruited. They too joined and were briefed about what had happened in the programme before they joined.

Reflection & learning

It is difficult to know what the quality of participation is when there is no real choice. Are people willing to participate fully? Or are they only letting time pass? Or dropping out after a while? After the first module the impressions varied. In one or two of the six modules some of the participants openly questioned the programme and had difficulties understanding the purpose.

Also, in the coaching groups some negative feelings were expressed. However, in the end, everybody participated in the whole programme and as the purpose of the programme became clearer, some of the critical voices stopped.

The one thing that put a strain on the managers' participation was the time pressure that most of them experience. To allocate whole days for modules and coaching took a lot of prioritising.

We did a lot of thinking in advance in order to make the programme attractive and to avoid drop-outs. However, in a large group it is “normal” that there are some sceptics and even some resistance and fear. We were actually surprised how positive the reactions generally were to be able to work with personal development. Perhaps a prejudice about bank employees on our side.

The criticism we picked up varied. To some extent it was “not another leadership programme!”. “Will we develop and do we want to develop?” was another question. A third reaction was: “I will wait and see what you are going to do before I say yes”. Obviously we could trace some fear in the coaching groups, which had to do with trust, not feeling safe and risking to be put on spot and criticised. Also, we suspect there was an element of being afraid of looking into oneself and finding unpleasant things.

One way to make it clear why focusing on one's own leadership and self-awareness would be worth the effort was to start with what is taking place in the outside world. Richard Scase was our guest at the Kick-offs in each country and he was asked to show how global changes also drive organisational challenges and affect the role of the leaders. His strong point is that leaders are made, not born and he discussed how to develop companies into talent farms. He also welcomed us into the age of the entrepreneur and into an exciting time where customer behaviour is dramatically changing⁴.

“We were quite good managers but we wanted to become Great Leaders!”

Kristina Elliot interviewed SWM's head Eira Palin-Lehtinen in August 2007, when the leadership programme was finished.

Why was the programme created?

We exist in an area with strong growth and are gaining 200 new employees. To do that we must have both management and leadership as supporters. A Nordic management team alone can't manage to give that support. We must have assistance from outside in order to get the leverage. We looked rather rationally at it and it was values, coaching and energising which all leaders needed. Today one doesn't start working at the bank and work for 30 years till retirement, but we must compete for the employees like all other banks. There was a clear analyses of strong continuous growth. And at the café dialogues we had at the Kick-offs it turned out that all the leaders were of that opinion too. When we combined everything and looked at the ESI results [Nordea's employee survey] and interviewed the leaders it showed that they felt uncertain of their roles. They are intelligent and can read a management book and learn to set financial goals etc. But how do we create a nice workplace?

The fact is that 100 out of 165 leaders are recruited because they are skilled specialists. In the management team we have been appraised for our professionalism, but from our interviews with the employees we have also understood that we need to learn more about coaching, energising and communication.

What is leadership?

Oh... well but everybody knows what leadership is... [laughter]. For me leadership is to make it possible for people to do the work. Management is to get the work done. I am convinced that we need good management in the regulated environment we live in. Rules, goals and management are needed as the platform that "focus, speed and performance" rests on.

⁴ Richards Scase's thinking is presented in his new book: "Global Remix, The fight for Competitive Advantage, 2007, Kogan Page Limited.

I am convinced that when we compete for skilled workers it is not we who interview the young ones, but they interview us to find out if they want to work here. Then something more is needed. They want meaning and fun. It is created through values, leadership and corporate culture. Sure enough it is created by money, but not only with money.

To improve the participants' emotional intelligence was a goal for the programme. What do you mean by emotional intelligence?

It is to use your eyes to see with. There is so much that can't be measured with traditional measurements. To see if your employees are feeling good. It is about intuition. If the leader really can see I believe he/she sees things long before the numbers show it. It is an "early indicator" and a tool to look ahead. What is needed in 3 years time? It can be analysed with the help of emotional intelligence.

In what way has the programme affected the business?

We have had noticeably less staff turnover during the programme, maybe because people wanted to do it to the end. When I have been around and listened I have picked up that the investment in future management and leadership has really been appreciated. Investing in people and creating fun jobs have been important aspects.

In a way it was a pity that the organisation was split up. It would have been interesting to see what the future effect had been, but we will not see that now. But many say it was fabulous luck that we run the programme before the split, since in the change process we need more leadership. People ask themselves: What happens with me? The group? The customers? Always in turbulence, for instance in the market turbulence that we have had recently we need a strong leadership. That's what the programme has helped with.

Is the SWM programme a pilot in Nordea or just something for SWM?

It came about from our own needs. We knew we were going to have a strong growth and that we had lots of specialists who needed to become good leaders. It was in the budget. We did not have a lot of general managers who could take on that responsibility. We had to develop the leadership in our specialists.

Could a similar programme be useful in other parts of Nordea?

Nordea has a strong platform regarding management and now we need to use corporate values, leadership and corporate culture as building blocks. It is important to improve the leadership everywhere. I believe the format of this programme would work in other places. It is not only in SWM we are competing for talent. The new values based leadership in Nordea will be complemented with new values and a strong growth platform based on values and corporate culture. My view on values is that all we do should be related to our new values "Great Customer Experience", "It's all about

People” and ”One Nordea team”. That’s what you need. It will probably be easier now when we are in the middle of a corporate strategy process, which we were not when the programme was carried out.

I now hope we will get some new Balanced Score Cards from upper management based on the new values. If the values platform is not in place we will do nothing more than cutting costs. I can’t separate financial results and results linked to values. It is the same thing. One needs wholeness for success. In the planning process what is measured is what happens. If a strategy has damn all to do with values or if something is not measured, nothing will happen. For me values are as strong as financial facts. It is my conviction. For me it is important that the job is a lot of fun. I hope now that the new values thinking will be included in the Key Performance Indicators!

But isn’t it using old ways to do new things? You mentioned an inner conviction had been enough?

To be a torch-bearer is not enough from a rational point of view. It might be natural in 50 years time, but we are not there yet. The 40ies and 50ies generations are good at goals, follow-up etc. I think we need to approach what is new with old methods. So beautiful has not the world become yet, not as long as we human beings are human. Just imagine that it would be enough with convictions... [laughter] to solve our problems!

Goals for the Leadership Programme

The goals the Management Team wanted the programme to achieve were to:

- Improve personal leadership and emotional intelligence
- Strengthen the Value Based Leadership in SWM
- Help the managers to implement the strategies in SWM. (Growth, One model, One SWM, One Nordea) and the Nordea Values
- Create a movement in SWM from specialist to leaders

Expected results were:

- Managers will be better at supporting others (coaching, energising, communication)
- Business will grow and become more profitable as a result of the programme
- Managers will be better at delivering results through others
- Lower turn-over of employees

The goals were presented at the Kick-offs. In café-dialogues the participants were invited to write down a list of suggestions regarding content and expectations they had on their future leadership and on the programme, and to add personal goals they would like to reach. This was done in order to pick up the needs from the group and create an interest.

The leadership programme aimed at ***personal development, emotional intelligence and self-awareness***. Early on, Eira Palin-Lehtinen and the Management Team were clear about what they wanted the leadership programme to incorporate. For her it was obvious that personal development, emotional intelligence and self-awareness are qualities which are needed in any organisation, regardless of circumstances, necessary for moving from specialists to leaders, for taking on broader leadership roles and for the business to grow.

Reflection & Learning

It is not often a leadership programme has such a strong emphasis on personal development. When the issue was brought up with SWM's Management Team they said that organisation and business development would come later. They trusted that personal development of the leaders would yield improved business results as a consequence.

In the planning stage there were more possible goals for the programme that were suggested. They had mostly to do with achieving business results. But they were taken away since the theory was that business results would be a result rather than a goal.

One Nordea is one of Nordea's key-targets, always communicated from the very top of the bank. It was also emphasised in the programme, both in the design and in the content, especially in the cross-border coaching teams. Nordea is a merger of different national banks. All systems are not yet coordinated. It is a strategy to achieve synergies by streamlining products so that all countries offer the same services and use the same systems e.g. IT, trading etc. The strategy also aims at taking advantage of each other's different strengths. However, the work has not been completed. There are perceived national and cultural differences, which cause problems in communications. Nordea is not more than six years old, which shows that from a marketing perspective and from building the brand externally the bank has succeeded. However, internally it takes longer time to build unity.

The leadership programme was aiming at supporting the movement towards One Nordea and creating a feeling of togetherness cross-functionally, cross-border and between people from various parts of the SWM organisation.

To share the same overall vision and share values is a way of overcoming cultural differences, which is said to be an obstacle for the cooperation between the four Nordic countries. Therefore, understanding each other's cultural patterns and idiosyncrasies was also a goal. It is worth mentioning that the One Nordea strategy is also served by English having been made the official corporate language.

From specialists to leaders. Many of the leaders have a dual role both as a leader and specialist. As in many other organisations it is easy to fall back onto the specialist role when work pressure builds up. Coaching and necessary conversations with employees get postponed. SWM is facing a future where many of the leaders will

have responsibility for an increased number of employees. Eira Palin-Lehtinen pointed out that she wanted to raise the level of emotional intelligence in the organisation and wanted managers to move from being mainly specialists to become leaders. She also wanted the leaders to be good at coaching.

One thought-provoking question, which was raised at the Kick-offs and then became a recurring theme throughout the programme was: “*Why should anyone be led by you?*”⁵.

In the design work another goal was expressed, which was more of an internal goal: ***It must be a success.*** In the discussions of how to achieve that, it was emphasised that one non-negotiable requirement to secure a successful outcome was to have the top managers participate in the same way as all other managers. That would be a way for them to become role models and to show the importance of the programme.

Another important aspect to achieve that goal was to design a high profile programme. Kick-offs took place within a few days of each other in three countries, where Eira Palin-Lehtinen and Kristina Elliot introduced the project. The international consultant and business professor from England, Richard Scase, gave inspirational arguments for how global changes requires individuals to change and why entrepreneurship and taking initiatives are fundamental for long-term business success. In the second programme module another well-known management professor and international consultant Gareth Jones presented. He coined a phrase, which many remembered:

**Be yourself
more
with skills**

Everyone got a copy each of a book “On the Mind of the Leader”⁶, a collection of inspirational articles about leadership. The book was later on discussed in some of the coaching groups.

Reflection & Learning

Some people have a learning style which means they want to read and reflect. We wanted to accommodate those. Giving a certain academic flavour to the programme we thought would increase the credibility. Also, we didn't want to invent the wheel again but take advantage of some of the leadership theories that have also been proven practical and working.

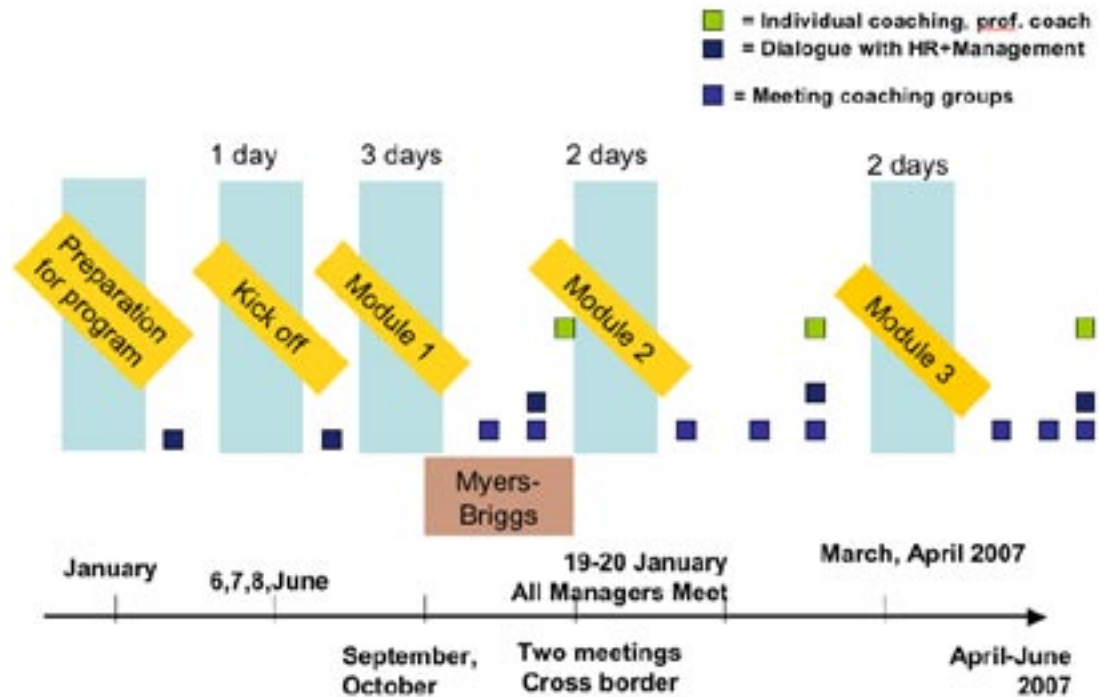
⁵ From “Why should anyone be led by you?” By Robert Goffee & Gareth Jones, article in Harvard Business Review, Sept-Oct 2000

⁶ Harvard Business Review, 2005.

The design

The programme was designed with three main components:

- Modules
- Coaching teams
- Individual coaching



After the Kick-offs, which started in June 2006, there were three modules. The first and the third were held in each of the four countries with 25-35 participants. There were two in Denmark and Finland and one in Sweden and Norway. The first module, which was three days, took place in August-September 2006. The second module was held in Denmark in January 2007 over two days and on that occasion all 165 leaders were gathered and the third, which was two days, in March-April 2007.

Reflection & Learning

A discussion went on as to whether the first module would run over two or three days. We argued in favour of an extra day.

Our experience is that so much more happens that extra day.

Assimilation of new thoughts takes time, it can't be rushed. Getting to know each other is also a process, which can't be speeded up.

In particular, a programme which is about personal development, needs a lot of processing and ample time to reflect.

The design process went through a number of stages. Two questions came up “What language?” And “How to mix the groups?” Early on the ‘One Nordea’ concept was considered so important that all modules would have a mixed group of participants from all the different Nordic countries with English as the language. On second

thought, however, it was decided to run module one and three in the language of each country. The coaching groups were mixed in the sense that leaders with a ‘cross-border’ task, i.e. working over all the Nordic countries, were mixed in English-speaking groups. Other leaders formed groups where they could speak their native language. In the second module all leaders were gathered in Denmark in one place and English was the main language. All material has been written in English just like most of LD’s training material and other documents in Nordea.

Reflection & Learning

Since the merging of the Nordic banks, Nordea’s official company language has been English. Regardless of this, it was considered important that the participants were not restricted by language barriers, therefore the process was set up so that when they were to talk about themselves, they were allowed to use their mother tongue.

There exists a polarity between what can be called global and local. English as a company language creates communication barriers. Local languages help communication but do not support the idea of creating One Nordea.

What is personal development?

Personal development covers a lot of areas. There are many ways to describe what it is, e.g. higher consciousness, learning about oneself, maturing, self-awareness, growing, and there are endless methods, tools and techniques to teach it and to practise it. Personal development is a theme in philosophy, religion, psychology and literature throughout history. “Know yourself” was inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. However, with limited time we had to choose certain aspects, which we thought would be easy to understand, easy to communicate, easy to observe and reflect on and easy and fun to start practising.

As a start we elaborated on a quotation from the management professor Warren Bennis: “If you can’t manage yourself, you can’t manage anything”. Personal development happens all the time as a result of our experiences and as we grow older, however, we suggested it can be accelerated through strong intention, focus, support and practice.

Areas of personal development, which were included:

- Mental models
- Humanistic world view
- Goals and visions
- Motivation and meaning
- Personal values
- Learning orientation

Learning about oneself begins with knowing who you are. Already the first day, when the programme started, the leaders were asked to introduce themselves to a small group of colleagues. The task was to spend half a day in an exercise called “The Mill”, which is about finding out personal aspects of oneself and listening to other’s views on important life issues.

The Participants moved around to different “stations”, which had different themes:

- My values. What is important to me?
- This is why anyone should be led by me.
- A motto that you have as a leader?
- When I sit in the rocking chair, have moved to the old peoples’ home or if I died today what would I like people to say about me? Vision – build your own vision
- Life line – where am I in life? In the beginning, middle or end? What makes you believe so?
- Five things that make me happy and smiling. What gives me energy?
- Five weaknesses and five strengths – unique talents you have and unique weaknesses
- Tell about one real success you have had and one real failure/mistake you have done.
- What is important to you when you were/are/will be 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100 years old? What is important at different ages?

The goal with the exercises was to help the participants to increase self-awareness. It was an appreciated exercise. One of the participants said: *“It is really luxurious to get the opportunity to spend time during work hours being paid by the employer on such important issues”*.

Emotional intelligence

We used this concept as a way to communicate an aspect of the human being, which in many cases tends to be under-developed and, especially in organisations, not emphasised or valued. Emotional intelligence was presented with the following components:

- Knowing one’s emotions. Self-awareness.
- Managing emotions
- Motivating oneself
- Recognising feelings in others. Empathy
- Handling relationships. Social competence

These concepts are to a large extent the same as Daniel Goleman defined as emotional intelligence.⁷ The managers got familiar with the concepts through presentations, exercises, dialogues and documentation.

⁷ Goleman, Daniel: “Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ”. Bantam 1995)

Myers Briggs Type Indicator

To increase personal insight and learning about themselves and other's ways of behavioural preferences the participants were invited to do his/her profile based on Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This took place after the first module and personal feedback together with a written analysis was given. Further discussions about each other's profiles were held in the coaching teams.

In the second module a corporate SWM MBTI profile and also country profiles were presented and processed. This was an attempt to work with the cultural differences between the four Nordea countries in a different way. The results don't show any big differences in profiles between the countries. The Finnish are just as extravert as the Danish. In the large meeting when all the 165 managers were together they could compare the differences. It was a great relief and also fun for them to observe how, regardless of nationality or profession, they ended up in the same MBTI profile group.

Reflection & Learning

MBTI profiles for the different nations were more similar than many had expected. It was not possible to trace back the perceived difficulties to communicate to different MBTI-profiles. The question then becomes, are cultural and national differences just concepts that are easy to fall back on when there are differences, let's say, in opinions or views? Is it a safe way of not having to take full responsibility for one's relationships, to avoid being held responsible for bad communications and questionable results?

Cultural expressions shows up for example as language patterns or body language styles and cover who you really are. This should really be discussed more often. Even though MBTI profiles give only a partial aspect of a person it became a real eye-opener for many of the managers.

A concept like One Nordea can relatively quickly result in changes on a structural level, e.g. integration of IT, trading systems etc. However, on a deeper human and cultural level only introducing the concept alone will not change very much. It must be supported by a process that usually takes a long time. Is it possible that such a concept, if it is used as a slogan or mantra, actually exaggerates the differences rather than reducing them? Could it be that perceived cultural differences between countries grow and become stronger only because the intention is to create uniformity? Focusing on polarities sometimes strengthens them...

How far is it effective to go in standardising in order to achieve One Nordea? Can it go too far? This is probably not a question only for Nordea. Unification and standardisation is something

many companies strive for. But it creates a lot of pain in the organisation, especially where people are close to the customer. Bringing in One Nordea created some very important conversations especially in the coaching groups. The polarity or tension between global and local was strongly felt by many and the pain and difficulty to deal with the tension became visible.

One Nordea has now been changed into One Nordea Team. Our interpretation is that it means the focus now is on unification and on working together, which obviously will mean also nurturing and using differences for the benefit of the organisation.

Bringing personal development into leadership

In order to connect personal development with the work situation a metaphor was used which we called “I, Inc”. The leaders were asked to see themselves as an independent small one-person entrepreneurial business, which has SWM as its customer. Using this metaphor the leaders concluded that the “product/service” they delivered to the organisation is leadership. They identified “demand areas” of the “customer” and they asked themselves what they wanted the content of their product/service to be. An amusing question also became how to price your product. Is the quality on par with the price? Using the I, Inc. concept helped the leaders to see that leadership is not only defined top-down, by the organisation chart or by leadership policies, but as much by personal initiatives, creativity and taking responsibility.

Reflection & Learning

An insight for the managers: It works to apply the same kind of managerial tools as everybody is using in his/her profession, e.g. investing, having a strategy, planning, budgeting, goal setting, etc, on oneself. This aspect of personal development is not about acquiring new knowledge or go deep into yourself, it is instead about using existing skills but changing focus.

Self-managed learning

“I have learnt that you have to take responsibility for your own situation and implement the changes that make it possible to develop the unit the way you want”

(Swedish participant)

The coaching groups were based on the need of the participants. The philosophy of self-managed learning is that learning starts from where you are. Behavioural self-management is the process of modifying one’s own behaviour by systematically managing cues, cognitive processes and contingent consequences. More easily

explained it is a way to see that learning and behavioural change relies on the individual who takes the responsibility to change himself or herself.⁸ There are close links to the principles of ICF's (International Coaching Federation) coaching standards. The emphasis there is on behaviour and the focus is not on changing attitudes, values or personality but to understand them more and link them to what is desired at work. In this case self-managed learning techniques were applied in the coaching groups and to some extent in the modules.

Coaching in teams – learning groups

Coaching groups were established in order to deepen the personal learning, to give each participant a chance to discuss his or her situation and get ideas of how to implement new ideas. The goals for the coaching groups were:

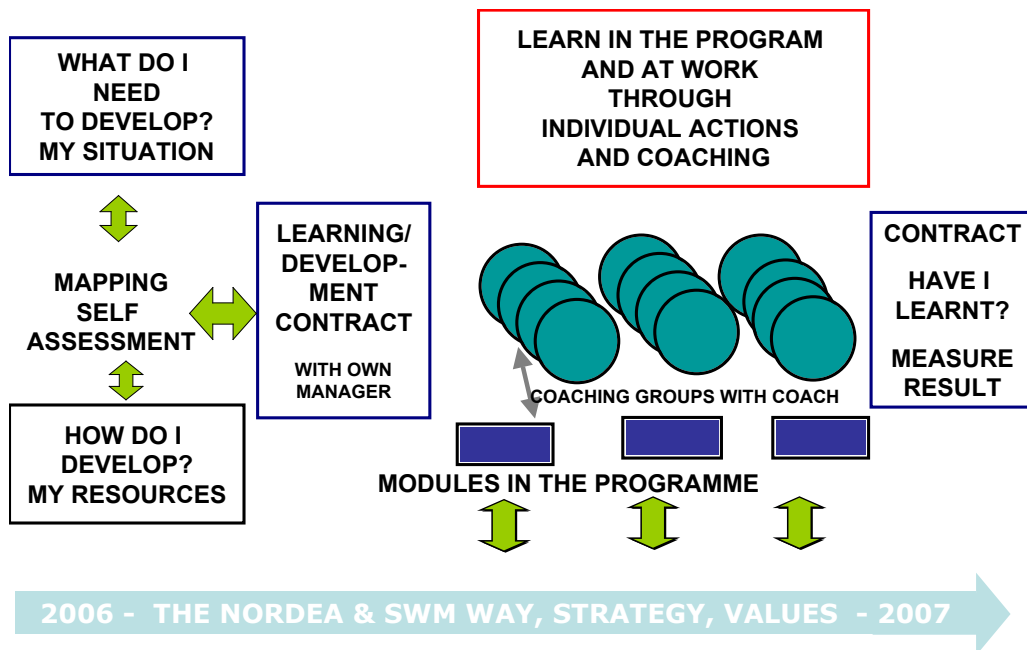
- Develop coaching skills
- Give support for your role as a leader
- Develop personal leadership style
- Support learning together with others

One way of developing coaching skills was to practice on each other. On average there were 5-7 people in each group and one coach. The coaching groups began to work after the first module and decided themselves together with the coach when to meet. The coaching groups met six times. All in all 26 coaching groups were established.

The main parts of the coaching groups were not functionally organised. That means that leaders who normally work together were not in the same group. Exceptions to that were the Nordic management team and the Swedish, Finnish and Danish management teams who, except for the national heads (who were part of the Nordic management team) formed a coaching team. The HR-partners also formed one coaching team. The Nordic and national management teams and the HR-group had an additional focus. That was to be a reference group for the programme, to pick up ideas and suggestions that came out of it and integrate them into the business.

In addition to the work in coaching teams there was a possibility for the leaders to have three individual coaching sessions with a learning coach. That added up to an impressive 480 coaching sessions.

⁸ Luthans and Kreitner: Behavioral Self-Management – The Missing Link in Managerial Effectiveness”, Organisational Dynamics 1979
Foresman: Organisational behavior Modification and Beyond: An Operate and Social Learning Approach. 1985



This is how the coaching groups were presented to the participants:

Along the process there will be coaching teams. They will be managed by MiL Institute and LD consultants who are professional coaches. MiL Institute has a long experience of managing and facilitating leadership programmes based on personal leadership and of development in small groups. They are also together with LD in Nordea in charge of running the coaching groups/learning groups as well as the modules. The groups will primarily be local with national language. The group is a support for individual development. The content will be based on individual needs. The coaching concept means that we start where the individuals are rather than setting a fixed agenda for all.

In the process all participants will be trained by the consultants in how to coach – tools for coaching, processes etc. The MBTI-results will also be processed in the learning group. All individuals will get personal feedback in the coaching group and if the individuals want they can discuss and share it with each other. Each coach will offer the participants in their group individual coaching.

Reflection & Learning

Looking back, we could and probably should have organised some of the coaching groups differently. The country management teams formed a coaching group but without its manager who belonged to the top management coaching team. Therefore, the national managers' coaching groups were complete except for one very important person and that hampered the work to some extent. On the other hand, the question became: How do we inform and include our manager in our process?

Programme resources

With the simultaneous roll-out of the programme a large number of coaches and resource persons were needed. In order to cover 24 coaching teams 17 consultants were involved. LD contributed 10 and MiL 7 consultants. Kristina Elliot was the project manager and Göran Wiklund was MiL's contact person and coordinated MiL's resources. The consultants involved from LD in Nordea were, Sari Ilo, Micael Duncan, Kristin Løvenskiold, Frank Løfqvist, Martti Nikkinen, Marie Lück Søfelt, Göran Månsson, Lars-Åke Dahl, Karin Nordlund, Pirjo Kuusela and Kristina Elliot. The MiL consultants were: Göran Wiklund, Anneli Valpola, Maria Delmar, Inger Dræby, Lars Marmgren, Renée Widmark, Arne Vestergaard and Øystein Rennemo.

Co-operation LD and MiL Institute

It became obvious very early on that the design required a large staff for its execution. MiL Institute's consultant, Göran Wiklund, was contacted by Kristina Elliot during the preparatory phase in the spring 2006 with the question if MiL Institute would be interested in discussing a co-operation for providing the resources that were needed.

It was stated from the beginning that it was in both parties' interests to develop a co-operation: MiL Institute could learn more about large-scale programmes and co-operation with an internal consulting organisation as the customer. LD could learn about MiL Institute's way of doing coaching, especially coaching in groups. Both parties were curious to learn about each others' way of working and using pedagogic tools.

A more down to earth reason for the co-operation was the fact that LD did not have the capacity, since some of the consultants were already booked for other projects.

According to the preferred partner contract MiL Institute's role was limited to that of a resource supplier for leadership programmes based on set designs. However, in this case the design conversations with different parties from SWM had not been finalised and MiL Institute's coordinator therefore got involved in the design work, which was a parallel process to figuring out how the resources of the two consulting organisations could be used in the best way. Only after that had taken place was it possible for MiL Institute to put together a cost estimate, which then was accepted by first LD and then integrated into the total price for the joint work of LD and MiL Institute, which SWM accepted.

Reflection & Learning

From the customer's point of view a simple solution was to regard MiL Institute as a supplier of coaches and resources for the modules. With a complex design process as in the SWM case, it became evident that design and manning of all the different roles was affected by available personal resources, i.e. suitable consultants not being fully booked for other consulting tasks.

Consultants fluent in the different Nordic languages as well as in English were needed. Organising the programme staff with so many restrictions and to fit the design therefore became a quite intricate matter.

Delivery of modules

It had been decided that the first and the third modules should take place in each country in the local language. Organisationally that raised some problems. The original idea was that one LD consultant should be the responsible for each module and one MiL Institute consultant should be active one day as a resource person. In most cases, however, this person was present for more than one day to get to know the group and secure quality. In that way there was more of a shared responsibility between the two consultants.

Two modules were offered in Finland with the same team both times. One module was run in Norway and one in Sweden with the same MiL consultant but different LD consultants. In Denmark two modules were run with the same LD consultant but different MiL Institute consultants. All in all 8 consultants were active in delivering the modules.

The first module

Before the first module a meeting was held in Klippan between LD and MiL Institute's consultants responsible for each country. That was the first time some of the consultants met. In addition to getting to know each other time was spent on going through the design of the module. A problem was that not all the consultants could attend the meeting.

One of the prerequisites was that all participants should be given basically the same experience and the same message regardless of which country module he/she attended. That turned out to be a difficult task for several reasons. One was the short time the teams had for preparing. Another was the fact that MiL Institute's consultants when forming a programme staff are used to creating the design as part of the staff integration work. In this case the design of the first module was already decided on, including the content, concepts and timing. That caused some friction as it was perceived as infringing on the freedom of the team. However, it was emphasised that the manual served as a framework but not to be slavishly followed. It was said that exercises, examples, and interventions should be characterised by each team's individual temperament and personal style.

Reflection & Learning

Here we experienced an organisational culture clash between MiL Institute and LD. LD are used to working with large groups and delivering the same concept many times. MiL Institute's experience is basically coming from situations where customised design is standard. For many LD-consultants the reality is that they are

flying back and forth to the Nordic and Baltic countries working with different business areas. The only way of coping with the workload and to be helped in the facilitation role is by making detailed training guides. This is also a way of storing knowledge from one programme to the next. It took some time to come to terms with the different work styles for the freelancing MiL-consultants and the employed LD-consultants. This is probably one of the difficulties many consultancy companies have when working with large corporations, that want to do things the same way over business areas or internationally. For MiL Institute it is necessary, in order to participate in large-scale projects to be willing to 1) accept to deliver programmes, which are designed by the customer and 2) run repetitious programmes where one of the goals is to make them similar.

Coaching

“The group exercises have been very effective – we have reached a communications level in the group which we didn’t have before in the same way. It is easier than earlier to get to the point directly, both regarding ourselves and our respective issues.”

(Participant)

Coaching is one of the leadership competencies that all Nordea managers get measured on in the yearly ESI (Employee Satisfaction Index). Nordea is working under the International Coach Federation (ICF) coaching concept. Most of the LD-consultants are certified by the ICF’s standards.

One coaching tool that was used was the GROW model which stand for Goals – Reality – Opportunities – Will and represents a sequence that can be followed in the coaching process.

Nordea’s Coaching Concept (Summarised)

Nordea has a strong focus on developing coaching skills amongst the managers. Nordea’s Coaching Concept is a training programme in Leadership Coaching, a vehicle for moving Nordea from Good to Great. Moving from knowing “It’s all about people”, “One Nordea team” and “Great customer experiences” to practising it in the leadership role. More than 1 000 managers have participated in the programmes.

The Coaching Concept consist of four levels:
Coaching – Level 1, Coaching Basics
Coaching – Level 2, Coaching Experienced
Coaching – Level 3, Team Coaching Basics
Coaching – Level 4, Team Coaching Experienced
Coaching Programme for Executives

Participants will start at the basic level and then move on to other levels as their skills develop.

To guarantee the quality of the programme it was important that a common ‘language’ was established and that all participants basically had similar experiences. When the programme started we only had a short time for coordination of the coaching work. Both LD and MiL Institute have extensive experience of coaching work, but at the outset it was not clear if the working styles of the two organisations were similar. One need was to make sure that the content of the modules was integrated by the participants, and it was decided that the coaching teams would be a place to follow up and discuss what was presented in the modules.

In order to accomplish such streamlining a detailed *Coaching Guide* was produced and distributed to all coaches. The guide covered general methods for coaching, areas to cover, the GROW model, and detailed design for the first module. For the second session there was a design guideline to help the coach – especially the ones who were not participating in the modules and therefore cut off from valuable information.

In the group processes the coaches were instructed to step back over time and let the participants decide what to work with and how. The idea with this self-managed group concept, which both LD and MiL Institute have a long experience of, was to make the groups independent of external resources. Towards the end of the coaching, i.e. the fifth time the groups met it was suggested that the coaches were not present. The sixth meeting was then an opportunity for the groups to decide whether they wanted to continue on their own.

The importance of being quite structured in the beginning of a self-managed learning process is also an experience from previous leadership programmes. It is also emphasised in the book “Självstyrt lärande”⁹ written by Kristina Elliot, Jörgen Hansson and other colleagues from the MiL-network. The book was translated into English for IKEA’s Self-Managed Learning programmes.

“Accept it takes time. It takes time to formulate learning needs partly because of the mapping phase and also because it takes time to boil down the impressions and to accept the result. It can, in the first place, seem easy to formulate learning needs but it is far away from that. We have learned that it takes about 1/3 of the program to formulate a learning contract. This often creates worries and is unproductive in the beginning”⁹.

We had the same experience. A difference, however, was that each manager had also individual coaching sessions to set goals. Ones who had a good coaching said they got helped in formulating the learning needs.

In many self-managed programmes it has been described how difficult it can be in the beginning. Ashridge Management College writes¹⁰:

⁹ Jörgen Hansson (red) Självstyrt lärande – när katedern inte räcker till. MiL Publishers 2000.

¹⁰ The Ashridge Guide to Self-Managed Development, 1994.

”As a manager you may feel energized by this freedom, and relish the challenge of undertaking your own development journey. Yet, as with any expedition, preparing and starting out is often the most difficult bit. Companies have a responsibility here: they cannot just leave you to decide on your own direction and somehow come back suitably enriched and experienced. You need, want and deserve structured support in planning out your personal itinerary and in sharing and testing out ideas. In many cases you may need help in learning how to learn”.

We wanted to diminish the difficulties for the participants by providing structure. This aspect was not quite easy to convey to all the coaches “Do I have to use a guide? I am experienced enough to do without it”, was a typical reaction. Another advantage of a guide was that the participants had a shared reality in the beginning before each coaching team moved in their own direction.

In the planning we were aware of these difficulties and especially with 17 consultants from four countries and two organisations it was important to have a firm structure in the beginning and then back off as the coaching groups became more and more self-organised and knew where they wanted to go.

An aspect of self-managed learning groups is that the team members naturally tend to stay with familiar issues. The unexpected and unknown is seldom brought in. One doesn't know what one doesn't know and therefore what ever resides in that somewhat mystical area never gets explored. With an external resource such new perspectives can be brought in. It becomes the role of the consultant/coach to help the group members to see what they haven't seen and to move reflections up to a higher level, a meta level, at which they can get a larger perspective and generalise their experiences into learning.

“The most important thing I learned was what I learned about myself!”
(Participant from Denmark)

I have developed insight about my own strengths and weaknesses. I will be more open-minded to people with a different approach.
(Participant from Finland)

From one of the coaches:

All the managers did their MBTI profiles. To discuss what it was like to be an extravert or intravert and how that reflects on how you deal with the world has given them a lot of new insights. Not only for the individuals themselves but also how they handle their own employees. To talk openly about how difficult it can be to get into a discussion if you are an intravert and how extraverts might think that they are not appreciated as they don't get any response were interesting topics in the group. How can we help each other? What do you need? How do I feel when you.... etc? Many of the participants probably did not think of it as part of emotional intelligence. Some thought this concept, as it was presented in the modules, was a bit intellectual as they might not have linked it to what was going on in the coach group. The atmosphere has been very open in the meetings and every time someone has opened up it has helped the others in their development. Things that have been discussed in the group are the meaning of life, what do I dream of, what is difficult for me and what you can do about it, disappointments, joy, turning points, relations with my nearest, relations with my manager, what is important to me, etc.

Reflection & Learning

An interesting result of the work in the coaching groups is that team performance has risen in their own teams at home. Participants have reported they have been brave and practised what they have learnt, used methods and tools, which were used in their coaching group. The coach group is a place for experiments, for searching new views on dilemmas. A place to feel safe.

In the first coaching session each participant was asked what goals to achieve in the coaching process, on one hand his or her leadership task/role and on the other hand personal development goals. The idea was that the goals should be written and distributed to each of the group members so that the continuous coaching process could take place with the goals as a backdrop and that situations that were discussed could be related to the individual goals.

When the coaching groups started the coaches were asked to have the group agree on ground-rules for the work.

Examples of ground-rules in a coaching group

Between participants

- Use the group to learn about different cultures in SWM
- Agree on topics to work with
- Open dialogue; listen to each other, share actively opinions and information
- Respect each others opinion
- Turn off telephones when together (make calls during breaks)
- Structured way of working, keep to the point
- Be brave
- Be honest; no cheating
- Challenge each other
- Support each other
- Confidentiality
- Give oneself and others a chance to change and learn

The role of the coach is to

- Keep the context
- Support learning
- Give feedback

As information about the re-organising of Nordea came out the coaching groups became a forum for discussing the consequences. In some groups there was a lot of strong feelings and anger was expressed. The management got blamed. The coach dealt with that by mirroring back and asking the group how they, if they had been responsible for the re-organisation, would have acted.

Learning & Reflection

Coaching groups with an open agenda, deciding amongst the members what to talk about gave raise to an idea: What about having coaching teams as a support system in organisations that go through changes? Such groups could first of all be a safe container for all feelings that want to be expressed. Also, the groups could be a forum for exploring the consequences of the change, discuss ideas for implementation of new goals and what the change does mean for me, how do I go about it, how do I inform my own employees, etc. Such groups could be established as an informal organisational structure, which complements the formal.

However, just as in the SWM case, it takes a lot of courage from the management to accept this organisation, since you don't know what they will be talking about. You have to have trust.

Individual goals

In the coaching participants were asked to set goals to be achieved, on one hand leadership goals and on the other hand personal development goals. The participants were given examples of such goals as a help.

At Module 1, the participants were asked to collect feedback about themselves from colleagues, which could be used in the goal settings. The participants were expected to present individual goals at the first coaching team session. The goals would then be discussed with the participant's manager and approved. The individuals in each group shared their goals with each other and during the course of the meetings the goals were subject to continuous revision.

The goals formed a learning contract, that we suggested should be taken seriously and each participant was expected to be held accountable for reaching the goals. In order to make the learning goals a contract it was suggested in the coaching guide that the coach make the group members collectively promise to support each other in reaching the goals.

What very soon became obvious was that the managers were not used to thinking of goals in this context, and setting personal goals was an unfamiliar and difficult process. The coaches were therefore instructed to ask the managers to not only suggest goals but to talk in terms of ambitions, directions they wanted to take their leadership, development steps necessary to take, intentions, directions, what results they wanted to achieve from being in a coaching group. The idea was to use a language, which was easier to grasp and relate to. Even so, the difficulties persisted for many. Therefore, forming individual goals became part of the coaching sessions both in the groups and in individual sessions.

Individual goals:

Examples of personal goals

- Develop communication skills, social skills and coaching skills
- Deepen understanding of emotional intelligence
- Establish a mentor relationship
- Work less, create a balance between work and leisure time
- Improve my ability to prioritise and be able to say no
- Improve my skills to give feedback, both positive and negative
- Develop a system that stops my last minute behaviour
- Structure my work in a way that my environment experiences me as engaged as in fact I am
- A better structure to my daily routines

Examples of leadership goals

- Create a mutual picture regarding the development of my unit
- Become better at implementing processes in my unit
- Improve cooperation and exchange of experiences between my employees
- Improve the structure of follow-up on performance
- Use the experience of older colleagues
- Increase my mental and physical presence with my staff
- Show more enthusiasm

Reflection & Learning

The managers are used to having business goals and job related goals. Using the leadership programme as an instrument for becoming a better leader was easy to understand, but to break down a general intention into specific development and improvement areas and specifying goals was difficult.

A distinct difference seems to exist between job related goals and individual development goals. Could a consequence be that the managers don't see their own power to create a difference and that improved personal capacity and effectiveness is directly connected to work quality and work effectiveness? Do they not see the potential to develop as a human being?

This difficulty to formulate individual goals was reported by many of the coaches. Is there something in the bank culture that brings about this disconnection? Neither LD nor MiL Institute has seen this phenomenon so clearly before.

It is, however, important to point out that the mental difficulty to formulate individual goals did not in any way limit the learning that took place but it was mostly not driven by goals.

Coaching the top management team

The top management team wanted to participate in the same way as others and that included forming a coaching team. One idea was to make this coaching group and its coach independent of the rest of the programme and not organised under the Project Manager but have the management team itself as the customer. The intention was to create a safe space for any kind of conversation. The coach was Lars Marmgren from MiL Institute. His contract became somewhat different because of these conditions. It turned out that there was no real opening for coaching each other or giving each other individual feedback in the group. An attempt from the coach to do so was not accepted. The group preferred to have a less challenging working style. In addition to be a forum for following the progress of the leadership programme a focus area became defining the role of the management team and making clear who belonged to the team and who didn't.

Reflection & Learning

We realised that becoming an accepted coach for the top management team was not an easy task. Therefore we introduced Lars Marmgren at a management meeting and asked Eira Palin Lehtinen to meet with him before the programme started.

Coaching the top management group level did not work as intended. Our interpretation is that there was not enough safety to be open and share personal issues. The work became more

management group development. On the other hand, in individual coaching sessions there was a willingness to go into personal matters.

The second module

When all 165 leaders gathered at Marienlyst outside Helsingør, this was actually the first time all the SWM leaders came together in one place. The management team therefore wanted the gathering to be socially oriented, with special focus on One Nordea. The gathering itself was intended to demonstrate the meaning of that concept. One intention was to achieve a high “bar index”, which meant encouraging networking over a glass of beer till early in the morning.

As all managers were gathered it was an opportunity for the top management team to become visible. Therefore, LD’s and MiL Institute’s coordinators invited the team to run the second module and also share some of their own learning and express their leadership ambitions. The final design, however, became a mix of different activities. The members of the management team lead a process where, after Eira Palin-Lehtinen’s had given her view of the future for SWM, they went around and collected information from the participants based on the following question: “*What does it take from you as a leader?*” The result was then presented to the whole group.

Some of the answers were: Strengthen the people-oriented leadership, ensure that SWM keeps the talents, motivate the employees and make use of differences.

At this module the management consultant and business professor Gareth Jones gave an inspiring presentation and as already mentioned this was an opportunity to work with the cultural differences in the organisation in a different way as individual MBTI profiles were added up to an organisational profile and national profiles. This was presented by Björn Hillström at Assessio.

At the first module all six groups had been informed that they were expected to deliver some kind of entertainment at the second module. The dinner was set so that stage performances could take place. The groups had a couple of hours to do the final preparations. The tension in each group went up as they learned what went on in the other groups.

It was interesting to learn about the processes that went on. As one manager describes it: “It was total chaos in our room before the performance. A room full of 45 managers all used to be in charge. Now we really had to team up. One was screaming out really loud trying to get us organised. Comparing the frustration and also the fun we had in that situation to the outdoor exercises where we all preformed really well is interesting. Does that mirror how we work in our organisation in the daily work?” Although there was chaos, the creativity and quality of the performances were very high.

Reflection & Learning

Creating together, for instance an entertainment evening, is a creative process that has a deeper meaning. To realise that there is an untapped creative potential in an organisation raises the questions: What more can we do with this creativity? and the bigger one "What else are we hiding to ourselves? It certainly increases the organisational self-image and self-confidence. Someone from the top management team pointed out:" If we ever get out of bank-business we could always go into show-business. This evening showed that we have a lot of talent!"

This exercise was probably one of the most important learnings in the programme. Even though the task was very blurry, and with a group of approximately 20-40 participants, which took a lot of organisation and team-work, the result was excellent.

The third module

One area, which we found needed more emphasis was individual goal setting and to follow up on what the leaders were doing differently as a result of the participation. We also decided to come back to the questions we asked in the first module. How do I see myself, how do others see me? Who would I like to be? What do I see in me, what do others see in me? Have I developed? We used Johari's window as a means. One important activity in the third module was to experience some "comfort zone expansion" to find the link between values and behaviour and also how others see that link. One exercise that can be perceived as a little abstract but also very interesting was to create an "installation" of their own development in the programme using clay as the means of expression. Other methods which were used was to make a film of everyone's leadership philosophy, to get personal feedback from each other using the "hot chair" and do out-door exercises.

Real listening affects reality

On the first day of the third module we let the participants in Stockholm do outdoor exercises. One of the exercises was to bring a group of nine through a 'cobweb', a grid made of ropes. The task was to bring the whole group through without touching the ropes, which can be done by lifting each other up and through. The groups were very surprised how well they managed.

The next day we started by sitting in a circle reflecting. One of the women said she had not learnt anything about leadership through the exercise. There was a moment's silence. Then someone argued that he certainly had learnt a lot and he challenged the woman. The leader of the reflection suggested that everyone should share what he or she had got out of the exercise without questioning each other. The person who did it immediately realised what had happened and excused himself. A silence

followed. Then one after another they started to tell what the learning had been and what they could use in their leadership. It was noticeable from what was said that there was a deep listening and that what was said was inspired by previous speakers. They were building on each other's reflections. When nothing more needed to be said the participants were asked to reflect on the reflection. There was a shift of attention from yesterday to present time. Viewpoints that came up were how much one had learnt from listening to each other, how pleasant it had been with silence between the sharings. Someone even suggested that a decision should be taken to use this form of conversation at work.

The woman who opened the process had, through her sharing, created something that could result in an organisational change. Had she been aware of that? Had she expected this to happen? She said she had not. The reflection that followed had to do with the fact that we can affect reality through what we do and say. Had she not said what she said the reflection process would have taken a different direction, it is impossible to tell which. Leadership in this situation was to start talking, to share what was inside. Also, there was a direct experience of the quality of a conversation where there were no arguments, objections were withheld and instead real listening took place.

Organisational change

At the time for the third module a change at the top of Nordea took place as Christian Clausen took over as the new CEO. In May it was communicated that Eira Palin-Lehtinen would quit her job and a new head of SWM had been appointed.

This is the press release that was published:

Nordea streamlines its organisation and appoints new member of Group Executive Management

26.4.2007 08:30

The changed organisational structure, which will be established in the period up till 1 July 2007, implies a stronger customer orientation and a more simple, transparent and efficient product and service delivery chain. In addition, it contains a clear separation of the responsibilities for customer relations and products.

The stronger customer orientation will be supported by combining the corporate customer units in the bank and establishing one Nordic customer area, "Nordic Banking". This customer area will be responsible for sales and customer relationship processes covering retail and corporate segments in the Nordic region. This will streamline the customer organisation and gather the corporate relationship management competencies.

The product and service delivery chain will be streamlined by organising all products and related processing in the Group in two new product areas, "Banking & Capital Market Products" and "Savings & Life Products" with a simplified governance structure for the interface between customer and product units. Within these two new product areas four product divisions will be formed: Account Products, Cash Management & Payments, Capital Market Products and Savings Products & Asset Management.

A new framework for prioritisation and management of the Groups' strategic initiatives will be established with an Executive Strategy Committee to support Group Executive Management in selecting, driving and assessing the most important strategic initiatives of the Group.

- The changed organisation will take Nordea to its next level of operational efficiency by integrating and optimising the cross organisational processes following a successful rationalisation within each of the business areas and Group functions during the past 4 - 5 years. The changes will support our organic growth strategy by improving the quality of our customer relations and increase time spent with customers. In addition we will reduce time-to-market of our products. Our revised vision and values foundation is reflected in this new integrated Group operating model, says President and Group CEO Christian Clausen.

Revised vision and values

The Group's vision and values foundation have been revised. The vision has been adjusted to mirror the increased ambitions of the Group. The new Nordea vision reads:

"The leading Nordic bank, acknowledged for its people, creating superior value for customers and shareholders"

The Group's values foundation has also been adjusted to better support the realisation of the vision and the organic growth strategy. In addition to the existing foundation three new elements "Great customer experiences", "It's all about people" and "One Nordea Team" have been included. As a consequence of this a new business support area, People & Identity will be established consisting of three divisions Group Human Resources, Group Identity & Communications and Marketing. This will also strengthen the Nordea brand and the focus on people management in the Group. [.....]

The Leadership programme ended after the third module and after the six coaching group sessions, some of which went on till after summer 2007. The experience of having coaching teams was so good that the Management Team decided to let the groups who wanted to do so continue during the autumn 2007 and decide among themselves on the number of meetings and whether they wanted to work with the coach or not.

Results of the program

Evaluations have been done during the process. Here is the summary of the quantitative measurements and also voices from participants. 95 out of 165 participants has answered the evaluation scheme.

The participants responded on a scale with four alternatives, not at all, a little, more and very much.

Percentage that answered more and very much:

80% of the respondents have developed their personal leadership
80% have more knowledge of themselves as leaders – their strengths and weaknesses
60% are using the knowledge they have acquired
78% have a clear understanding of the link between values, leadership and business.

“Do you think the ability to grow the business has increased thanks to the program:

68% in Denmark
70% in Norway
80% in Sweden
58% in Finland

Quotations that describe what the participants have experienced:

“MBTI profile and feedback was very good and the practical work in the forest with these letters was very good. Working with the personal learning contracts is good but very difficult. It takes a good insight in oneself. The one to one coaching session was the most valuable element for me [...]. Coaching in the learning team has made me more confident being a good coach. Feedback session was also a good way to get more knowledge of myself. “

(Participant from Denmark)

“The coaching sessions have given me a lot of insight in myself as a leader. The programme has also provided good opportunities to learn how others are doing

things. Inspiring input from Richard Scase and Gareth Jones. The MBTI profile has also been very helpful in understanding myself, my employees, and other colleagues.”

(Participant from Denmark)

“I have changed my focus from performance in itself to creating results via people. Further, I got a better understanding of how other people see me and how I communicate.”

(Participant from Denmark)

“I have learned a lot about coaching, created several new contacts, gained a lot of self-confidence, have my head full of new ideas, know better where my career could be headed, see that regarding leadership there is a lot to do.”

(Participant from Finland)

“Using my own personal strengths, respecting other styles, using different kinds of techniques in order to facilitate group situations and to develop people [...]”

(Participant from Finland)

“Even the professionals need and want to have a leader. Never underestimate the importance of leadership”

(Participant from Finland)

“Be yourself more with skill...assume less...find time for leadership!”

(Participant from Finland)

“I am much better aware of my own strengths and weaknesses – I have now a deeper understanding of my own motivation, reactions and feelings. I feel it is easier to speak about myself than before. It is easier to understand conflicts in the organisation.

(Participant from Finland)

“You always need consciousness and this program has given me a lot of that.”

(Participant from Norway)

“Coaching individual and group. In addition interviews with colleagues has been very helpful.”

(Participant from Norway)

“I have developed my insight in my own strengths and weaknesses. I will be more open-minded to people with a different approach.”

(Participant from Norway)

“Learnt more about myself and people like me as well as understanding others.”

(Participant from Sweden)

“How to be a better coach. How to use my strengths in a better way. Our coach group has made a difference!”
(Participant from Sweden)

“Repetition most.”
(Participant from Sweden).

“Less beliefs in textbooks, more belief in myself and my competencies.”
(Participant from Sweden)

“As a new leader I need more tools. I am very satisfied with the programme and the possibility to work “through yourself through others”, my new network, and contribution from seminars.
(Participant from Sweden).

“Insight of how others look at me as a leader! SWOT! Confirmed as a leader!!”
(Participant from Sweden)

“A really good programme that in some perspectives will increase my leader abilities! Thanks!!”
(Participant from Sweden)

“I participated in the programme under protest! I didn’t think I had the time to give 19 of my working-days to the programme, but I am convinced that the days where all well spent!” (Participant from Sweden)

Reflection & Learning

After the programme is over it is interesting to ask whether the investment in people has made them more resilient and the organisation more stable although it is in the middle of a restructuring? Was it a wise way of spending money? Should organisational strategy or change management workshops have been alternative approaches giving more return on investment?