



MiL designs out-of-the-box in Shanghai

Katarina Billing, 2011

From January 1st, 2011, MiL Institute has a Shanghai office and from there we design many kinds of Action Reflection Learning® experiences. Out-of-the-box and mini projects are two examples.

– MiL Institute has been taking managers to China for more than 10 years now and the leaders tend to value this out-of-the-box experience as one of their most important in our programmes for their long-term development, says Katarina Billing, responsible for MiL in Shanghai.

Through those weeks the managers confront themselves and their own abilities and values in an unfamiliar environment. This enables them to make their own predispositions clearer and move towards a more listening and open management approach, finding solutions to new challenges that are indeed innovative and out-of-the-box – making the goal to become a true global business leader – easier to reach.

They also get a greater understanding of China, the second largest economy of the world today, its customs and business environment and the opportunities and challenges that companies and leaders confront from a wide range of perspectives.

The week consists of visiting companies and people, handpicked to match the purpose of the programme. It also entails cultural experience of a wide range and visiting Chinese families in their homes, a highly valued event during the week.

Improved organisation and leadership as a result of MiL project at the World Path Clinic

The mini organisational project, for a day and a half, tends to be the most appreciated event during the Shanghai week in the MiL Programme for Experienced Managers. Not only does it make the leaders use many of the skills they have acquired during the programme but it also puts them far out of their comfort zone in their quest to deliver a result that actually makes a difference to the organisation who has asked for their help as free-of-charge consultants. Moreover, it also challenges the group and their communication and leadership skills in many ways.

– We really appreciated having MiL Institute's group here. The group's recommendations made us amongst other things change our organisation, and it now works much better, says Dr Kou, Physician and Managing Director of The World Path Clinic, commenting on the project conducted at his clinic by



Presentation for the management of The World Path Clinic.



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one of the smaller groups of the MiL Programme for Experienced Managers, who visited Shanghai for a week in May 2010.

The World Path Clinic is a health clinic for Chinese residents and expats in the Pudong area of Shanghai that opened two years ago. It is a comprehensive multi-disciplinary medical center with a wide range of healthcare services from primary prevention to disease treatment. It has about 100 employees.

The two questions that the group had to address were:

- How can we market ourselves in a better way?
- How can we improve our organisation in order to become more effective?

– I loved this task! Had someone told me beforehand that I can apply my knowledge from 15 years as a manager in the chemical industry in the Health Care sector in China I would have doubted that, but now I know that I have a competence that is widely appreciated outside of my field and that strengthened me and my identity as a leader, says Kerstin Lindell, CEO of Bona, a company producing and selling sustainable solutions for fastening and finishing wooden floors, and participant in the MiL Programme for Experienced Managers.

She continues:

– The project was great because it was for real. We had to deliver at the end of the day and it really tied together many of the things we had touched upon during the programme, like team work, appreciative inquiry, strategy and communication skills. It also forced us to think and act outside the box and see things from a different angle.

– And then there was the time pressure. We just about made it on time and that made us learn a lot about each other as a team and as individuals and our per-

sonal leadership skills, which was really interesting. It also was a great example of that diversity is good for excellence, since we all contributed with our different skills and experiences from a wide range of businesses.

Dr Kou was the project host for the day and he and his senior colleagues were all present at the end of the day, when the group presented their solutions/new perspectives on the two questions. As a result, each floor now has formed a team with an independent team leader and the rotation between the floors have stopped in order for the people to build their competence in a secure way in their new group. The number of leaders has increased. Before Dr Kou himself was the sole manager for all the professional personnel, now he has about five team leaders that report to him.

– My work load is now much smaller and I can focus on the things that are important in my position. The group also gave very valuable solutions on marketing for the clinic which has made us reach a point where we are very close to break even – very close to our target.

– For people who are used to deliver always, this kind of task is very motivating. The comfort zone gets narrower and it is impossible to pull back and refuse leaving it. Instead the group has to have an open mind, towards the new environment but also towards each other and one self. In order to deliver you have to really open up and listen, get close to other people and find a way of using your skills in the most productive way in this new setting, continues Katarina Billing, Programme Director for the MiL Programme for Experienced Leaders.

– If you use this experience back home you will be a much better leader also in your familiar setting, since it is never as familiar as we often tend to think.