



MiL Institute Contributes with Consultancy Work to Chinese Organisations

MiL Institute has groups of leaders coming to Shanghai every year to learn about different areas of the Chinese industry, may it be health care, marketing or manufacturing. As a part of their week here, they work a day and a half as consultants for free in a Chinese host organisation, hereby giving something back to China and Chinese organisations by contributing with their, often long, management experience and outside perspective. The projects cover many areas from leadership issues, questions on organisation, but also financing, quality, efficiency, communication and team work. Examples of organisations where the groups have contributed are: healthcare clinics, post partum clinics, charity organisations, pharmaceutical companies, packaging industry and telecommunications. This article describes the outcomes in two organisations that recently were hosting one group each from the MiL Programme for Experienced Managers and some of the gains they experienced.



Lars Henrik Persson, CEO Starka, and Thomas Borén, Manager instruments service at Ringhals, were two members of the group of participants coming from MiL Institute supporting Baby's Home with their management challenges.

Baby's Home happy host

“The MiL group contributed immensely and we are now working in the areas that they have suggested to improve step by step what they suggested”, says Wencui Guo, director of Baby's Home, a charity voluntary organisation for disabled orphans from the countryside in need of medical treatment founded in 2008. (read more at: www.shbabyhome.org.cn.)



One of the questions that Baby's Home posed to the MiL group was: “How can we best optimize our resources?” The question circled around organization, feedback, work climate and communication.

“As a result of the group's recommendation we now will have clear responsibilities for some of our senior volunteers which we call project leaders”, says Wencui Guo.

Before the manager of operations Elinor Zhang, one of the two management officers employed by Baby's Home, used to be the project leaders herself for all areas of operations like medical treatment, web site and marketing/publicity. Now the project leaders are the ones responsible for the operations and the other volunteers within that area.

“This is very good because some of the volunteers wanted to take more responsibility. Hence this improves the work climate and increases motivation, something very important with a workforce that mainly works for free, people driven by their strong values”, says Wencui Guo.

This organisational change will be supported by different events where the volunteers get divided into groups of responsibility and then receive both training and engage in some activity to support team work and raise money simultaneously. Wencui Guo has also asked her staff to contribute to the job descriptions that they are now finalizing, another step towards clarity and transparency when it comes to



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tasks and responsibilities. At the same time the nannies will also get more training and more defined job descriptions.

Longterm financial stability

The second area that the MiL group was assigned was: “How to make the economical base with donations more stable?”

As a result of the suggestions from the group Baby’s Home has now started looking for people to form a board. The board will comprise of people with long experience from the legal, medical and leadership areas, people that can contribute with advice and best practise in order to improve operations. But also people with good “guanxi”(network) that may make the influx of money larger and continuous, through their support and connections.

Yollanda Xu, responsible for communications and one of the founding mothers that engage the most, has together with Wencui Guo also contacted one of China’s largest and most renown charity organisation to learn more from them on how to survive developing from a value driven visionary project by 11 mothers to a sustainable organisation that will be able to live on for many years to come.

Another part of this, recommended by the MiLgroup, is to become clearer on long term goals and vision for Baby’s Home, be clearer on rules and regulations, and also make these visible on all material coming from Baby’s Home, like the home page, newsletters and blog, but also simple things like stamping the business cards with the NGO-logo etc. Things that have become increasingly important following the many scandals in China with fake NGO:s or NGO officers swindling their organisations of their means, creating a cautious public extra wary of where they invest their charity yuans.

Bona is amazed by result

Another company that has benefited from the MiL group’s consultancy service is Bona. Their scope was the following: “How can the communication between the employees become better? How can

the employees take more initiatives by themselves? And finally; What does team work really mean? And how does that connect to One Bona?”



Berit Fredricsson, Divisional Manager Gavleborg Regional Council, Magnus Benon, Category Leader IKEA Trading Services and Anna Karlsson, CEO Kalmar Energy Elnat, were some of the contributing participants from the MiL Programme for Experienced Managers. Here in dialogue with Joe Zhou, Country Manager of Bona and Project Host.

“It is amazing what a group of managers coming from the outside can accomplish during a day and a half!” says Joe Zhou, Country Manager of Bona, a Swedish global company producing and selling sustainable solutions for fastening and finishing wooden floors. The company was established on the Chinese market in 2002. (read more at www.bona.com)

When Joe Zhou talks about the contributions and the positive changes he sees in his employees he mentions first of all the improved understanding of the vision and goals of the company.

“The meetings and talks we have had because of the MiL project have made us talk about the goals. What do they mean for us, how important are they and how does each one of us contribute to fulfilling them?”

Changes that Joe Zhou has made to make this happen is taking more active part in meetings that his sales force have with customers, arranging meeting with the whole staff regularly, for instance through acquiring video conference software in order to enable everyone to take part, wherever in China.

“Another very simple, yet effective, thing that the group suggested, and that we really like is putting



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the words about the passion for wooden floor on the walls at our office, so we get reminded of it every day”, says Joe Zhou.

Engagement required

Participating in a MiL project requires the managers of the operations to be not only very engaged and close to their operations, open minded, experienced and learning oriented – but also prone to taking quick and responsive action. It also requires availability during one day with interviews and small talk; employees that are curious and open.

“I think it was such a great experience to be interviewed, I got to think through a lot of things about my job, what I do, how I do it, how we cooperate, what Bona is and much more. I did not think it would be that valuable just to do an interview with a complete stranger from Sweden!” says Lingling Xu, responsible for Sourcing and Logistics.

Sales representative Alex Zhou says he most appreciated the increased understanding of what the others in the organisation do and getting an overall picture, and furthermore how he and other employees can contribute. It added to his feeling of meaningfulness.

Staff empowered

The majority of the staff were interviewed by MiL Institute after the project and they all say that they

think the MiL group’s work contributed very much to their work climate, to their feeling of empowerment and willingness to take more initiatives.

“I can see this for instance when it comes to the employees’ reactions to communications with headquarters in Sweden. Before when they did not get understanding from HQ they would give up more easily. Now they are more persistent, more sure of themselves and the importance of their request”, explains Joe Zhou.

Lingling Xu also says it was important for her, after the MiL group left, to have an open meeting together with Joe Zhou and all the staff where they talked through earlier mistakes and misunderstandings and tried to learn from these situations. Not that these were any major ones, but still, it made them all learn and develop.

“Now we are more suited to handle these kind of situations in the future”, she says smiling.

Katarina Billing

If you want to read more about MiL’s project work in Shanghai both through the project host and the MiL participant perspective, please study the article “MiL designs out-of-the-box in Shanghai” ([Out_of_box_Shanghai.pdf](#)), where a MiL project at the World Path Clinic is described.