

CASE STUDY

Raiffeisen Bank International delivers fifth year of high-level executive development with Roffey Park

Raiffeisen Bank International AG (RBI) regards both Austria, where it is a leading corporate and investment bank, and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as its home market. In CEE, RBI operates an extensive network of subsidiary banks, leasing companies and a range of other specialised financial service providers in 17 markets. RBI is the only Austrian bank with a presence in both the world's financial centres and in Asia, the group's further geographical area of focus. In total, around 60,000 employees service about 13.5 million customers through around 3,000 business outlets, the great majority of which are located in CEE.

The challenge

RBI had instituted a senior executive professional development programme called Execute. The target was employees across the group who were one step below board level, and who wanted the skills and knowledge to progress their careers. However, it was felt that Execute was not meeting its objectives and changes needed to be made if it was to fulfil its potential.

"I joined RBI in 2007, taking over responsibility for the Execute programme, but it was clear that it wasn't working as well as it should," explains Judith Hanika-Gruenn, Specialist for Executive Development and Performance Management at RBI. "I decided to redesign the whole programme and bring in a new organisation to facilitate it. My boss had previously used Roffey Park for one-off training programmes and suggested I consider it."

Following a trip to Roffey Park, Hanika-Gruenn was convinced that the approach was perfect for what she wanted to achieve: "Roffey Park focuses on the individual

and their needs through a self-managed learning process that is based in practical exercises rather than just theory. That's the approach we thought would work best with our participants."

The Execute participants are, by nature, already in senior positions and are highly experienced. Hanika-Gruenn thinks this makes them less receptive to traditional didactic teaching methods, preferring a more immersive, hands-on style – and Roffey Park fitted the bill. Together, they set about redesigning the programme, keeping the existing cornerstones intact.

"We wanted to continue to include key elements such as guest keynote speakers, site visits to local offices and dealing with some of the real issues and development tasks the participants face," adds Hanika-Gruenn. "But to wrap these up in a new way of learning and facilitation that would ensure participants make the most out of the process. Roffey Park helped us achieve that."



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The solution

The Execute programme runs once a year with a maximum of 14 participants in each cohort. It consists of five three-day modules over the course of several months. Before the programme begins, potential participants must be endorsed by a board member within their organisation and then complete a self-assessment survey as well as a line manager assessment.

The first module involves one on one coaching which explores the results of the assessments and results in a development plan. It also incorporates one day on a leadership topic and an introduction to self-managed learning. Participants also bring a proposal or challenge relevant to their own organisation – two of which are chosen to become the focus for modules three and four which are then hosted in the relevant location.

The second module includes a keynote speaker focusing on a specific area such as performance management or conflict resolution. It also has a day devoted to equipping the participants with the problem solving and consultancy tools they will need in order to address the issues that will feature in the two site visits. In every module, the third day is dedicated to working in a learning set, with the cohort divided into two smaller groups.

"It is very much an organic process. We introduce them to self-managed learning, help them set agreed development goals and identify real-world issues that they can tackle together. We help them prepare to consult on these issues effectively and then in modules three and four, we physically visit those offices and get immersed in the practical situation," says Hanika-Gruenn. "The final module is then hosted back in the head office in Vienna where the CEO plays an active role in discussing the challenges of leadership and we can review the progress made."

The results

The revamped Execute programme has proven so popular that it is always over-subscribed. The impact on the business has been dramatic.

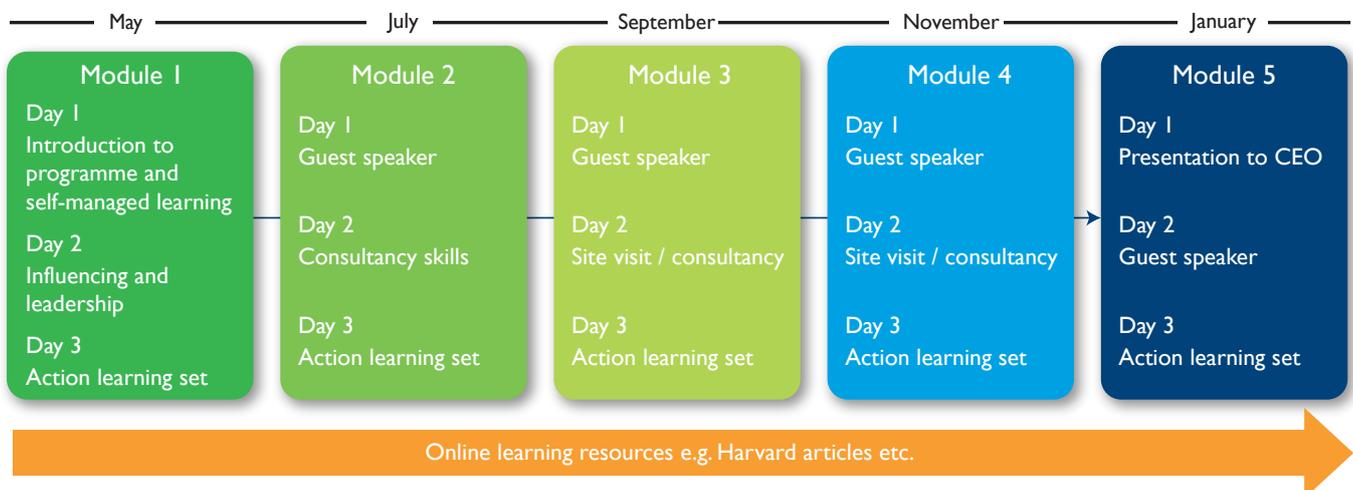
"Execute has had a two-fold effect on the organisation. On one hand, it helps participants prepare to take board level positions, equips them with new tools, strengthens their ability to work as a group and solves real issues in the workplace – all of which are critically important," comments Hanika-Gruenn. "Equally important, it helps us all work better as an international business. It is a real challenge for the board in Vienna to manage effectively across such a diverse region, and one with such troubled recent history. Execute gives us a broad insight into regional differences. Running a retail bank in Croatia, for example, is totally different operationally from doing the same in Russia. From our vantage point in Austria we are not always fully aware of the nuances at play but Execute helps us shine a light on that."

And central to the success of the programme is the involvement of Roffey Park, whose programme directors co-ordinate and facilitate the entire process, regardless of whether it is held in Vienna, Zagreb or Kosovo.

"Working with Roffey Park is a great pleasure. The programme directors easily create an atmosphere which enables learning – despite the initial scepticism of many participants," concludes Hanika-Gruenn. "They effortlessly integrate all the different components into a cohesive whole that delivers a learning experience like no other."

Now in its fifth year, Execute looks set to continue equipping senior staff with the skills they need to progress their careers for many years to come.

Raiffeisen Execute Programme



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