

Sanofi-Aventis connects Distance Learning courses to its Skills Repository

IN BRIEF



The challenge

To continue to invest in skills and career management for its managers by providing them with a distance learning program. To offer a line-up which matches the requisite key managerial skills to distance learning training sessions from the CrossKnowledge catalogue.

Sanofi-Aventis

Number one in Europe, Sanofi-Aventis is one of the world leaders in the pharmaceutical industry. Its laboratories cover seven major treatment fields and employ nearly 100,000 people worldwide. With offices in more than 100 countries on five continents, its consolidated turnover is EUR 28 billion with a research and development budget of over EUR 4 billion.

sanofi aventis
L'essentiel c'est la santé.

► In less than two years, more than 1000 managers from the Europe region of the Sanofi-Aventis group have followed CrossKnowledge distance learning programs.

First implemented in 2005 when the two groups were merged, the “E campuS” managerial training program is entirely integrated with its Skills Repository, thus offering professional development plans to senior executives in accordance with their group’s strategy.

The pharmaceutical industry became increasingly concentrated at the end of the 1990s. In 1999, Sanofi and Synthelabo merged whilst, at the same time, the German group Hoechst and the French group Rhône-Poulenc decided to join forces and create Aventis. However, optimal economies of scale were not enjoyed until Sanofi Synthelabo and Aventis themselves merged at the beginning of 2005, forming the largest pharmaceutical group in Europe and the third largest in the world. These successive mergers left the Human Resources Department eager to implement consistent standards vis-à-vis skills and careers management. *“A merger inevitably causes major on-going training programs within the two merging parties to be suspended, and it’s normally a while before any joint programs can be launched again. During the last*

merger, we were keen to maintain a consistent offer, and to prevent everything from coming to a halt. Distance learning was the ideal way in which we could continue to train our managers and accompany the appropriation of corporate values”, explains Brigitte Rocque, Director of Professional Development for Europe and Canada.

Quick deployment of E campuS

It was just after the merger between Sanofi-Synthelabo and Aventis therefore that the European Department for Professional Development launched the “E campuS” distance learning program. The group’s decision to give its managers access to all the available courses in the CrossKnowledge catalogue was a clear signal of the group’s desire to invest in their management training

“Distance learning has become a key link in the strategy to develop managerial skills”

Brigitte Rocque,
Director of Professional Development

scheme. Deploying the program quickly was a priority, and the launch was completed within six months: *“We first of all ensured that the content corresponded to the leadership development requirements of our future middle management. Above all, the content needed to be consistent with our values: creativity, courage, innovation, solidarity, respect, and finally, performance.”* Most of the groundwork focussed on formalising the connections between the key skills examined during annual evaluation reviews and the various sessions in the CrossKnowledge catalogue. CrossKnowledge therefore worked closely with the HRD to ensure the compatibility of its programs with the priorities as laid out by Sanofi-Aventis.

Executives at the heart of the program

There was never any question that the Human Resources Department would be content to offer a simple self-service catalogue. The approach depended on the involvement of the executives, who were called upon to offer advice.

For each of the main managerial skills sought by the pharmaceutical group - entrepreneurial spirit, the ability to manage change and innovation, team motivation, efficient communication,

or the ability to develop strategic thinking - an online chart allows those conducting the assessment as well as those being assessed to learn about the relevant training sessions.

A coherent professional development scheme

During the launch of the annual appraisal interview, Sanofi-Aventis reminds its managers of the main principles of these interviews through an E campus module. Depending on whether the key skills have been acquired, are being acquired, or are yet to be acquired, the interface proposes corresponding CrossKnowledge training modules at the appropriate level. For example, seven sessions are available to help those managers who are looking to develop their ability to tackle difficult problems, whilst nine sessions are offered to those who are considered to be already well on their way to acquiring this skill.

The assessors follow not only the progress of their colleagues in the compulsory course elements, but also in the modules that they have freely chosen from the rest of the catalogue. By integrating distance learning with the annual evaluation review, Sanofi-Aventis has clearly demonstrated the operational aspect of distance learning. The “E campus” method is

therefore at the heart of a coherent professional development scheme.

A successful trial

After a pilot phase in seven European countries, the “E campus” method was extended to 35 countries in 2006. *“A thousand managers have followed, on average, between eight and twelve sessions in 2006. I would prefer them to take on fewer sessions and to concentrate on seeing each one through to the end in order to get a real handle on the content.”* In fact, figures show that 86 % of compulsory sessions were completed. In 2007, 1,000 new managers will take advantage of the program. “E campus” has now become a permanent fixture which now seeks to go beyond meeting the needs of recently merged companies.

Distance learning has become a key link in the strategy to develop managerial skills. In order to ensure that managerial skills remain in line with the group’s repository, the Department for Professional Development in Europe and Canada, in a very decentralised approach, is encouraging each country to increase the number of managers eligible for the program. A forthcoming questionnaire will ask assessors to what extent they believe that their “E campus”- trained colleagues have got on. ● ● ●