

## Ready for the island – Workshop on the topic of leadership

Further development measure for the experts of Infrastructure Consulting and Development Management at Drees & Sommer

### COMPANY

For more than 45 years, Drees & Sommer has been supporting public- and private-sector owners and investors in all aspects of real estate. Managed by partners and headquartered in Stuttgart, the company has 41 offices worldwide. The focus is always on profitability, whereby the company promotes sustainable building to the greatest possible degree. Drees & Sommer refers to this holistic and sustainable approach as the “blue way.”

### PROJECT TARGETS

Specialists and managers of the Drees & Sommer Infrastructure Consulting and Development Management team regularly hold two-day meetings to discuss current developments and to work on corporate strategy topics. In addition, the aim is to provide new inspiration and to transfer this to day-to-day project work. At one of these events the focus was on leadership for one day. The aim of the project was to work on current topics concerning leadership and management research with the around 60 participants. Rather than impart knowledge in an abstract way, the Profil M consultants used an experience-based approach.

### FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

Drees & Sommer regularly trains its specialists and managers in their in-house academy with a focus on their requirements. During some of these training sessions the company already successfully cooperated with Profil M. Therefore, repetitions in terms of contents and methods were to be avoided.

### SOLUTION

With a presentation on “Today’s requirements of managers,” Profil M introduced participants to the topic. The historical development, different economic systems, advancing mechanization and virtualization, and changing values in society: the Profil M experts explained the challenges resulting from this for company managers.

Based on this, they identified methods for working with large groups and spoke about topics from the presentation. The managers were to be given the opportunity for an active reflection.

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Preparation

The workshop facilitators first of all analyzed the specific requirements of the Infrastructure Consulting and Development Management team at Drees & Sommer. The team is distributed across several locations in Germany and deals with various projects. The aim was to ensure that the workshop topics and methods match the participants’ requirements in the best possible way. In addition, another challenge was the group’s heterogeneity with regard to the team members’ leadership experience. While some participants had line management experience, others only had experience in managing teams and projects with functional responsibility.

#### Identified topics

The facilitators sounded out the topics that are currently being discussed in management and leadership research as well as the requirements of Drees & Sommer. This resulted in the following topics for the presentation:

- Change requirements of managers considered from a historical perspective
- Handling of increasing dynamics (VUCA) and increasing requirements
- Handling of changing values in society and the resulting requirements about the way in which employees want to be managed

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### Workshop design

In order to create an open and pleasant atmosphere, the facilitators chose the analogy of a journey as a leading metaphor. The individual workshop parts were referred to as “leadership archipelago” – and they invited the workshop participants to join them for an island hopping adventure on this archipelago.

The journey started with a 30-minute presentation on “Today’s requirements of managers.” This was to provide participants with inspiration and create the frame for the workshop.

Facilitators then divided participants into three separate travel groups who, over the course of the day, travelled to the islands and worked on the topics.

The names of the islands did not immediately reveal which topic was involved. This was to increase the participants’ curiosity and ensure that they dealt with the topic in an unprejudiced way.

In order to support the participants’ reflection process they were given a travel journal to note down their thoughts and learning experiences. The Profil M consultants acted as travel guides.

### The “islands”

Specifically, this involved the following topics and designations for the islands.

### *Island of images*

The island of images related to the implicit rules of cooperation. The participants were to put images in a logical order without looking at their colleagues’ images. Subsequently, they reflected on the group process together with the Profil M consultant and derived measures for more effective collaboration. The participants’ day-to-day project work also deals with getting those involved on board, finding compromises, and proceeding promptly regardless.

### *Island of health*

On this island the participants – under the guidance of a consultant – dealt with their health and with “healthy leadership.”

### *Island of indigenous people*

In small teams the participants played a mix of gambling game and strategy game, with the different groups following different rules. The rotation of participants between the groups brought difficulties to light that can arise during the confrontation with other (corporate) cultures and when training new members of staff.

### Joint final round

At the end of the workshop all participants came together for a (travel) photo presentation from the workshops, which concluded the event in an atmospheric way.

### RESULTS

Participants assessed the workshop very positively. They particularly liked that Profil M integrated knowledge transfer methods with active exercises and intensive reflection phases.

For the transfer to practice they took away that...

- good leadership means assigning responsibility to employees
- it is important to get all those involved in projects on board
- it is necessary to ask a lot of questions rather than simply expect employees to have certain know-how – in particular in the case of new employees and in projects

The workshop has contributed to a common leadership understanding among the Drees & Sommer participants with their different levels of experience and hierarchy. In this way it was a good fit for the company’s training and development concept.

### RESULTS

- The very high participation rate in



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