



Strengthening the business through diversity

Norsk Hydro takes advantage of different backgrounds and mindsets to foster innovation and high quality decision-making.

Improvements beyond cost optimization

Cost control is critical in the aluminum industry, where prices are established in a global market. However, low costs alone are not a sufficient competitive advantage; Good leadership and a proper organizational structure are essential to further grow the business, which is why Hydro launched a company-wide diversity program in 2013.

“You could say the project has two objectives”, says Franziska Barth, Initiative Leader Diversity at Hydro. “The first is growing diversity awareness by helping our people understand its meaning and positive effects. The second is what we call ‘hardwiring diversity’ – meaning that we integrate diversity in our processes and give our coworkers the tools they need to structure recruitment processes, resulting in diverse candidates for new positions”.

“We chose to work with Celemi for several reasons”, Ms. Barth continues. “Partly because Celemi had the rare experience of promoting diversity on a large scale, but also because we had cooperated in the past; Ten years ago Celemi created a custom solution for Hydro on company values that was very well-received. In fact, we still use it, which is an impressive proof of its high quality!”

Diversity demystified for 400 managers



“Our improvement ambitions reach much further than cost level.”

— Svein Richard Brandtzæg, CEO Norsk Hydro ASA

The program in brief

In cooperation, Celemi and Hydro developed a learning solution to help teams and individuals realize the positive impact of diversity on business performance, and create the right performance culture needed in today’s complex business world.

In the interactive workshops, 400 managers discussed and explored the following topics in a series of learning activities:

- How are key global trends driving diversity, and how do we address them?
- What kind of organization do we want to be and what are the gaps that we then need to overcome?
- We are all biased by our history and unconscious values How do we challenge our beliefs?
- Which are the excluding and including behaviors that impact our performance?
- How do we apply new insights in workplace situations?



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The new knowledge in action

“We conduct a brief survey after the trainings, and it shows that our people enjoy the program and feel it truly helps them attain new knowledge. One participant actually said ‘This is Diversity Demystified!’” Ms. Barth laughs. “The final exercise challenges them to define situations in their workplace they should change. It is of course the hardest part, but it lets them put their new skills to use. I remember one manager saying ‘Now I get it, this is not that complex! These are actual changes in our daily work!’”

Visible results are already materializing in the form of changed recruitment practices; In a remote business area traditionally dominated by Norwegian staff, a vacant position was given to a foreign applicant in the week following the training. “This would almost never happen before the program, but thanks to the program, diversity now is seen as a strength, and not a weakness”, Ms. Barth contently adds. “We expected results, but not this fast!”

In addition to the positive effects within the company, the program also promotes Hydro outside of the organization. “Diversity is gaining momentum in the HR world.” Ms. Barth explains, “We invited some HR students at a local university to try some exercises, and our diversity ambitions really raised Hydro’s attractiveness as workplace. So, as a surprise side-effect, the program also turns out to be an asset for employer branding!”

Diversity at all levels

Hydro aims to further diversity with regard to nationality, culture, gender and educational background when recruiting and when forming management teams and other working groups. Already, the company come a long way in terms of gender representation; Women are represented in the board of directors, the corporate management board and in most business area management teams.

“What we want to achieve is a positive effect on our business by having the right balance. Diversity helps us meet global trends and leads us to several organizational capabilities, such as innovation, improved decision-making and better customer service” Ms. Barth concludes.



About Hydro

Hydro is a global supplier of aluminum with activities throughout the entire value chain, from bauxite extraction to finished aluminum products and building systems. Based in Oslo, Norway, the company employs 22,000 people in more than 40 countries.



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