



CLIENT SUCCESSES

THE BEST FROM TWO RELATED WORLDS

SAP

INDUSTRY: IT

"With their professional preparation, and support with content and organisation, DDI has made a significant contribution to achieving our ambitious goal of establishing a powerful management team in a very short time."

Michael Hillerbrand
Head of Human Resources and Member of the Board of Management of SAP Deutschland AG & Co. KG

DDI SUPPORTS SAP GERMANY AND SAP SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

The name SAP has stood for innovation, creativity and success for over 30 years. The corporation is the leading global supplier of enterprise software. What's more, SAP is the third largest independent software supplier in the world and has around 35,000 employees in over 50 countries.

The solutions in mySAP Business Suite help organisations improve their relationships with customers and partners, optimise their business processes and design their logistics chains more efficiently throughout the world. As well as the high quality of its products, its success is based upon the many years of experience and deep expertise of its staff – which is why the successful recruitment and retention of top-notch executives has top priority at SAP.

Corporate alliances are always a major challenge – and especially for HR Managers. A new organisational structure comes into being, and the enterprise must reach decisions on the optimal appointments to posts. Such decisions take place within the context of employee insecurity regardless of whether the alliance is formed between two previously unlinked enterprises or whether two organisations in a corporate group interact together more intensively. This makes it even more important that the selection process for leadership appointments is transparent, well-timed and professional.

The SAP subsidiaries, SAP Deutschland AG & Co. KG and SAP Systems Integration, were faced with just such a challenge in the autumn of 2004 as they decided upon a closer alliance between their German consulting organisations.

In line with the well-established principle of placing customer interests first, a single closely cooperating business division was to be formed from the consulting divisions of these two companies on January 1st, 2005. Members of the SAP project group working on this assignment were conscious that they bore a great responsibility and this under severe time pressure: they had three months to match two organisations to one another, each with approximately 1,600 employees, different structures and a different number of management levels. The critical outcome was to fill the 42 most senior management posts at the three top levels of the new consulting alliance from a pool of 87 candidates. What made this particularly challenging was that in addition to objective selection criteria, care had to be taken that the employees of both organisations were equally represented as far as possible. The two SAP alliance partners decided to bring in qualified external assistance to help them do this speedily and efficiently, and also to ensure high quality decisions. HR consultancy DDI was chosen, not least because they had successfully been running the Executive Assessment Center at SAP since the autumn of 2003.

"Despite our internal expertise, business integration made us dependant upon an experienced and reliable partner who could guarantee additional objectivity and neutrality."

Wilfried Göckel Global Head of Human Resources of SAP Systems Integration

THE STARTING POINT FOR SELECTION

The first step of the collaboration involved DDI, the SAP project team and the heads of the two consulting organisations working together to agree on a joint set of selection criteria.

In Addition a new Skill and Competence Requirements Specification for different manager levels and functions was derived on the basis of the future business drivers of the new cooperation. These formed the foundation of the entire subsequent selection process. The existing SAP Management Excellence Definitions were also added in to the profile to cover leadership skills requirements.

Next, the SAP companies ran Assessment Centres to measure candidates' suitability against the requirements profile. In the design of the Assessment Centers, SAP and DDI placed great emphasis on the future challenges top managers would face as a result of the new strategic corporate goals of the consulting alliance.

AS CLOSE TO REAL LIFE AS POSSIBLE

Assessment Centres were used to diagnose candidates' strengths and development areas so that as much evidence as possible of candidates' suitability could be obtained. These were tailored individually to the three different management levels and were designed to mirror closely the requirements profiles.

DDI's tried and tested approach involved participants stepping into a 'day in the life' of an executive. Rather than taking part in several sequential exercises they encountered all challenges in the same "role", as if experiencing a day in their future work environment in all its variety.

They received in advance written instructions on their role and the business context in which they were to operate throughout the Centre. These included, for instance, an annual report and balance sheets for the fictitious company in which they were to spend the day. Additional realism was provided by each candidate occupying his or her own office on the morning of the Assessment Center, where they were visited by assessors in the role of different colleagues and business partners. Participants, for example, held meetings with a strategic partner, a dissatisfied customer and an employee. The day's business included the creation of a marketing plan and replying to a stream of incoming e-mails to deal with queries or problems posed by various key positions in the organisation.

HIGH ACCEPTANCE THROUGH FEEDBACK

At SAP, as is always the case in times of change, extensive communication with everyone involved was key to the project's success. So participants were given specific information on the process and all the steps involved prior to the start of the selection process.

Another very important element of the process was giving feedback to the candidates after completion of the Assessment Center.

DDI coaches held intensive personal meetings with candidates after SAP had notified them of the appointments decisions. These meetings lasted between one and two hours and gave candidates feedback on the behaviour they had demonstrated as well as on a personality test completed in the Assessment Center. Candidates were also informed of the DDI assessment of their competences in relation to the selection criteria. DDI coaches did not explicitly discuss the appointment but concentrated on giving clear-cut recommendations on personal development.

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The realistic assessment scenario combined with intensive feedback resulted in 98% of candidates being very satisfied with the process, believing that they had been fairly appraised and were able to benefit personally from the feedback.

APPOINTMENTS MADE ON A BROAD FOUNDATION

Once the Centres were completed, results were evaluated and discussed at group level for the different management tiers, from the top down. This allowed those newly selected senior managers to become involved in 'Strategic Data Reviews'. These events were used to combine the DDI Assessment Center conclusions with information from the respective HR Managers and Line Managers to build a comprehensive overall picture. Appointments were therefore made based on the joint ratings produced by HR and Line Management, after a discussion of the Assessment Center results, of information in the participants' curriculum vitae, plus their track record at SAP.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MADE EASY

The data obtained in the Assessment Center gave SAP more than just support with the selection process; it also provided sound information for both individual and collective personal development. Development areas identified in the Center form the basis of further individual employee development, as well as for enhancing the performance of the whole management level. The focus was on supplementing those areas where weaknesses currently exist. This was a significant by-product that SAP values very much. As a whole, because the Assessment Center results are based on competences crucial for success in the new business, they form a solid basis for reorientation of internal and external training courses for top managers.

SOUND RESULTS

Only ten weeks after the start of the project, the two SAP companies had a valid basis on which to make key personnel decisions for the future direction of the alliance. This meant that the management positions of the new consulting alliance were filled early. Further, the data from the Assessment Center now provides the HR Department with a strong platform for systematic development of top managers and for measurement of success.