MCE Management Centre Europe®

AccessHolding

Client Story

Access Microfinance Holding

Leadership Development Programme

Leadership Development Programme

Access Microfinance Holding (AH) was founded in 2006 in Germany as a partnership among Development Finance Institutions and private sector impact investors. The shareholders are united by the drive to support entrepreneurs in developing and emerging markets by providing access to responsible and fair financial services. With 8 financial institutions in 3 regions (Africa, Eurasia and South America) and a staff of 5.500 total assets exceed 560 million Euros. Clients of the financial institutions are small-scale entrepreneurs that are the engine of sustainable economic growth and prosperity. Loans for the entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa average 900 USD.

Background

AH is committed to drive impact through improving outreach, economic growth, and gender equality, and thus contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. HR – or 'People Partnership' as it is called – is following the principle of engaging people, empowering talent, and driving change to ensure the strategic success of the company.

With this in mind, back in 2014, Access Microfinance Holding established AccessCampus, an internal training facility which aims at strengthening the capacities of managers in the network institutions and Head Office through a blended learning approach. The role of AccessCampus is to promote changed behaviour and enable AccessHolding values through learning. AccessCampus is a dynamic, flexible learning and development programme, aimed at our network's future leaders.

Current and future C-level executives and senior managers in the group are targeted with a Strategic Leadership Training to raise their self-awareness as a leader and to reflect, integrate and design their own development plan to become a more aspirational and effective leader.

Finding the Right Partner

AH sees the Management Training program as a major long-term investment in its management cadre and their Leadership Development team was determined to find the right partner to work with over what could be several years of implementation.

In the procurement process AH considered three options: classic business schools with their prestige and thought leadership, pure Leadership Development consultancies and MCE with its solid, business-centric approach and commercially focused faculty.

In MCE, AH found the right balance of subject matter expertise, business leadership experience, the ability to customize solutions and global presence. Through the selection process Anna Aslanova, Senior Expert in Learning and Development in AH, found an engaging and flexible style in MCE that connected well with the culture of AH.

Finally, AH wanted an Account Management team and facilitators with whom they could develop strong personal relationships and who would quickly get to know their business. They believed that these relationships would be key to the program.

Collaborative Process

AH required a companywide aligned strategic solution which is fit for and engages the whole business.

Therefore, MCE and AH worked very closely together and took time to ensure the right solution was developed. From the beginning MCE worked with the internal team at AH, including the People Partnership department, to design the program approach.

MCE then interviewed and worked with key people in the Head Office and network banks to shape and endorse the solution. Engaging early on with business leaders, who were going to attend the program themselves, and having staff from their teams attend the course, was a key success factor.

The Solution

Whilst the programme has three different modules, it is more than simply a set of training sessions. AH and MCE engage with participants at several key points along the journey.

Following closely this collaborative process and consulting with the designated expert faculty, MCE designed a six-module cutting edge solution to enable AH middle managers transition to executive leadership. Operating in a truly VUCA environment, AH managers are routinely exposed to challenges ranging from developing their people's potential, to reaching ambitious KPIs, to managing and maintaining long term relationships with their clients, and more recently to steadfastly drive the business and adapt to changes due to COVID-19 and the need for digitalization. The solution proposed covered essential skills for leadership excellence and is described in greater detail here:

Module 1:
Understanding Leadership

In this module, participants are encouraged to think on leadership, its social nature, the role of the leader as a direct outcome of the relationship with the "follower". Participants are invited to discuss and present their challenges, enabled by the facilitator to also envisage potential solutions. The difference between a manager and a leader is presented and understood in terms of differentiating roles including routine operational functions and adopting more strategic and people management capabilities.

Module 2:
Situational Leadership

In module two, participants are exposed to theoretical knowledge on becoming more flexible in their leadership approach, following the tenets of Situational Leadership. They are invited to think on the maturity levels of their people and the importance of adopting their style. They then engage in smaller group discussions and encouraged to apply their new understanding very practically to the staff they currently oversee, with the help of the facilitator. The module ends by the assignment of a thought-provoking piece of homework that aims to increase their self - awareness as leaders.

Module 3:
Emotional Intelligence in Leadership

This module is an experiential module on how to be and become an emotionally intelligent leader. Based on current research around emotional intelligence, participants are very practically guided to understand themselves and others, to identify gaps and strengths around their own emotional intelligence and to be able to effect change in their people. Module 3 forms the contextual basis of the following three modules which are "skills based" and aimed at managing relationships and leading others.

Module 4:
Engaging and Motivating Others

Module four capitalizes on the previous module and introduces theories and practical tips on how to engage and motivate employees. Through practical examples and group work, theory is translated into "matter of fact" best practices. This is an essential module that covers a vital need of leaders: ensuring their people remain invested in their daily work and proud of the results they are producing.

Module 5:
Leading Communication

Here, participants learn the intricacies of leadership communication, including listening, asking the right questions, and giving feedback for performance and empowerment. It is a highly "hands on" session whereby participants practice the skills under the supervision of the facilitator.

Module 6:
Ethical Leadership and Managing Conflict

Being an Ethical Leader was high on the priority list of AH, and this module was designed around exploring what it means to be an ethical leader, adhering to the ethics of the organization and making tough decisions driven by ethics rather than convenience. Participants are exposed to a case study and then discuss their own challenges of becoming ethical role models and defending the AH organizational values. The second part of this module covers the essentials of managing conflicts as a leader, supporting the idea of ethics, fairness and transparency.

It's Working!

So far, the feedback from delegates and management has been overwhelmingly positive. 130 middle-managers from banks graduated successfully since the introduction of the program in 2014 – with 43 more participants to graduate later in 2021 and beginning of 2022.
Despite Covid-19 hitting the world in 2020, the program continued successfully with facilitated virtual sessions. MCE calls this format 'Live Online'.

Background

According to the Leadership Development Team there are several factors that are making a difference:

- Firstly, the program design is a joint effort between AH's People Partnership Department, business leaders and MCE.
- Secondly, the program content and delivery is actively monitored and evaluated, with consistency of delivery and messages seen as key. This requires close partnership between MCE, Faculty and AH.
- Follow-up and continued engagement with learning. MCE and AH are constantly reviewing ways in which to maintain this engagement.

How Success is Measured

**Since 2014, 130 employees across the Group have graduated from AccessCampus, giving a networkwide promotion rate of 59%.
The participants' feedback provides an immediate indicator of quality, an impact and value to the business.**

Testimonials

Anna Aslanova

My experience of working with MCE associates started with a short call and has transformed to a long-term partnership. Every program is different from the previous one and the only thing that combines all of them is a high level of professionalism, best practices in the field, and dedication of the team.

Maxine McKenzie-Kellie

The MCE course was in some ways like a refresher course for me, I was reminded of several best practices which as a leader of people resonated again. Like any skills acquired, managers must continually learn to sharpen their leadership skills and apply them in the workplace. I found the training to be hugely beneficially... Reminding me leadership is not necessarily intrinsic but can be learned and applied! Thank you to the management board of AccessHolding and the Learning and development team for considering me a leader in the organisation, and affording me this opportunity to attend the MCE leadership training. I am definitely applying what I have learnt, especially situational leadership!"

Olaniran Akinola, ABN

The AccessCampus has a well-rounded approach to leadership development, and it gave my leadership skills a tremendous leap. For example, I thought I had a fair share of good communicator skills until AccessCampus happened to me! I learnt (practically) how active listening can help me gain better understanding of the perspectives of my Associates, empathize with them, and put me at a vantage position to effectively resolve complex issues in and around the workplace.
I think every employee of the AccessHolding network should attend AccessCampus; it should not only be a 'Manager's thing'. I guarantee this will ensure greater efficiency and boost employee loyalty to the bank.
A few words about Leadership program with MCE. This sandwich program was phenomenal. It helped me to understand the power of inclusiveness in leading an organization. For example, as a leader, I would take pride in solving all the problems, telling everyone what and how to do everything, but the MCE program caused a paradigm shift in my thinking. Now, when my associates bring any problem to my table, I engage them in providing the solutions. This leadership style is helping to build capacity in my associates, improve their confidence by making them feel that "we did it" instead of "my boss did it". it is the best way to raise other leaders.

MCE | KEY FACTS

MCE is your reliable partner for continuous success with agile people development solutions.

10,000,000

participants on AMA & MCE programmes in the last 10 years

92%

of Fortune 1,000 companies are our business partners

96%

of participants report they are using what they have learnt at AMA & MCE

1,000+

expert facilitators globally

100+

Open Training Programmes running throughout EMEA

98

year's experience working with our clients around the globe

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