

A Best-Practice Case From Susanne Irving About the VELUX Group



Author

John van Etten
Susanne Irving
Dana Köring

“We work towards something positive and trust that at the same time, we lower the „red“ and „green“ styles.”

This best practice case study focuses on the VELUX Group and how they implemented their culture journey in 2014 and how they have worked on it since. VELUX was founded in 1941 by Villum Kann Rasmussen in Denmark and has 11,500 employees globally. The VELUX Group is owned by VKR Holding A/S, a limited company wholly owned by the foundations and family.

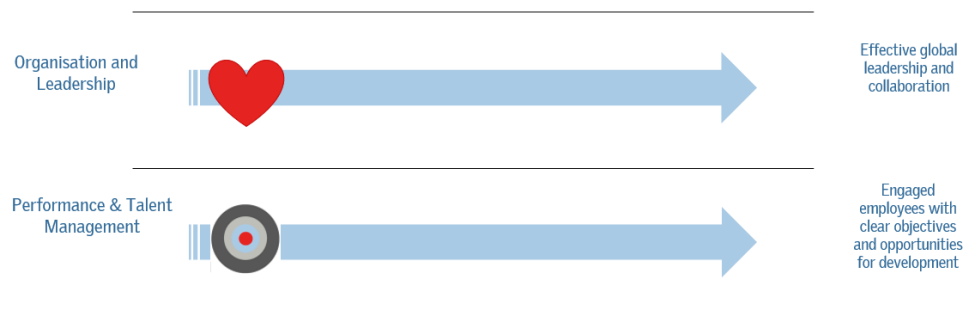
The interviewee Susanne Irving was working with VELUX for nine years and headed the global Learning and Development Team. Since 2019 she is self-employed as an independent consultant at Human@Mind Aps. Susanne Irving is accredited in the Human Synergistics tools since 2014. She became accredited between 2014 – 2016 in:

- Organizational Culture Inventory® (OCI®)
- Organizational Effectiveness Inventory® (OEI)
- ACUMEN® Leadership WorkStyles™ (LWS)
- Life Styles Inventory (LSI)
- Group Styles Inventory™ (GSI)

CASE FOR TRANSFORMATION

The starting point for VELUX to rethink its organizational culture came with an initiative for further globalization of the company. Especially two initiatives from the Strategy Statement were the foundation for the development process: „Creating an efficient global business services model (Explorer)“ and „Revitalize our unique VELUX culture“. To create an efficient global business service model, the structures and processes in the organization were questioned. VELUX restructured in order to be able to act more efficiently globally.

Hence, more and more support functions were organized as global organizations, with much more cross-organizational leadership and collaboration. This led to the next statement „Revitalize our unique VELUX culture“ as the company culture is the common foundation and the “glue” that can ease change and lever actual implementation. VELUX initiated two development tracks:



A Best-Practice Case From Susanne Irving About the VELUX Group

As part of the initiative, VELUX rephrased their value statements to match the new ambitions:

- Commitment: We strive to achieve great results together
- Mutual respect: We treat each other as we would like to be treated ourselves and more
- Improvements: We work to be better every day
- Local initiatives: We take action and collaborate to reach our goals
- Thoroughness: We ensure the right effort, in the right place, at the right time.

The organization and leadership principles were also adjusted under the heading „One VELUX – We operate as one company“.

This whole process led VELUX to discover concrete ways to make expectations of behavior even more tangible. They also needed tools for both the organization and for the individuals to assess and target the need for development.

THE PROCESS

VELUX worked with a consultant company that recommended Human Synergistics tools. They explained the Circumplex and VELUX realized how much the „blue“ styles align with their value and leadership principles. In March 2014 VELUX started with the leadership development program „Light up your Leadership“. This program was divided into three modules: Leadership at VELUX, Leadership role, and Leadership style. First, they did the OCI® survey with its top 100 leaders. They chose the OCI® because „you can measure behavior, it is developmental and gives you a common language“ Susanne Irving says. Also, they started at the cultural level to bring awareness to the leaders and underline that culture is something everyone is responsible for.

In the first module, the OCI® survey was used to capture essential cultural traits, behavior, and competences of today and tomorrow. The second module was to clarify the role and assignments of top managers. The last module focused on the individual leader. In this third module, the LWS was used to see where the individual has its strengths and core competencies. Also, the leaders learn what contribution he or she can do to strengthen

the culture. Throughout the program, various exercises were carried out in the associated workshops, including the GSI to show the impact of leaders at the team level.

The LWS reports were debriefed by the external consultant group based on an assumption that the leaders at this level would speak more openly with external consultants than to HR colleagues. About 20 employees from the HR department were accredited in the LWS and LSI to support the anchoring and to conduct debrief sessions with middle managers when the program for that target group started in 2015. The program has three modules as well: Passion for People, Passion for Performance, and Passion for Business. About 1000 managers have participated since 2015 and new managers are still introduced to the Constructive Mindset and receive the LWS report and feedback.

VELUX went one step further and created initiatives for teams, project managers and specialists. For team development, Simulations and GSI are used in small groups. This helps everyone to understand that behavior impacts how effective the team works.

The training for the specialists is a 2-day session and after the training, the specialists feel more at ease in communicating with others. Like the programs for managers, also these workshops are designed to include a lot of discussions, communication, and coaching in small groups. The LSI 1 (Self-Description) & 2 (others' description) are used to understand the behavioral preferences and others' perceptions of themselves and to align their behavior to perform better.

Also, the „Constructive Mindset Toolbox“ was created, which includes workshop programs for HRBP and managers, exercises, behavior tips, films and a lot more.

FIRST RESULTS

The results of the OCI in 2014 showed that most of the constructive styles were above average, but still had room for improvement. And there was a style from both the „passive/defensive“ and „passive/aggressive“ cluster which stood out and was above average.

VELUX decided to concentrate on improving the „blue „ styles. Susanne Irving says, „We work towards something positive and trust that, at the same time, we lower the „red“ and „green“ styles“.

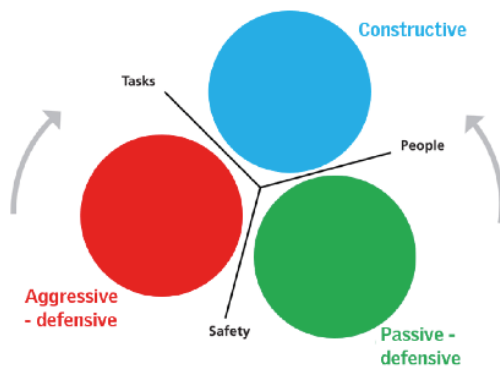
A Best-Practice Case From Susanne Irving About the VELUX Group

VELUX focused especially on developing the „Humanistic-Encouraging“ and „Achievement“ traits of the culture.

This common understanding was valuable for understanding the results of the LWS surveys and direct the development effort for the individual manager.

Also, the initiatives of the other development track VELUX is working towards („Engaged employees with clear objectives and opportunities for development“), supported the idea of concentrating on these two styles. „ The Achievement style is exactly paying attention to the performance we aim for and the Human-Encouraging style addresses the way we should develop our people accordingly“ Susanne emphasizes.

VELUX®



FIRST CHANGES

The first signs of change showed up in all the dialogues about culture, leadership and global collaboration that were started across the organization. Leaders began to use the language of the Circumplex. The managers who completed the LWS acted on the feedback they had received. They strived to use constructive styles in both daily leadership behavior and for the more formal processes like annual appraisals. Furthermore, several managers carried out workshops within their units or teams and used the GSI to implement constructive dialogues.

Working with the tools helped to create a common language and to understand what behavior VELUX is striving for. As one manager express it: “It has given us a shared language, a shared framework to discuss and develop from.

Feedback is something we not only talk about but do/ give - and a constructive mindset is something we should expect”.

Managers showed a high willingness and improved ability to share experiences and discuss challenges with each other.

Susanne Irving points out that the combination of relevant content, professional tools and leadership programs designed to create a safe environment for development has been essential for the results.

In 2017 VELUX did a progress check and conducted a new OCI survey. The results were very promising – especially the „Humanistic-Encouraging“ style had improved and challenging styles in the „passive/defensive“ and „passive/aggressive“ cluster were less dominant.

FUTURE

The constructive mindset is now an integrated part of the culture in the VELUX Group and new employees meet this way of thinking and behaving in their on-boarding process.

In 2019, a new group of 20 HR Business Partners was accredited to keep the focus and anchor the constructive behaviors even more.

Susanne Irving would also recommend other organizations to start at the organizational level and then cascade it down to the individual level. If one starts at the cultural level it is easier to create an understanding because one is not pointing to one individual but to the whole organization. „The OCI created a certain openness on the subject of organizational culture, which made it easier to jump to the individual level afterwards“ Susanne points out.