

## Developing Country MDs to maximise the opportunities in a changing global landscape – a Networked Learning Approach



### The organisation

L'Oréal is a leader in the global beauty business. Founded over 100 years ago by a chemist/entrepreneur in Paris, the organisation is now present in 140 countries, employing 89,300 people and developing and marketing 34 global brands.

### The business issues

L'Oréal has very clear ambitions: to continue to lead in a highly competitive sector, to continue to globalise and, over the next ten years, to double the number of consumers the organisation serves. As the world moves towards emerging markets they recognise a need to change and adapt.

The organisation's Country Managing Directors are critical to the success of this strategy. They are responsible for managing the L'Oréal business in their country, providing strong leadership for the organisation's employees and ensuring that L'Oréal fulfils its social responsibilities to the communities in which it operates.

It is a complex and challenging role and L'Oréal is seeking to develop a new generation of senior executives to succeed in an environment of increasing complexity, globalisation, hyper-competition and continuous change.

### A Networked Learning Approach

The Country Managing Director's Programme takes a Networked Learning approach to developing the skills required in this challenging context. Initially a successful, fully residential programme, was designed to meet the specific needs of this important group. Over time it was felt that a blended, technology-enabled, approach could increase the efficiency of the learning, and the degree of long term application.

In the current programme, Country Managing Directors from around the world meet initially for a face-to-face module in Paris and begin the process of coming together as a supportive learning community. In this first session the group focus on their leadership challenges.

After returning to their regions, they join a series of scheduled, web-based tutorials with Cranfield faculty over a 12 month period – combining pre- and post- work

assignments and coaching support.

Issues tackled with Cranfield faculty during these sessions include Change, Innovation, Visioning, Stakeholder Management and Leadership/Management Style.

As an online, networked, community they are supported with additional, guided resources made available at intervals from the Cranfield Knowledge Interchange. These relate to specific topic areas identified as most useful during the face-to-face module.

A concluding face-to-face, Paris based, event draws the learners together to consolidate the learning. It is also an opportunity to strengthen personal relationships for the continuance of their career networks going forward.

### Why Networked Learning?

*“Learning is effected in time and in situ. Cranfield brings new frameworks, new insights, tools, benchmarking. And it’s done in such a way that it is integrated with our own development cycle.*

*Our Country MDs prepare for each session with their own challenges in mind; work in a focussed way with faculty on new models and ways of thinking; share ideas amongst themselves - online and at a distance - and then apply the new knowledge very quickly in their own environment, with support from the Cranfield team.*

*Learning is embedded in their work responsibilities. We are successfully bridging the ‘learning-knowing-doing’ gap. It’s a very powerful recipe.”*

**Tony Russell, Director Senior Executive Development, L’Oréal**

### Impact

As a result of the Programme L’Oréal has already observed a number of changes:

Firstly in terms of leadership style: Country Managers themselves are more self-aware, more sensitive to their own leadership style, to their relationships with others and to intercultural issues.

Programme participants are employing a range of tools from the programme to tackle their day-to-day challenges. Examples include: the use of new change management models in Southern Europe; new lenses on sustainable development deployed in Asia; and stakeholder management models applied in L’Oréal’s start-up operation in Kenya.

The changes in leadership style are having an impact both upwards and downwards in the organisation.

The programme is demonstrating that the tools, models, new ideas and new insights introduced during the programme are an important way of complementing the development that L’Oréal is able to do internally.

### Why Cranfield?

*“Firstly Cranfield brings a very strong faculty, a faculty which has breadth and depth, international diversity, and which is rooted in business practice. ‘Knowledge into Action’ is something which is very important for us too.*

*Then there is partnership: Cranfield has significant expertise in business partnership and learning delivery. Through the breadth and depth of their online resources, Cranfield is very capable of reaching out to an international senior executive population, which is extremely important to us.*

*And finally the notion of innovation and continuous improvement. All of those ingredients are very important. It’s a very complete package.”*

**Tony Russell, Director Senior Executive Development, L’Oréal**

### Facts and Figures

The networked programme has run twice with more programmes planned. To date, L’Oréal Country Managing Directors from across Western Europe, Taiwan, Croatia, Venezuela, Kenya, Panama, Lebanon, and Singapore have attended.