

On the road to success: driving sustainable, innovative growth through leadership development



The Organisation

Etisalat Nigeria is the country's fastest growing mobile network operator with over 22 million subscribers. They provide network coverage in all 36 states of the Federation covering more than 2,000km of fibre to support broadband development. The company has a track record of introducing innovative products for mobile banking, which have made financial transactions convenient for customers and helped foster entrepreneurialism. Etisalat Nigeria launched one of the first major broadband services in the country – EasyBlaze – and is known for its innovative products and services such as the Eco Sim and the first network to offer special mobile numbers to Nigerians via the '0809uchoose' campaign.

The business issues

The company had a clear Mission and Vision and also agreed a set of Values following a full internal consultation exercise. These were encapsulated in Project 1-3-5 depicted in the graphic above.

Development was being provided on an ad-hoc basis and the focus was very much on building business. There was, however, a clear need for an integrated strategy for Leadership Development to provide a cornerstone of an embedded culture driving sustainable, innovative growth.

Two key groups were identified as central to this the Leadership Development intervention:

- CXOs and Directors (24 in total)
- Heads (52 in total)

Together, these groups in essence formed the leadership of Etisalat Nigeria. They were undoubtedly critical to embedding the culture and performance standards which had been identified as crucial to success.

The development challenge

In order to ensure cultural and regional alignment, Cranfield partnered very successfully with Lagos Business School in the development and delivery of the programme.

Lilian Uwaeme, Associate Director at Lagos Business School found the partnership to be hugely beneficial: "Working with Cranfield on this programme was very collegial. It was a well organised programme in which, both schools brought their expertise to the fore. It was a great experience working with true professionals that were willing

to give one another support in ensuring the programme was high quality. We must also commend the expert leadership of the Cranfield Team.”

The programme

The Pathways Leadership Programme design was based on the core principles of building a wider and more mature leadership capability across the two key groups and building a common mind-set and language based on the Etisalat Nigeria Values and all elements of the 1-3-5 Initiative. It was delivered over a one-year period in the following format:

Module 1: Leading in Our Context

The primary scope of Module One was the individual. Personal values were made more explicit and explored in the context of the Etisalat Nigeria values. Individual exploration of personal working styles built the process of self-awareness and we began to develop emotional fluency through working with the arts and spatial body dynamics. The metier of open conversation was established as a core activity with facilitated group interaction.

Module 2: Leading for Competitive Advantage

Module 2 focused on strategy formulation through looking at trends in the external environment to include both macro and industry specific drivers. Essential conversations took place on how these trends could be interpreted into meaningful strategic options for the company.

Module 3: Leading through our People

The third module focused on the role of the leader in motivating teams and harnessing collective capacity for innovation and performance. There was a focus on building individuals' emotional fluency through developing rapport and engagement competencies. We explored individual accountability and action in empowering and growing our people with an emphasis on leveraging diversity. We increased the onus on the participants to build trusting and supportive relationships.

Module 4: Driving Business Performance

Module 4 focused on the key drivers of business performance, addressing key questions such as:

- What were the key financial parameters that we as leaders need to work to and motivate our teams to deliver?
- What does performance mean to us and our stakeholders and how do we align our measures to ensure delivery of Project 1-3-5?
- How do we build innovation and creativity into the DNA of Etisalat Nigeria whilst still ensuring compliance and quality standards are maintained?
- What process and capabilities do we need to gain competitive advantage through commercially astute and ethical negotiating practices which also build relationships?

Module 5: Leading Change and Influencing for Impact

The final module explored how leaders create truly effective, context specific, vision and purpose whilst engaging and aligning key stakeholders to build both individual and organisational capability. We focused on the role of the leader in change, our emotional reaction to change and its implications for how we lead through change. We also explored our need to understand context and culture to enable effective change and finally how we communicate and influence for change.

Why Cranfield

Etisalat Nigeria chose Cranfield as a key partner because of their strong expertise in the field of executive education. They were looking for a partner that could deliver a comprehensive learning and development experience which would ultimately enhance their leaders' ability to drive business success through crafting winning strategies, driving innovation, and implementing change.

Abigail Isokopan, Chief Human Resources Officer at Etisalat Nigeria commented, *“I am happy to note that we found that ideal partner in Cranfield. When we were making our choice, we were convinced it was the right one based on the consistently high rankings which Cranfield have received over the years for executive education. Once we started working with Cranfield, our confidence was further strengthened by their readiness to collaborate with local partners to ensure that the content of the Pathways Leadership Programme reflected the latest thinking in global best practices combined with high relevance to the market conditions in which we were operating as a telecoms company*

The Cranfield faculty demonstrated full commitment to the programme, from conceptualisation to execution. They were well-grounded, skilful, and patient. They were also eager to work with our leadership team and faculty of the Lagos Business School in a collaborative manner to ensure that the programme achieved its objectives”.

Making a difference

Working with Cranfield on delivering the Pathways Leadership Programme has resulted in positive outcomes at both the organisational and individual levels. Abigail added “The programme remains a reference point for subsequent leadership development interventions here at Etisalat Nigeria”.

It is also worth noting that, about 3 years after the end of the programme; several participants have been promoted to the next level or have assumed different responsibilities on the same level across the organisation.

The knowledge, skills and competencies they have gained through the Pathways Leadership Programme has certainly enhanced their internal mobility opportunities, their readiness to assume greater and higher levels of responsibility.