Nestlé in the USA

Richard Vincent, Director, Executive Development

Company Setting
Nestlé (USA) Inc., part of the world’s largest food and beverage company

Business Challenge
Deepen leadership understanding and culture so that Nestlé can maintain its world leadership position through innovation and excellence as well as continue to grow market share in the United States

Richard Vincent is the Director of Executive Development for Nestlé USA Inc., an $11 billion arm of Nestlé S.A. He’s been at Nestlé about seven years. From his base in Glendale, California, Rich oversees leadership development for the top 300 executives in the company and oversees educational programs for a broad swath of managers. Rich describes Nestlé as an organization with European cultural roots whose leadership realizes they need more innovation and change. He reports directly to the Head of Nestlé University who reports to the Senior VP in charge of Human Resources.

Rich is a take-charge person and an innovator. He designs in-house programs and delivers them, and he trains others to teach them as well. He keeps his focus on the needs of the business and balances these with the needs of the individuals whose development is his responsibility. Because he can’t possibly cover all the needs of his constituency, he occasionally recommends outside educational opportunities for executives. In order to understand the marketplace of executive education as well as to get ideas for his own courses, Rich attends executive education programs at leading schools such as Harvard, Columbia, Wharton, and Stanford.

Rich attended the May 2002 Leading Change & Organizational Renewal (LCOR) Open Enrollment program. He was impressed by the content, the faculty, and particularly by the action-learning approach. Rich was already on a path to provide more action-learning opportunities for his executive group. Nestlé had scheduled a Leadership Forum for later in the summer, and they were in the midst of designing that event. Rich was particularly intrigued by the breakout sessions and facilitation, because it gave him a model for what he might do with his leadership training.

Rich decided to introduce the LCOR framework at the semi-annual Leadership Forum. He purchased and then distributed the Solving Today’s Problems CDs to each participant at the Forum. He got positive feedback about the perceived value of being able to take a learning tool back to others in the company. “A lot of our leaders are very excited about this blended learning approach,” said Rich.

During 2003, Rich will host fifteen small-group workshops for these same leaders. Each workshop, called a Performance Conference, will be attended by one of the company’s top executives and his/her leadership team. Rich has designed each
workshop along the lines of an action “workout,” combining some elements of education with breakout discussions focused on the team’s business: both current performance and future opportunities. At the end of the sessions, Rich will distribute a second LCOR CD, *Building Ambidextrous Organizations*, to all the participants. During these workshops, the intact team of leaders will review and work through some of the material in the first and second LCOR CDs. This team approach to action learning is pushing Rich’s learning organization in new directions. By the end of the year the top fifteen General Managers and Function Heads in the company will have direct experience with this combination of education and action.

According to Rich, “Our expectation is that workshop participants will be able to use the material in the LCOR CDs to cascade these concepts throughout the organization. In time, the Performance Conference format (including much of the material from LCOR) will be our template to drive organization-wide innovation, speed, and performance-based learning.”

**More information:**
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