



CASE STUDY: DANONE MEDICAL DIVISION

VALUE FOR TIME CONFERENCES – A CLIENT’S PERSPECTIVE, BY BOB WOODBURN

BW: I’m Bob Woodburn. I am the Global Supply Chain Director for Danone’s Medical Division and I am part of the Operations Leadership Team of Danone Medical.

Q: *Bob, you used Sensei to help you deliver a conference within Danone. What did you hope to get from that conference?*

BW: We were a very young leadership team and supply chain community. We had been together for about 3-6 months. At the conference we had lots of new people from countries with a supply chain responsibility coming together for the first time. We also had people from different functions; we had people from factories, purchasing/sourcing and logistics and we wanted to create a sense of a single operations community.

Q: *To what extent were those hopes and expectations met with the Sensei conference?*



BW: I think the conference was a very important first step. Building a community is a journey. It’s not something that is created overnight but the conference was a great start, which we then built on with everyone who attended. It helped to set the tone of the community that we are trying to develop: in trying to communicate key messages around personal responsibility, about commitment, about being an interactive part of the whole team rather than simply someone who was passed instructions from on high and told to get on and do it. We wanted to create a community where people could contribute, add, as well as taking from the community; contribute, as well as be told what to do. So the conference was an important part of setting that scene, it set the tone for how we wanted that community to work in the future.

Q: *As a participant at that conference did you find any of it particularly useful on a personal level?*



BW: I was part of the team that co-designed the conference with Sensei. So the design was not a surprise to me; I knew what was coming. Nevertheless I really took away some quality conversations with people who I work with quite often, which gave me much bigger insight into who they were as people and what they were trying to achieve in their role and their personal aspirations. We created an environment where, over the course of the conference, people responded to the exercises we did and as a result developed a different quality of relationship, one that was deeper and more authentic.



Q: *The business invested a fair bit of money flying people in for the conference and putting them up for two days in a nice venue. What do you think the business gained from the conference? How would you justify that investment in terms of time and money?*

BW: At the end of the day we are doing this to achieve a result; and we have very clear cost objectives and service objectives as an operations community. In order to achieve those, we have to co-operate. We have to co-operate across functions, across countries, across technical areas. We had a very successful year and a lot of that came from our ability to operate as an integrated whole. Everyone had to understand what the priorities were and everyone had to understand what the business wanted to achieve.

Q: *So would you say that the conference was good value for time - for the participants and for the leadership team?*



BW: Yes, I think so. We only come together at most twice a year and in 2009 with all the budget constraints we will only be meeting once. The Sensei design, the format we used, meant we really got great 'bang for our buck'. The conference was quite an intense experience yet people didn't feel overloaded. They didn't get swamped with information that they never use again. We had a clear process within the conference, which meant we delivered really impactful messages in a cost and time efficient way. I would say that we got great value for money and for time.



Q: It's about a year since we did the conference. What's different now from when we entered the conference this time last year?

BW: We are several steps further on our journey than we were last year. We can really see much better communication and an understanding between the different functions up and down the supply chain - operations, manufacturing as well as our people in the countries around the world. Basically what we created with the conference last year was a platform that we can now build on. We have our next conference coming up now, roughly a year after the previous one, and what we will be doing is trying to use this to push forward and to challenge ourselves to come up with a higher performing organisation. The conference last year gave us this opportunity.



Q: So you chose Sensei to help you design and facilitate the conference. How did you find working with us?



BW: The Sensei team were very easy to work with. This doesn't mean that they just sat in the background. They are very active, participating and where appropriate leading the discussions we had, both from a design point of view and to challenge us to be clear on what is it that we are trying to achieve. They really helped us to actually understand precisely what it is that we were trying to do with the conference. Once we got our objectives agreed, they were very good at coming up with different ways of achieving these. In terms of conference design they helped us break things up and to do things in a different and engaging way. Their design ensured that people interacted and remained energised throughout. In particular they kept our people interested and energised. Everyone enjoyed the event and lots thought they wouldn't before they came!