

CEDEP - Next to INSEAD, 2,000 employees trained a year

The training giant full of generosity



The employees of L'Oréal and Danone are trained at CEDEP in Fontainebleau, a unique business club which has growing solidarity construction sites in the region. Interview.

With its 26 staff, in comparison to 600 at INSEAD, CEDEP (Centre Européen d'Education Permanente) has always been in the shadow of the famous business school. Unknown to the wider public, the 'club', which has recently celebrated its 40th anniversary, and proposes executive education to some of the biggest companies worldwide, from L'Oréal to Danone, cultivates its uniqueness.

Its niche: customised company specific training programmes in a privileged environment, with its own hotel rooms, gym, jacuzzi and restaurant. « *A fully independent campus* » smiles Debby Montelly, Communications Manager. Here, top global managers put down their suitcases for several days to exchange and leave rich from their unique experience. 2,000

people are trained each year at CEDEP, a club which is the only one of its kind, and has amongst its members some of the biggest international groups. « *CEDEP largely invented the concept of executive education and welcomes around 2,000 participants per year. Executives from our member companies come from all over the world to follow these intensive programmes at our premises with their unique architectural design* » explains Debby Montelly. The Director General, Jens Meyer, explains that CEDEP has become an engaged player in the region, via its solidarity construction sites.

La République de Seine et Marne: CEDEP has always been in INSEAD's shadow. Is this voluntary?

Jens Meyer: Let's just say that we never made the effort to be known! (Laughs) But from now on, this is going to change as we aim to reach out to local contacts. For example, we have organised some conferences at the Fontainebleau theatre, for the Bellifontains. We

hope to continue in this logic and carry on with our charitable actions which help the area.

LR: Yes, tell us more about these renovation projects that you organise for your executives ...

JM: The objective is to use real life projects to demonstrate both the strong and weak points of an organisation. For a group of executives who have never met before, it's an opportunity to create links. I'll set the scene: we send them to a worksite; we explain what the construction project is and that there is no money. After a short time of anxiety and astonishment, the participants realise that it isn't a joke and they have to organise themselves into a unified team if they want to reach the goal of carrying out the task.

LR: What kind of projects are we talking about?

JM: Carpentry, building wooden amphitheatres for handicapped children... We have a whole heap of projects which need to be carried out. When the participants

leave, they feel they have done something concrete which can be transferred to their daily work skills in the office. We also frequently use the Fontainebleau forest. We send our executives out amongst the trees or to find their train of thought! We've noticed that having a conversation or class in the forest gives much more time to reflect than a one to one dialogue inside. We learn to accept the silences and the answers are often deeper and more thoughtful. Everyone understands more what their colleagues mean to say and explain and makes the most of their environment.

LR: Is it more difficult for companies to invest in executive training during this time of crisis?

JM: Yes. We are always happy to welcome new members. We have the image of an exclusive club because we build up real partnerships. The world has changed though, the context too.

**Interview by
Yoann VALLIER**