

To whom it may concern

Boehringer Ingelheim
Pharma GmbH & Co. KG

CDMQ
Global QM-M&R

23 October 2014

Background & challenges: Working in an international virtual environment

The Boehringer Ingelheim group is one of the world's 20 leading pharmaceutical companies. Headquartered in Ingelheim, Germany, the group operates globally with 142 affiliates and more than 47,400 employees. The Boehringer Ingelheim group embraces many cultures and diverse societies. For this reason, an increasing number of employees at Boehringer Ingelheim is facing the challenges of virtual cooperation in a global world.

In order to give our global employees in the Quality Management, Medicine and Regulatory Department some tools and standards to hand so that they can work more effectively in a cross-cultural and virtual environment, we have decided to offer them some training in this area.

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The solution: International online workshops

Originally, we had planned to hold some workshops on the subject of international virtual collaboration in conjunction with an international conference in Germany. However, for organizational reasons, we changed our plans and offered these workshops online. This proved to be a very good decision: After all, how better to show people how to improve their virtual collaboration skills than by hosting this training course in a virtual environment?

Over a period of eight weeks from the beginning of May to the end of June 2014 Gudrun Höhne conducted a series of six online workshops tailored for our international staff on "Working in a virtual environment". The workshop participants came from all over the world.

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Preparation: Setting priorities & organizing the workshops

Together with Gudrun Höhne, we chose the specific focus topics for these workshops in several international conference calls and online meetings. With a time limit of just four hours, we had to set priorities. Gudrun was a great resource in organizing these online workshops for the different time zones. She has always been flexible and reliable to suit our needs. She

participated in a couple of pre-technical online tests to make these workshops, each with some 30 participants, a success.

The main workshop objectives were to sensitize our international staff for the challenges of working virtually with their colleagues worldwide and to give them specific and real tips and tricks on how to do this more effectively.

The four-hour-workshops were delivered with Microsoft Lync 2010 which we use for online meetings and instant messaging in our company. We were really impressed with the high level of interaction possible in the Microsoft Lync environment which Gudrun Höhne showed us.

The workshop content

Topics covered in the online workshop included:

- The virtual communication challenge – basics
 - Basic communication models transferred into the virtual world
 - Advantages and disadvantages of all available communication media
 - When to use which communication medium?
 - Avoiding misunderstandings and supporting team building by using the right media
- Language and culture in virtual teams
 - Culture and stereotypes
 - Direct and indirect communication: cross-cultural challenges
 - Native versus non-native speakers: communication challenges, tips and tricks
 - Avoiding and managing cross-cultural conflicts
- Leading and working in virtual teams
 - Definition and forms of virtual teams
 - Motivation and team building in virtual teams
 - Culture, distance and power in virtual teams

The outcome & reference for Gudrun Höhne

Gudrun Höhne succeeded in holding the attention of all the participants during the four-hour-online workshop with Microsoft Lync and even managed to do online group exercises. She was able to create a really pleasant and interactive workshop atmosphere – despite the virtual classroom.

The workshop was clear, concise and effective. The content and pace were ideal for our diverse workshop participants from EMEA, Asia and the Americas. Gudrun Höhne continuously encouraged audience participation and showed us how to engage an international audience online.

All of our training requirements were met. The workshop participants obtained some helpful tips and tricks on how to work more effectively within a virtual environment. As a positive side effect of these workshops

the participants learnt a lot about how to use Microsoft Lync more effectively for our own internal online meetings and training courses. To follow-up, all participants were given the workshop slides, the polls and the whiteboards worked upon. This was very helpful to reflect on the different perspectives within the company and on what has been learnt during these four hours.

We would not hesitate to consult Gudrun Höhne for any future projects of this nature and are more than pleased to recommend her to other global companies facing challenges similar to our own.



Carrie Regan
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