



EXECUTIVE  
EDUCATION

# Knowledge for Innovation and Sustainability

## THE ROYAL DSM PROGRAM

### The Challenge

Royal DSM, a global life sciences and materials sciences company, sought to balance growth and sustainability. With 22,000 employees and annual net sales of around €9 billion, DSM delivers solutions that nourish, protect, and improve performance in global markets such as food and dietary supplements, personal care, feed, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, automotive, paints, electrical and electronics, life protection, alternative energy, and bio-based materials.

*“Our next ambition is to become a truly global company working as one big team. The biggest challenge will be to drive our One DSM Culture Agenda while expanding our global footprint within the timeframe of our new corporate strategy.”*

— MARCIN SKARBON

*Vice President, Global Learning and Development,  
Talent Management North America, DSM*

### The Goals

DSM called on Wharton Executive Education to create a custom leadership development program that would propel the company forward as it expanded internationally. The strategic goals:

- Train top leaders to foster innovations based on the three pillars of sustainability: benefits to people, planet, and profit
- Prepare leaders for learning from and with people from different cultures
- Achieve net sales growth of 5%–7% annually
- Cultivate talent and grow the leadership pipeline inside the organization
- Promote collaboration across business units



## THE IMPACT:

### People

- 100% retention among Wharton Executive Education program participants
- Many Wharton program participants were promoted into global leadership roles

### Planet

- Dow Jones Sustainability Index #1 “Gold” ranking in Chemical sector
- 94% of the products in DSM’s innovation pipeline are ECO+, meaning that they offer clear ecological benefits compared to the mainstream solutions they compete with

### Profits

- Following the program, organic sales growth was 11%, far exceeding 5%–7% goal
- Cautiously optimistic outlook; on the way to achieving three-year targets
- Using tools from the Wharton custom program, DSM increased innovation-driven products to 18% of sales

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## The Solution

Wharton created a leadership development program for DSM that fostered sustainable innovation, cultivated talent, increased retention, and grew sales. Each module of the program was oriented toward tools that participants could take back to their offices and use to create immediate business impact.

## The Royal DSM Program Design

Each Wharton Executive Education custom engagement is designed to address the specific needs and challenges of our clients. Participants in a custom program receive tools and strategies they can use immediately for maximum impact. The following is a snapshot of the DSM program design.

- One or two cohorts of six senior leadership potentials per year
- Program Components:
  - Personal assessment and coaching
    - > Designed to heighten self-awareness, effectiveness, leadership acumen, and collaboration skills
  - A focus on real-world business issues
    - > Participants organize into teams around a real strategic issue or organizational dilemma at DSM
  - Residential module
    - > Participants come together to learn from Wharton's world-class faculty, stretching and exercising new skills as part of a peer team
    - > Provides a vehicle for managerial and leadership interaction as well as collegial exchanges with DSM's Managing Board and senior executives
- Leadership Insight Tools: Participants received leadership assessments, executive coaching, and peer feedback to broaden their self-knowledge
- Knowledge for Immediate Impact: Sustainable solutions and ideas for new products that could be implemented right away



*“Wharton committed to provide an objective perspective on what they observed at DSM as an organization. That objectivity gave us the courage we needed to address certain things. One of our goals was to sensitize our executives to learning from people from different cultures; Wharton could add value on to that.”*

— MARCIN SKARBON

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## **In the Client's Words: Marcin Skarbon, Vice President, Global Learning and Development**

Wharton Executive Education had been recommended to me by a colleague. I appreciated the high level of program customization Wharton offered. We made a conscious decision to partner with a business school that has a known European presence; our objective was to internationalize our company, so we appreciated Wharton's global reach.

Once we presented our challenge, Wharton helped us to shape all the components of the program. Wharton came up with the concept, designed each piece, and brought in additional components like personal evaluation and coaching. The Custom team responded quickly and was flexible. Wharton did not come with a preconceived idea—they used a collaborative approach. They tried to understand DSM, its background, its organizational challenges. They spent hours in determining the scope of the engagement, spending time with senior management.

During the program, participants take counsel from each other and become open to growing their businesses in a different way. As one participant told me after the residential module, "This was a life-changing experience."



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