

Patrick Mathieu Conseil

Answers to questions from Learning Lab Denmark : a case story using the « Simulation » artistic tools developed with Local Access for the Fischer Brewery in France.

Paris, Feb. 15, 2005

1. Name/Location of company

The Fischer Brewery is a subsidiary of Heineken in France. It is located in Strasbourg (east of France). It is a 150-year old company, that specialises in tradition blond beer (pils / lager) and specialities for young targets with products such as Desperados (beer with tequila flavour).

2. Who are you? (Simulation?)

Patrick Mathieu Conseil is a marketing consultancy based in Paris. It is a small business with 7 consultants experienced in branding, consumer research, communication and product innovation.

Simulation is a tool in form of a 1-day seminar, that was developed in partnership with a group of five artists, Local Access, based in Paris.

3. Date of project (intervention)

Our mission with Fischer was started in 2002, and was about installing a connection between the marketing department and the sales force dedicated to bars, restaurants and discotheques. This mission led us to define 7 workshops. 2 of them were addressed by using Simulation in the early phase. This part of the mission was conducted between May and July 2003.

4. The (innovation) problem/challenge the company was facing

The challenge was initially to help the salesmen better use the marketing tools that had been developed within the company (packaging, pricing / contracts, local brand communication and events, etc.), and develop a better

collaboration with the new trade-marketing team. This was done in a context of a market with a strong negative trend and very high competition by larger companies with more money to sustain sales.

5. Your proposal: how did you suggest to address/explore the issue and how did the process actually happen

We suggested to start the mission with Simulation in order to redefine the real issue that was behind the problem the company had described to us. We felt it was more complex, and we knew that there were a lot of political, commercial, and human pressures going on about this subject. Also, the commercial situation was quite bad for some of the products involved, and this had been lasting for years. But we had no clue on how to address this as the real issues were unclear.

Both Simulation groups provoked strong reactions. The 10 salesmen + 2 marketing people discovered why that situation had become critical, but also what type of resource they had within the company's identity to overcome them. Only, this meant that all programmed actions for the coming months, that had been validated for months, showed useless and unefficient !

6. Short description of the essence of Simulation?

Simulation is the outcome of a 3-year co-development process aiming at implementing Organizational Art in our day-to-day consulting activity. Simulation uses a special listening technology and a very precise protocol to help groups develop by themselves new points of view on complex and problematic issues. One cannot decide who they speak to, but only who they listen to. The Simulation group lets every voice be heard, and multiple and peripheral informations become part of a global solution. It exploits collective intelligence, and reflects the deep identity of the group.

7. What was the outcome i.e. result/impact of the intervention. How did it affect the organisation, product, quality, ways of working and finally the bottom-line.

At Fischer, the company's very distinctive identity and practices appeared as the best opportunity to overcome completely the current problem situation. No one had ever thought this could be a solution before that date. So, at the end of the groups appeared the necessity to convince very quickly the president of the company to stop them and rethink 2 brand positionings

completely (that were 2 of the company's major products). This was done in 2 weeks after the groups. Major decisions in terms of marketing and sales priorities have been taken them, in complete autonomy by the marketing and sales teams (we were even not there). 18 months later, 100 % of what has been decided is still being implemented. One product has been completely reworked already, and its sales rise by + 4 % in a market that goes down by - 11 %. The second product is currently being finalized as it requested further marketing research. We are helping Fischer on this mission now.

In the end, we can say that Simulation was a major trigger in this project that has become a strategic one, and led to deep changes for the company. Its influence in the organization was that the sales force feedback gained a better recognition, and marketing and sales people were immediately brought into common action (that was the primary objective) that they had provoked (...and had to assume together) by themselves. We as consultants did not make traditional recommendations as we expected. Instead, we have created a new kind of workflow, generating immediate and positive energy that led to rapid change, with an immediate and definitive appropriation by all participants that was the key to success and actual full implementation. The resistance to change had been integrated and overcome by the Simulation process itself, during the groups. Simulation generated a fast and powerful change of mind not only for the participants but for all exposed to the findings of these groups, including the company's president himself. And most of all, this was quite an easy to sell process, with a good profitability for us and for the artists, but also for the company's bottom-line.