



WHITEPAPER:

Danfoss Global Mentoring Program

Being ready for the new tomorrow

By
KMP+ House of Mentoring

Introduction

Danfoss A/S is a worldwide organisation with HQ in Denmark, 71 factory sites in more than 20 countries and more than 27.000 employees globally (June 2021) providing services in more than 100 countries.

Danfoss is a globally leading technology partner in energy efficiency and sustainable solutions anchored in the three main business segments; Danfoss Climate Solutions, Danfoss Drives and Danfoss Power Solutions. The journey began on September 1 of 1933 when Mads Clausen founded Danfoss in his parents' farmhouse in Nordborg, Denmark – the Danfoss HQ is still situated at this location today. The business has since grown from a solo enterprise into a worldwide organisation and leading suppliers of innovative and energy-efficient solutions.

Never been more relevant – ready for a new tomorrow

With the stated objective to Engineering Tomorrow, building a better future, Danfoss aspires to engineer solutions together with their clients to help make a greener and better future that allows the world to use resources in smarter ways. As the world continues to face the ever-increasing environmental threats of global warming, pollution and climate change, the need to create sustainable solutions and transformations to limit climate change are on agendas worldwide, and Danfoss and its products have never been more relevant.

To cope with the changing landscape business leaders, need to adapt their own skills and those of their teams if they are to both remain competitive and take advantage of new opportunities in the marketplace. According to Bojana Zupanič¹, Head of Global Talent and Succession at Danfoss *“There has always been leadership and talent development on the agenda of the strategy. Our strategy is built on our foundations, which is our high-performing, diverse teams that make the strategy come alive. While growing our business, we want to maintain a strong culture, supported by a strong internal leadership pipeline. Our mentoring programme is the key to prepare the future Danfoss leaders for their next steps, because it tailors learning to the individual talent and builds global mindset by networking and exposure for all participants.”*

Building tomorrow's talent

To stay competitive both in terms of talents and customers on a dynamic market, Danfoss needs to develop a strong leadership pipeline and strengthen a global learning culture to stay innovative and be able to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

¹ This case was written in close collaboration with Bojana Zupanič, Head of Global Talent and Succession at Danfoss (2016-2021). Mentors and mentees have contributed with written statements, and in-depth interviews.

The future workforce needs to be comfortable working in an ambiguous environment and thrive on change. However, the new generations who start to emerge on the labour market bring big change as well. They will need to be engaged differently and they will not automatically endorse the hierarchical approach to leadership. The new generations are used to have a voice through social media, and they will seek jobs that provides meaning, and they are therefore more purpose-driven than previous workforces. They will demand a more fluid approach to careers and flexible working opportunities. This will have an impact on how flexible organisational culture will need to be, and future leaders need to be both more open to new ideas and aware of their own limitations. This means that organisations need to ensure that the current management culture reflects the right values to recruit and retain high potential talents.

The following presents the thoughts and initiatives behind the Global Mentoring Program at Danfoss A/S, as well as the design and result.

The Danfoss Global Mentoring Program for developing leaders

Danfoss has a long tradition of working with employee development, and when the discussion about having a mentoring programme on a global level started in 2016, Danfoss had already successfully implemented a mentoring programme in one of their business units. The main purpose of the Global Mentoring Program was to support leadership development and align to the overall talent strategy. Danfoss wish to connect their talents and high potentials with senior executives that they might not otherwise engage with. *“We knew that mentoring is perceived as a very effective development opportunity for high potentials also in other companies worldwide. One of the benchmarks said that 90% of organisations provide mentorship and 77% of them agree it is the effective activity”*, says Bojana Zupanič. Since 2016, Bojana Zupanič, Head of Global Talent and Succession, has been the Programme Manager of the Danfoss Global Mentoring Program.

The mentoring programme is the key to prepare the future Danfoss leaders for their next steps, because it tailors learning to the individual talent and builds global mindset by networking and exposure for all participants. The Danfoss Global Mentoring Program is designed to support high potentials in their internal leadership journey, to increase their visibility and create development opportunities and simultaneously the programme should develop a strong leadership pipeline and strengthen the global learning culture. The programme aims to develop leaders who aspire for high growth.

“A programme like this helps promote mentoring as a managerial discipline that is important to us and important to our development”, - mentor, Kim Schou Petersen, VP DCS Sales.

Selection of participants

Each year Danfoss has a people review process, where the business leadership teams together with HR identify high-potential employees on the mid-leadership level – senior management and director level – who have the potential to grow into significantly higher and more complex roles. This is basically the pool from where the future executives and vice presidents come.

Mentees for the Global Mentoring Program are selected based on this list of high potentials. Mentees are matched with mentors from a different part of the business, that they have not meet before. Bojana Zupanič states *“we are exposing the mentee to the wider part of Danfoss so the mentor can be a door opener for their next job or connect them with new people”*. The mentors must be on the executive level, and most of the mentors are vice presidents or above. Their job is also to develop future leaders meaning that they need to be on the look-out for new talents across the organisation all the time. One of the criteria for selecting mentors is, that they must be recognized as role models for their leadership style with a track record of spotting and developing talents.

According to Bojana Zupanič they recruit mentors in several different ways; potential mentors can be contacted directly by the programme manager, they can be nominated by their business functions, and because of the popularity of the mentoring programme, potential mentors are suggesting themselves to the programme manager.

How are mentors and mentees matched?

When potential mentees and mentors have been identified, the matching process begin. The first criterion is that there must be appropriate diversity to ensure learning potentials. Appropriate diversity meaning, that mentors and mentees should not be too much alike and not too much the same. Unless there is a specific wish from a mentee, the aim is always to match mentors and mentees from different business functions and across gender as well. The second criterion is to look at the candidates' preferences. The participants are asked to fill in a matching form where mentees describe their learning needs, and the mentors describe what they are particularly good at and what they can offer.

The third and final criterion is focused on the practical side of matching people across countries and time zones. This must be considered in a practical light even when mentors and mentees mostly meet virtually since the start in 2016. A global programme does provide for more flexibility in matching as geography is not a barrier. However, matching mentors and mentees from opposite side of the earth is very impractical, so “compatible” time zones are considered in the matching.

The programme is structured around a 12-month time frame. However, many pairs stay connected after the formal closing continuing their close relationship.

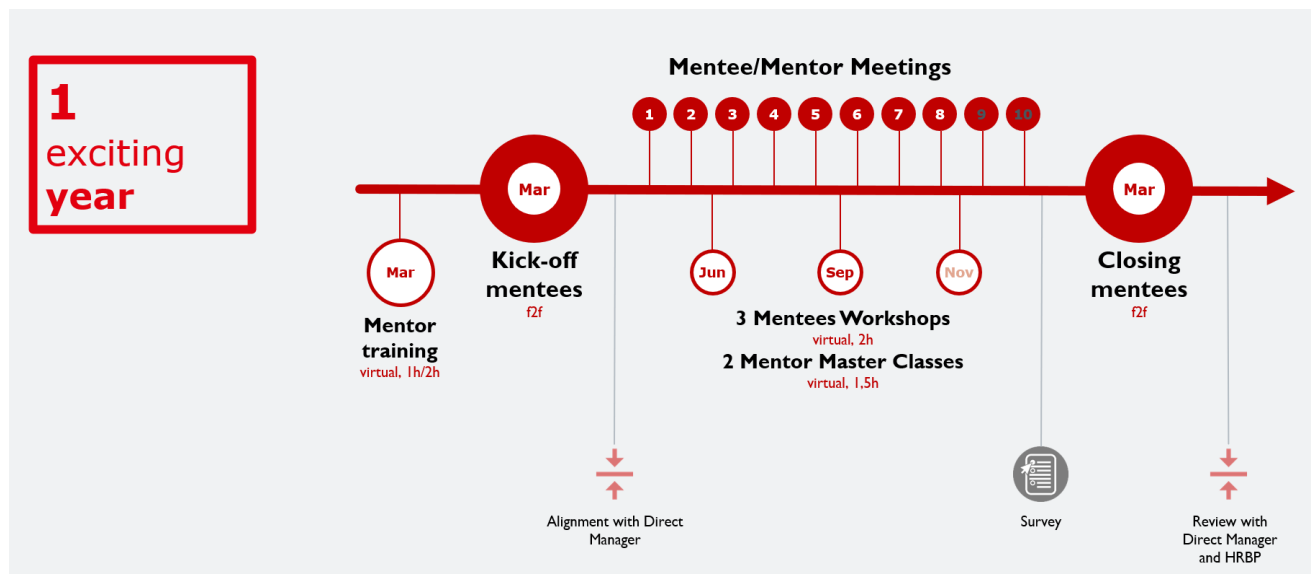
“It [the relationship] was built on trust and openness. As we spent more time together; we built a stronger relationship which even after the official mentoring programme is over, continues!” - mentee

Training and learning events

According to programme manager Bojana Zupanič a formal structure is necessary for the success of the programme. People need framework, guidance, and tools. Prior to the kick-off session all mentors participate in a mentor training session facilitated by KMP+ House of Mentoring. Here the aim is to provide them with a common understanding of modern mentoring, their role as mentors and the skills needed to engage fully in the relationship. Furthermore, the mentors are asked to make a short video presentation and speak a line from the Mentor Oath². These are combined into a video presented at the kick-off session. During the kick-off session the mentor/mentee pairs are revealed, and over the next 12-months they are encouraged to have 8 to 10 mentor/mentee sessions mostly virtually, and when possible, they are welcome to meet in person. The Danfoss Global Mentoring Program is designed as a 100% virtual programme – presently the programme includes kick-off, 3 workshops for mentees, 2 master classes for mentors and the closing session. These workshops provide an opportunity for mentees to meet, share their experiences, build network, and receive inspiration for their mentoring learning journey. For mentors the master classes are an opportunity to explore the mentor roles, network with their peers and build their skills as talent developers.

“In the beginning, I was sceptical whether virtual workshops would work, considering that not being face to face could reduce the interaction among the participants, but the reality showed I was completely wrong. The virtual sessions, adding the video resource and breakouts in smaller groups for deeper discussions have made the sessions amazing. The content was also another differentiation, quite relevant with the discussions among the mentees and actually considering the new challenges we are facing in the business”, - mentee, Rodrigo Link, R&D Vice President.

² The Mentor Oath is comprised of a statement for each of the 10 mentor roles from the Mentor+Game™ provided by KMP+ House of Mentoring plus statements around commitment to the mentoring process and the mentees.



Outline of the design for the Danfoss Global Mentoring Program

Motivation

It is a common observation in organisational mentoring programmes that there can be a motivational decline around the midpoint of the programme. The virtual workshops play an important role in ensuring progress, engagement, and motivation of the mentees all through the 10-12 months of the programme.

Also, the mentees' connection and alignment with their direct managers about their learning themes in the beginning of the programme and again at the end when they review their learning outcome brings commitment into the programme while at the same time signalling how important the programme and the participants are to Danfoss.

In most mentoring programmes, however, there will be motivational dips in the individual mentor/mentee relationships based on people being busy, pressures to perform, and unexpected, uncontrollable events that must be dealt with. Mentees in the Global Mentoring Program are generally very motivated and engaged. The programme is highly regarded within the organisation, and it is felt to be a privilege to participate.

Additionally for mentees, being matched with a senior executive, gaining access to knowledge, experience and inspiration is very valuable and very much appreciated. Transparency around expectations also influence motivation – knowing what to expect from the programme and what the programme expects from the mentees, makes it easier to participate and to prioritize the time for mentoring.

There is also focus on making this a fun and enjoyable programme. All learning events are designed with this in mind and includes breakouts, gamification of learning exercises, and plenary discussions – to encourage sharing, networking, and creating memorable moments. In the kick-off of the latest programme,

mentees were asked: “What motivational song do you want to listen to, when times get hard?” All their answers were collected and put together in a playlist on Spotify to inspire and remind them during the programme.

High-level senior executives are also very busy in their leadership positions, and though they are very motivated for the mentor role, it can be a challenge for them to prioritize the mentoring. However, we have also seen many mentors coming back year after year to mentor new mentees, which is a great sign of their motivation and understanding of the importance of the programme. To keep repeat and experienced mentors motivated, it is also necessary to keep giving them challenging mentees and reinventing the mentor master classes, so they feel that they keep learning as mentors.

“I have developed my leadership skills and I believe that I am a stronger leader today because of the mentoring programme. My understanding of Danfoss have increased as I have had mentees from many different areas of the business.” – mentor, Danfoss

Evaluation

At the end of the programme both mentors and mentees are asked to answer an online questionnaire to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning and the programme. The result of the evaluation is shared with the mentees at the closing event and in an executive summary for the mentors. According to the feedback received from former mentees more than 69% says that they wouldn't change anything, the match is perfect, and the mentor is giving more than expected.

“It was a very good match in my opinion. My mentor is a person with an amazing background in the sales and marketing field, but also has excellent leadership skills. The process was that good, that we are still in contact until today for good discussions about career and daily management topics”, - mentee, Rodrigo Link, R&D Vice President.

The last 31% would like to change for more individual reasons and attend more face2face meetings. Results also show that 45% of mentees who participated in the programme have moved in their careers to new positions.



The average satisfaction score of mentors and mentees from the Global Mentoring Program 2019-2020.

Reflections on the Global Mentoring Program

Mentors' and Mentees' reflections on the programme and their learning

Evaluations have shown that one of the biggest advantages of the programme is that mentors and mentees are matched across business functions and segments. This has provided both mentors and mentees with greater insight into other business functions and provided them with a better understanding of Danfoss as a whole.

"Because most of my mentees were from a different segment than me, I'm able to understand the challenges of the business regardless of geography and they are very similar to the challenges across the company. It gives a better understanding of what we should be doing differently and what we should be doing more transformative. What are the barriers to that - the technology barriers, cultural barriers, social barriers?" - mentor, RaviChandran Purushothaman, President Danfoss India.

On the question – what you have learned and achieved as a result of participating in the mentoring programme one mentee replied that *"The mentoring programme gave me the time to reflect on challenges, opportunities, and blind spots. It gave me the opportunity to look deeper for actions and the sparring with an experienced person with trust and openness. This paved the path to my development. As a result, the learning is to reflect and continue the path of mentoring as an ongoing part in my career!"* – mentee, Danfoss

Another mentee says:

“The main learning was that I was able to add much more experience from other functions in the organisation without leaving the R&D organisation. After such learning, I have decided to invest in continue growing in R&D, but always enlarging my job scope to add experience from sales, marketing, finance, and supply chain. In this way, I will be able to aspire to a position to manage one whole business unit in the future. Finally, after taking this decision, I have succeeded to be promoted to the R&D VP position 1.5 year after I finished my mentoring programme” - mentee, Rodrigo Link, R&D Vice President.

According to one of the participants, an important part of the programme was the question regarding work/life balance, and how to see oneself in a highly demanding position without compromising oneself: *“I have increased my confidence. I got some answer on questions: What are the things that distinguishes successful high-level managers from others and what is preventing me from going there. Rethinking on own life balance and life quality (personal vs business) and changing some bad habits”* – mentee, Danfoss.

On the question “why is it important to have such a type of a mentoring programme at Danfoss”, one mentor said:

“I believe it helps to develop both the culture of mentoring, the competencies for mentoring and to see mentoring as an important tool in the management toolbox. It also brings a slightly different level to being a mentor. Not because it is an important part in itself, but it is recognized that mentoring is part of working at Danfoss. It’s not something you just do for 5 minutes; it is something that is being signalled is important to prioritize both as a mentor and mentee. So that’s what I mean by status. It is promoted as a managerial discipline in the same way as change management, virtual management and the other disciplines we also are working on to develop ourselves as leaders”, - mentor, Kim Schou Petersen, VP DCS Sales.

We also asked, “what are important qualities of a mentor?”

“Of utmost importance is that I create a trustful environment, so that we have no barriers in the discussions. When this is done, it is important to understand mentees need and help shaping the relationship, so mentee can get most out of the sessions” – mentor, Danfoss.

Another mentor adds:

“Willing to learn and open to different perspectives, being able to understand challenges in other functions and able to listen, guide and share. I would also think a strong network at Danfoss is important to be able to share with the

mentee. Also, important to support the mentee in setting structure and getting clear on learning goals to ensure efficiency in the meetings” – mentor, Danfoss.

A mentee follows up by stating:

“The mentor role is to support the mentee in the journey in the development defined at the beginning. In my opinion, the good mentor is able to share his/her experience without overpowering the personal characteristics of the mentee. My mentor has done a very good job in this sense, bringing good provocations, and allowing me to see other paths to add experience from other areas in my current role in the R&D” – mentee, Rodrigo Link, R&D Vice President.

Mentoring is a learning partnership between two people with different levels of experience and with the potential to achieve new learning, new insights, and personal growth. Mentoring is about creating synergy between two people in a learning alliance. That mentoring is a learning process for mentee is very clear, however not all mentors believe that they also will benefit from a mentor/mentee relationship. The evaluation has shown that mentors continue to develop their own leadership style and the concept of reverse mentoring is often mentioned.

“It has made me a lot more reflective. I have become more aware of some things in my own behaviour as a leader. I have been able to test some things as a mentor, which I have been able to bring into my own leadership style, which I might not have done if I had not had another forum to test it out. it has also made me better at distinguishing between the role as a coach and as a mentor”, mentor, Kim Schou Petersen, VP DCS Sales, NER

Another mentor adds:

“I never expected so many benefits for myself. Firstly, it is a very strong learning partnership. I get into conversations with people from many different cultures and I get different facets of how business is done in different regions. Secondly, I was fortunate getting a mentee a lot younger than myself. Even though my mentee is German I can tell that almost 70-80% of the thinking is almost the same in the millennials and a lot is coming from the technology world that they were born into. I get a lot of knowledge on how things are done in a different environment” - mentor, RaviChandran Purushothaman, President Danfoss India.

From a mentoring programme to a mentoring culture

What makes this programme special is that it is: “Learning tailored to individual talent, networking and exposure to build global mindset and a guarantee of reverse mentoring”. The Global Mentoring Program is highly recognized and according to Bojana Zupanič “we see *more and more mentoring programmes appearing in the organisation at lower levels. Most of them are using the same structure as the global programme. Mentoring really has become something people are looking for; it has become part of the culture in Danfoss*”. Mentoring has become the doorway into the talent pipeline.

Danfoss will continue the Global Mentoring Program and would like to spread the concept of mentoring even more through the organisation to build community, develop leadership and create a strong mentoring and leaning culture across the organisation.

How KMP+ House of Mentoring can help

Partnering with KMP+ House of Mentoring for designing and implementing your mentoring programmes will give you access to knowledge, experience, and tools to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of mentoring in your organisation.



INCREASE THE IMPACT

With the methodology, e-learning and online toolboxes from KMP+ House of Mentoring to guide the design and delivery of your mentoring programmes.

ENGAGE THE LEARNERS – MENTEES AND MENTORS

With e-learning, online toolboxes and training events that are interactive, provides networking and reflection and is built on action-learning principles – whether delivered online or in person.

GAIN NEW KNOWLEDGE

With 20 years of delivering mentoring, we provide expert knowledge and full awareness of pitfalls and success criteria to help you establish professional, high performing mentoring programmes.



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KMP+ House of Mentoring is a consulting house established in the year 2000, focused on enhancing leadership and talent development through professional mentoring programmes. We design and deliver state-of-the-art mentoring programmes based on research and good practice and are continuously seeking to increase our knowledge of how to ensure optimal outcome of development initiatives – for the participants as well as for the organisation. Together with the client, we ensure that development activities are relevant and meaningful to the individual as well as to the organisation as well as connected to strategic objectives.

Learn more at www.house-of-mentoring.com

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