

An Organization Reinvents Itself

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12/08/2019 Porsche Consulting supports the medical association EADV on its way to becoming a High Performance Organization.

New communication channels, consistent focus on the needs of its approximately 7,000 members, and new formats for its key provision of continuing medical training: the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) has completely restructured itself. Porsche Consulting supported this renowned association of medical specialists on its path to becoming a high-performance organization.

At first glance there's no apparent need for radical transformation. The European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) has around 7,000 members in 100 countries. It enjoys an outstanding reputation, offers a wide range of continuing education and training programs that are in high international demand, and holds one of the world's largest conferences in the field every year. An independent nonprofit organization, it acquires a constant stream of new—and younger—members and has 40 full-time employees at its two offices in Brussels and Lugano.

Hold the course or take a new tack?

So everything is in great shape and there is no reason for change? One might be tempted to think that—but not Professor Luca Borradori, director of the university hospital for dermatology at the Inselspital in Bern, Switzerland. Right after being elected president of the EADV, he initiated a project with Porsche Consulting to completely reorganize the association. As he explains: "The EADV had been constantly expanding but otherwise hardly changing. An organization whose purpose is to serve its members has to scrutinize itself, increase its efficiency, and continually adjust its goals. Where do we want to go? What do our members want? How can we expand outside Europe as well? In short, what do we need to be both successful and innovative in the future? This is a matter of vision, mission, and strategy. Those elements were lacking."

Objective: high-performance organization

The EADV's leadership team and representatives from all over Europe therefore took the first step of drawing up a strategy to further develop the organization. The objective, according to Professor Borradori, was for the EADV to become a high-performance organization that can rapidly respond to member needs and changing framework conditions. To give just a few concrete examples: "We need to offer new formats for continuing training, to understand and meet the expectations and needs of our members and patients as well as possible, to be more active in our political lobbying and advocacy work, to pursue new communication channels, and to acquire new members outside Europe as well."

Objectives of this type, according to Professor Borradori, are difficult to achieve without the support of external advisors. "It's nearly impossible to put that type of change into motion from inside. You need experts to look at the organization from the outside. Here at Inselspital, our experience with this—and with Porsche Consulting—has been very good."

High performance in six fields of action

Together with the consultants, the leadership team defined six fields of action for increased productivity on the path to becoming a high-performance organization. These include developing new formats for continuing education and training that are in high demand throughout Europe. A few examples: an e-learning platform will soon be available, and later this year members will receive online access to fifteen leading dermatology journals. Already underway is a greater use of social media, thereby addressing the organization's many younger members. Another major field of action is the optimization of corporate governance by clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines within the organization.

In focus: member expectations

One central field of action has been the organization's continued development—for example, in concise responsibilities and job descriptions for employees. All of this is being done to meet member expectations as well as possible, explains Professor Borradori. "One third of our members are under 40. That's very good and we want to keep it that way. But it also means that we need to reorient ourselves and provide convincing answers on a daily basis to why young doctors should become and remain members of the EADV."

Long-term perspective

From the EADV president's perspective, it is important to take a long-term approach to such change processes. "The organization used to focus almost exclusively on the next conference and the next set of courses. Now we think and plan years in advance. Our organization is considerably more efficient and can respond better to changes." The main objectives are the same ones the 21 founding members set themselves in 1987: strengthening the field of dermatology, improving education and training throughout Europe, and helping patients who have skin diseases."

First the strategy, then the organization

The project has been exemplary from Porsche Consulting's point of view as well. Senior Partner Dr. Roman Hipp: "We worked together to define the EADV's future strategy and only then adapted the organization accordingly—this is the right order. The EADV is now a true high-performance organization and a role model for other medical associations that want to respond more readily and intuitively to member expectations."

Info

Photo: EADV

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