

# Promoting a ‘Feedback’ Culture in Futureproof Pharma

Pharmaceutical company MSD is moving its HR function away from the perhaps more traditional approach of addressing solely the here and now to try and anticipate short-term future needs, as HR lead Anita Schelcz tells the *Budapest Business Journal*.



## BBJ Staff

“The world is changing so fast that if we just try to adapt, we are only being reactive. We need to be proactive,” Schelcz says. Predicting the future may not be possible, but trends for HR strategy and talent practices can be identified.

“We need to prepare in advance for what kind of skills we will need for future jobs; we need to think ahead,” she insists. “It’s not enough anymore to be reactive, as we had to be when the pandemic came. If we miss these opportunities, we won’t be able to succeed as an organization.”

A good example of this, and how MSD brings together a diversity of voices to workshop ideas from all angles, is the Eastern Europe Enabler Roadmap. The countries in the region are not a formal MSD cluster, but they have strong connections and market similarities.

“Our Eastern European HR lead interlinked all the specifics and needs within the countries, and that’s how we created the concept together. This roadmap encompasses global programs, as well as localized capability building through workshops and role modeling activities. And now it’s a good example for other clusters and functions within our company that want to learn more about it and might join or do similar,” Schelcz says.

“I work very closely with my HR colleagues, and we wanted to have a bespoke and consistent approach, pulling together all people and culture-related activities across 15 markets within Eastern Europe, create smart

objectives with tangible and measurable outcomes, decide what we want to achieve, and how to work with the business in an even better partnership. That’s why we created this 18-month roadmap,” she explains.

“As part of that, we want to launch identified leadership skills, ensuring all leaders are aligned and are role-modeling the desired behaviors and ways of working. We want to bring an ‘Organization of the Future’ workshop to every market, and then see what we can or should do above the country level and how we could use our synergies best,” Schelcz notes.

She says there is a good level of “sponsorship” from senior leadership and all managing directors to make this journey happen.

## ENTERPRISE LEADERSHIP

“We also have a standardized leadership model within MSD now, called Enterprise Leadership Skills,” she explains. Interestingly, Schelcz emphasizes that it applies to all employees, just like the Talent Growth Framework.

“It’s not just about management roles. We consider all our colleagues as talents, and our philosophy is that development is for all.”

The Hungarian business has just held its “Organization of the Future” workshop as part of the roadmap.

“Based on the pipeline and the priorities for the upcoming years, we defined those skills and capabilities that we will need, and we will shape the organization accordingly. We will definitely need more flexibility,” she explains.

If trying to identify skills requirements for jobs that don’t yet exist seems daunting, it is worth remembering that

HR wasn’t even a separate business unit as recently as three decades ago but a function within finance. It may be a cliché, but the business world truly is moving at an accelerated pace.

## RESHAPE AND RESKILL

“The world, especially within HR, and its functions and roles have been evolving in the last 20-30 years. But that was at a much slower pace; we will need to reshape and reskill everything within the next years much faster if we want to stay competitive,” Schelcz cautions. By “competitive,” she means both as a business and as an organization that is attractive to talents.

That means becoming a broader, more inclusive company where investing in the growth, success and well-being of the people is a key priority, where diversity, equality and inclusion are a core focus, and where colleagues are encouraged to share their opinions without fear or favor in what Schelcz calls a “strong feedback and speak up culture.”

One commonality for all these developments, and others such as physical and mental well-being, is that consistent management action must be taken if employees are to take them seriously.

“We have semi-annual surveys for the employees, and it’s important that we follow up on those with an action plan and focus on those areas where we can see the biggest development opportunities,” the HR lead says. “What will support our goals to really grow our business and our colleagues? But it’s also important that we listen to our colleagues and that managers do regular one-on-ones with them, so we have continuous insights into whether we are heading in the right direction,” Schelcz says.

“If we encourage this feedback culture, it is vital that people are willing to turn to us with trust and then share their opinions and feedback about everything; otherwise, it won’t work. This speak-up culture is one of our core ways of working as an organization.”

The good news is that, on the gender diversity front, MSD is already well-positioned. “We have good female representation already within our local organization; more than 59% of our colleagues are females, and it’s the same across the company, even at the leadership team level,” Schelcz says.

Equally, it is vital that one group is not promoted at the expense of another. Thus, there are plenty of women’s health initiatives, but also many others promoting men’s health, such as “Movember.” Needless to say, given



Anita Schelcz

a DE&I approach, men are welcome to attend the Women’s Network Employee Business Resource Group events, as male allyship is highly important and encouraged. Indeed, it has proven so successful that a Next Gen EBRG is to be launched to build on intergeneration synergies and facilitate the successful cooperation of different age groups.

This publication was made possible by MSD. MSD Pharma Hungary Kft. 1095 Budapest, Lechner Ödön fasor 10/B, hungary\_msd@merck.com, www.msd.hu, +36-1-888-5300 HU-NON-01234 | Date of closing: 08/07/2024

**“If we encourage this feedback culture, it is vital that people are willing to turn to us with trust and then share their opinion and feedback about everything because, otherwise, it won’t work. This speak-up culture is one of our core ways of working as an organization.”**