

Conversation skills for 180 managers, moved online within days

Staying in conversation with employees supports sustainable employability and lowers absenteeism. From that conviction KPN decided to train around 180 managers in conversation skills. When the pandemic arrived a week before the start, the whole program moved online within days.

KPN • Netherlands • Since 2022

180 managers

in 17 groups, from Groningen to Maastricht

4 months

with four virtual moments and platform practice in between

2%

lower absenteeism reported at Customer Support a year on

The challenge

Managers walked into conversations unprepared

Operational managers in the stores, the field engineering organization and Customer Service steer employees and customer processes directly, and their teams saw somewhat higher absenteeism than the rest of KPN. Many managers went into conversations unprepared, without a plan, and found them tense.

The approach

Four virtual moments, with practice in between, moved online within days

KPN asked three providers to think along and chose Relevance, which offered the most complete set of learning interventions, taught the HR advisors how to lead intervention sessions themselves, and worked the most common cases per department into the practice material.

- **E-learning and platform** Online assignments plus practice and deepening material on the CrossKnowledge platform.
- **Intervision led by KPN's own HR advisors** Two sessions per group, with the HR advisors trained by Relevance to lead them.
- **Virtual training days with actors** Theory in the morning, practice with professional actors in the afternoon, in MS Teams time slots.
- **Own cases** The most common cases per department in the material, and managers bringing their own.

What changed

Conversations that are no longer daunting

Almost a year on, conversations have become less daunting for the managers, thresholds are gone, and Customer Support reported absenteeism 2% lower, which Alinda Kiemel is careful to attribute to an interplay of factors including working from home.

"The success of the training lay in the variety of learning moments. Combining e-learning with intervention and practice on the platform, and letting people bring their own cases, gave them tools to do better tomorrow."

Alinda Kiemel

HR business advisor, KPN (translated from Dutch)

At a glance

Program

Conversation skills for operational managers

Audience

180 managers in stores, field engineering and Customer Service

Format

Blended, fully virtual: e-learning, training days with actors, intervention

Duration

Four months, 17 groups

Region

Netherlands

What they did

Blended learning journey · Virtual classroom · Online learning platform · Practice with actors & simulations · Peer coaching & intervention · Internal facilitators trained · Custom curriculum, co-created

The biggest takeaways

1 Variety is what worked: e-learning, virtual practice with actors, intervention and the managers' own cases.

2 Teach HR to lead intervention and the organization keeps the capability after the program ends.

3 The training only counts if it becomes standard: KPN put it in the onboarding of every new manager.



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