

Give, take and innovate: sharing what works with T Systems MMS

How T-Systems Multimedia Solutions works with the EFQM network



T-Systems Multimedia Solutions (MMS) is a Dresden, Germany headquartered subsidiary of the Deutsche Telekom group. An innovative mid sized software development firm with seven hundred employees located across Germany, the company provides support and consulting services for the design and construction of portals, online marketing, eCommerce, eLearning and other online and mobile solutions. T-Systems MMS prides itself on the quality of its process management systems, its focus on continuous improvement of products and services, and its people development in particular.

Twice winner of the Ludwig Erhard prize for the best medium sized enterprise in Germany, and twice a prize winner in the EFQM Excellence Award (in the categories “People Development and Involvement” in 2006 and “Continuous Learning, Innovation and Improvement” in 2005) T-Systems MMS can claim to be “the most successful internet and multimedia company in Germany.”

Founded to support Deutsche Telekom’s commitments to interactive television in 1995, T Systems MMS repositioned its services in 1998 to serve high growth Internet and multimedia markets. This shift of focus was a sign of the agility that the business has repeatedly had to show in order to align itself with new technologies and market needs. Behind the highly structured methodologies that have helped it to win prizes, the company has a dynamic management structure in which business units are formed around new market segments and senior management responsibility is shared in a highly fluid manner. Clearly such a structure – balancing loose management control with tight development processes – requires the firm’s employees to be equally dynamic and self responsible. Getting this balance right has helped T Systems MMS to implement a highly innovative culture.

With so much happening in its core markets and frenetic internal activity to build teams and respond to growth (sales have doubled every three years) you might anticipate that T Systems MMS would be highly inward looking. In fact, the company has sought to learn from the outside – seeking the opinion of peer companies to challenge just how good its processes are and, in turn, offering its own experience on how innovation and learning can be promoted. In 2004, 2005 and again in 2007 visitors were received in Dresden as part of EFQM’s ‘good practice visits’ and were given in depth insight into how the company has approached assessment of its project management and people development processes. Senior management wish to gain more from these visits than to promote good public relations: the objective is to challenge what is done with input of outsiders.

Several of T-Systems MMS managers are experienced EEA assessors – a commitment which started more than five years ago - judged as beneficial both for the individuals themselves and for the company. Involvement in external assessments has identified learning on how processes, such as advanced approaches to internal talent management, could be improved within T-Systems MMS. The company is active in several ‘Communities of Practice’ including the work on multi-project management which seeks to share learning on how complex projects can be more effectively managed. Despite the accolades and the market success, arrogance is not encouraged: “We’re not perfect, we’re always looking for new ways to be better,” comments Carola Müller, Business Excellence manager.

T Systems MMS is the subject of an EFQM case: “Balancing opposites: delivering on innovation” which offers an insight into how the company structures and manages its development processes and has built an entrepreneurial and innovation oriented culture. Please contact us for further information.