



## Straight Up

Paul gives a skeptical look upwards at a foot-long platform that is 6 inches wide at most. This has been mounted to the top of a ladder nearly 20 feet high, which is standing in the middle of an open field – ‘suspended’ is actually a better description. The ladder is only in an upright position because four team members are holding stabilizing ropes in their hands.

The description of the task sounds relatively simple: climb the ladder, step up onto the platform with both feet, stay there for five seconds and then let yourself fall backwards. Four other team members who are holding safety ropes attached to Paul’s back will pull them tight, enabling him to be safely lowered to the ground. Halfway up the ladder, at the latest, Paul realizes that it will take more than his own courage and skills to reach the top. Much more than that, there has got to be good communication between him and his colleagues holding the ropes, as well as trust in the other four who are supposed to catch him if he falls.



1. The first task of all is a thorough team meeting. Approaches to a solution are developed and discussed.

2. Safety comes first. In the event that a participant loses his balance, he must rely on team colleagues to break his fall.



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What sounds very much like an episode out of an action TV series is called an “outdoor exercise” and is one component of the Kick-Off Week to Celanese’s ELF program. ELF stands for Emerging Leaders Forum and represents one module of the Integrated Leadership Development Process at Celanese AG. The Emerging Leaders Forum is a development program for junior managers who have the potential to assume a global leadership position at the company within the next few years.

Team participants are consciously chosen according to the ONE company principle: it is an international group, with members from across the global businesses and functions. The forum provides a platform, for example, for IT specialists, controlling experts, production and marketing managers from Europe, the U.S. and Asia to meet – people who probably never dealt with each other before in a business sense, and are certainly not personally acquainted. Thus,

the Kick-Off Week primarily serves as a team-building activity, which means forming a group that works well together, one which can take full responsibility upon itself for meeting a variety of challenges in a very goal-oriented manner.

An important aspect of the Kick-Off Week is that participants develop an understanding of their cultural differences and learn to deal with the individual personalities and working styles of each member. In this way, the group can benefit, for instance, from the production manager’s knowledge of statics when deciding on the best way to position and stabilize the ladder; it can also benefit from the analytical skills of a controller in a simulation exercise where a computer code must be deciphered in 180 seconds. At the end of the day, learning together, giving mutual support and building confidence in each other enables team members to master the challenges they have been assigned – each individual as well as the team as a whole.

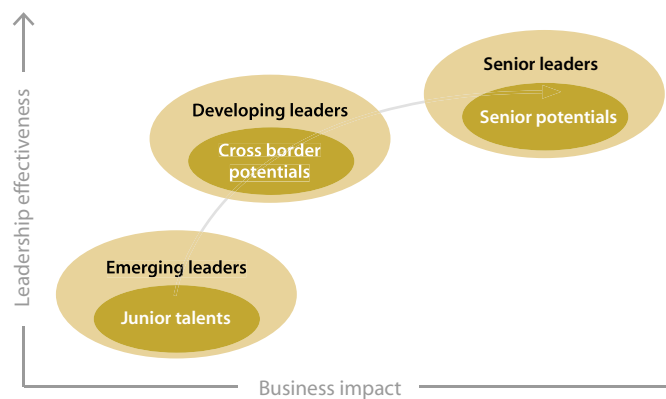
## The Celanese leadership development process

In an intensive assessment process, Celanese identifies those employees across its global businesses who demonstrate a high potential for assuming a leadership function within the company. Dependent on what career phase they are presently in and the degree of management competence they already possess, potential candidates or “high potentials,” as they are called, are divided into three groups: Junior Talents, Cross-Border Potentials and Senior Potentials.

Celanese offers these potential candidates special development modules in addition to regular management training. The Leadership Development Program is tailored to the needs of the individual groups of potentials, though interaction with Celanese senior management is included for all groups.

## Objectives of corporate LD programs

Junior talents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-organized learning and process stewardship</li> <li>Multicultural understanding and teamwork</li> <li>Managing team dynamics</li> <li>Operating in virtual teams</li> </ul>
Cross-border potentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking across businesses</li> <li>Visibility</li> <li>Understanding personal strengths &amp; development needs</li> <li>Creation and execution of individual development plans</li> </ul>
Senior potentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding leadership styles</li> <li>Coaching</li> <li>Developing others</li> <li>Providing meaningful feedback</li> <li>Empowering people</li> </ul>



Apart from the outdoor training exercise, the ELF's Kick-Off Week focuses on company-specific project work. The whole team is given a cross-divisional project assignment developed by the Celanese Leadership Council, which comprises not only members of the management board, but also the segment business heads and the heads of Shared Services and Corporate functions. The project work is scheduled for four months. The ELF participants must complete this assignment alongside their normal job responsibilities; all global teamwork takes place virtually, using modern communication technology.

Over the next few months, a joint goal must be reached across five business segments and three continents: namely, a convincing solution. The

project results will be presented to the Leadership Development Council at a closing event. This will be a major opportunity for all members of the ELF program to present themselves to the top management of Celanese AG as emerging leaders of tomorrow. ◀