



Achieving New Heights: Aventis Learning Group

Established in 2007, Aventis Learning Group (Aventis) offers corporate training programmes designed to advance human capital development in Asia. Based in Singapore, the multi-award-winning corporate training organisation is working towards becoming a one-stop solutions provider for businesses and working professionals.

In recent years, the training landscape has experienced rapid changes as technological advancements, evolving demographics – and, in the last two years, COVID-19 – and other factors compelled companies to relook their traditional ways of doing business. For training providers such as Aventis, upgrading and upskilling have become more sought after, with e-learning gaining favour as the knowledge delivery platform. To continue serving its customers as a premium training provider, the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) has been innovating its products and services, including how its programmes are presented.

To support its business sustainability, the SME wants to know how it is perceived by its target audience in the corporate training market, and what it can do to distinguish itself as the training provider of choice. With this in mind, Aventis approached the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI). Under the Institute's SME Consulting Programme (SCP), a team of student-consultants, supervised by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and a Project Manager from the Institute, undertook the business strategies and brand audit project.

A yearning for learning

Tapping on scientific research methodologies, the hallmark of the SCP, the student-consultants embarked on secondary and primary research. To understand the industry in which Aventis operates, they conducted a situational analysis spanning an industry review, a competitor overview and an assessment of consumer inclinations towards corporate training.

The industry overview uncovered the trends which have an impact on Aventis, such as digitalisation, increasing investments in technology, what is being termed "the new normal", and the responses and attitudes towards corporate training. Today's learners, for example, appear to veer towards video-based e-learning and bite-size modules, while companies are emphasising the importance of soft skills in addition to domain expertise. Among the players in the Training and Adult Education Sector to which Aventis belongs are four other key competitors, which the student-consultants examined using the SWOT analysis, to assess their unique strengths and weaknesses. They also carried out an audit of the SME and its competitors' websites.

To corroborate their industry intelligence and deepen their insights, the student-consultants conducted in-depth interviews with the SME's existing clients, potential clients and non-clients. They wanted to ascertain the standing of the company in the local corporate training scene, and the respondents' perception of Aventis. The responses from the interviewees would be used to develop three main personas to represent Aventis' current and prospective customers. The personas would then serve as the reference profiles for the consulting team to direct its



impactful business strategies, to support the SME's innovations for sustainability and scalability.

Better today than yesterday

Two overarching recommendations were proposed, namely, to build a coherent brand message that would resonate with the three personas which embody Aventis' existing and potential customer profiles, and launch a series of campaigns that would nudge the customers towards the next stage of the consumer purchase journey.

The Big Ideal was used to establish the foundation for the first recommendation. As the name suggests, the Big Ideal is a tool which joins the brand's best self with the cultural tension. Simply put, it infuses in the brand image the things that people care about. From the primary research, it was determined that people cared about the relevance of their learnings now and for the future, reliability of the training institute, value they were getting, and variety of the courses available.

The final report featured comprehensive recommendations to create a coherent Aventis brand message and how to elevate it in the corporate training market. The student-consultants crafted innovative campaigns and activities which communicated the things that mattered most to people. For example, to spotlight the SME's reliability and credibility, they suggested that Aventis showcase the awards conferred on it by reputable third-party organisations; it could also make known its trainers' credentials. To appeal to value-conscious customers, the SME could leverage bundle deals and pricing strategies; to convince vendor-agnostic customers to take the next step, course contents and related information could be made easily accessible. The student-consultants also devised a 20-week programme, with specific action plans and timeframes, to help Aventis kickstart its campaign.

Realising aspirations

Aventis General Manager Samuel Teo appreciated the scientific methodologies that were used in the research and analysis. Sharing that the student-consultants "have been awesome in providing us with insights into the qualitative interviews that they conducted with our clients", he found the overall analysis to be "thorough and comprehensive"; the project outcomes also validated his business plan. Describing the recommendations as "feasible and implementable", he highlighted that the feedback on the company logo was particularly useful to support the company's rebranding efforts. Mr Teo added that he has no qualms having the same team continue Aventis' campaign should the opportunity arise.



EMPOWERING A SMARTER WORKFORCE



Aventis' new slogan: Empowering a Smarter Workforce

The student-consultants participated in the SCP with the aim to “improve our consulting skills and utilise our creativity while solving a real-world business problem,” they shared. “As a team, we wanted to use our different perspectives to help the company we were working for.” As their proposals comprised “direct solutions” to the client’s problems, they pronounced themselves “happy with the impact” they had made in the SME’s branding and business strategies.

Describing their Project Advisor Tan Ghim Hwee as “a seasoned guide who had experience in consulting and business strategy”, the student-consultants said his constant communication kept them focused on their tasks while his guidance helped them select the appropriate frameworks to use for analysis. “He could not have done anything more to ease us into the consulting project,” they concluded, of Mr Tan’s all-round input.

The initial brief from Aventis was “not very well defined as the SME was still figuring out what it wanted,” revealed Mr Tan. Given that the team had to “produce something actionable”, they had embarked on “fact collection and providing insights into their research”. As the



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requirements became clearer later in the project, the student-consultants “really stepped up and took charge of the different elements”.

It was the spirit of collaboration that stood out most for Project Manager Chen Shan Shan. Right from the start, the SME was “very supportive and appreciative of the students’ work, so it was clear we were working together to make things happen,” she disclosed.

As the SME intended to implement the students’ findings as soon as the project came to a close, it was testament to the successful outcome of the project, and the practicality and applicability of the team’s recommendations.

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Project Manager: Chen Shan Shan

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