

Evonik's Development Journey Builds Long-Term Bonds

Evonik Industries AG and CrossKnowledge

Best Use of Social Collaborative Learning

July 2022



Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Essen, NRW, Germany
Year Founded	1847 but Evonik as brand introduced in 2007
Revenue	€12.2 billion
Employees	33,000 (as of December 2020)
Global Scale	Present in more than 100 countries, in all regions globally
Customers/Output, etc.	<p>Evonik is a specialty chemical company. Its customers are the different divisions of Evonik, including Specialty Additives, Nutrition & Care, Smart Materials, Performance Materials, Technology & Infrastructure and corporate administrative functions.</p> <p>Evonik is one of the world's leading specialty chemicals companies. The company offers specialty chemical elements/additives for many products ranging from tires, mattresses, medications to animal feed and many more. While the amounts of material contributed are usually small, those contributions are precisely what make the difference (e.g., making tires fuel-efficient, medications more effective or animal feeds healthier).</p>
Industry	Specialty Chemicals
Stock Symbol	EVK
Website	www.evonik.com

Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	CrossKnowledge
Headquarters	Hoboken, NJ
Year Founded	2000
Revenue	\$70 million
Employees	400 (5,000 at group level – Wiley)
Global Scale	Worldwide
Customers/Output, etc.	<p>CrossKnowledge delivers an integrated and personalized learning experience: a unique combination of our digital content for the most in-demand skills created with world-renowned experts, a learning platform built with human and artificial intelligence, and unmatched accountability with a dedicated Client Success Team. That's what makes CrossKnowledge the trusted learning partner of organizations, helping L&D, managers and learners acquire the skills they need to succeed.</p> <p>Part of Wiley, one of the world's largest research and education providers, CrossKnowledge has 20 years of experience in digital learning, serving over 12 million learners in 130 countries.</p>
Industry	Digital Learning
Stock Symbol	NYSE: JW.A
Website	www.crossknowledge.com

Budget and Timeframe

Budget and Timeframe	
Overall budget	No external costs
Number of employees involved with the implementation?	Two
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	None
Timeframe to implement	Two months
Start date of the program	May 2019

Business Conditions and Business Needs

It is Evonik’s firm belief that employees are the key success factors for the global business. The idea for a development program arose from a major reorganization project at the Global Financial Services (GFS). In 2016, a shared service center structure was established as part of this project. The service centers serve to bundle the service processes for the financial services. The result was the creation of shared service centers for financial services at three locations: Germany, Costa Rica and Kuala Lumpur.

Although the result was a heterogeneous structure, the project also came with the external hiring of many young employees who had only little work experience. These young employees were often highly motivated and showed a great potential. Unfortunately, they could not be considered for the company wide talent development programs, because they did not fit into the classical definition of talents. Especially because of the missing work experience and lower grading, since all of them were tariff employees. Among other things, this lack of suitable development options resulted in a high turnover of these employees within the shared service centers. This high fluctuation again resulted in increasing recruiting cost and efforts for onboarding. Moreover, this made it complicated to assure stability for newly created processes within the SSC. To find a solution to this problem, a global “GFS Potential Program” was developed. In addition, the expectation was to develop the specialists and managers of tomorrow through internal talent development.

The GFS Potentials Program was launched to develop talented and committed employees in line with requirements for longer retention. As a frame of the program, the learning journey “The GFS Potentials Development Journey” was created in collaboration with the learning experts. The aim was to combine classic HR development modules with modern

digital learning content. This was intended to create optimal and flexible talent development conditions and strengthen internal succession planning to solve the aforementioned issues.

Figure 1: Visual of the GFS Potentials Program



This learning solution faced some challenges. The different time zones of the three locations had to be considered. Also, the solution was not to be designed as purely formal learning but to be integrated into everyday work and concrete projects. The target group for this learning solution are people with a lot of potential who need to be supported accordingly. It was felt that the target audience should be actively included in the development process to ensure it met their needs. The employees have a need for learning with modern learning formats and mobile learning solutions. Most of these employees are young but there are also a few older employees from the pay scale — diversity was written large and no one was excluded. The employees who showed very strong performance with the potential to develop further were nominated.

Overview

The intention with the Global Financial Services Potentials Program was to launch a tailored training program for Evonik's young talented colleagues. It is based on a state-of-the-art collaboration and communication solution which allows them to increase their skillsets for future tasks and challenges whilst building a global network. Combined with a social program this program really saw results, it became possible to observe an increasing commitment index above average in the Global Finance Community.

Employees with potential who, due to various circumstances, were not considered for a regular talent program at Evonik should receive the attention they deserve through this program and the integrated learning journey. The aim of the learning journey is to enable potentials to develop personally and professionally, to build and expand their own network of contacts, particularly within Evonik, and to recommend themselves for nomination as talent.

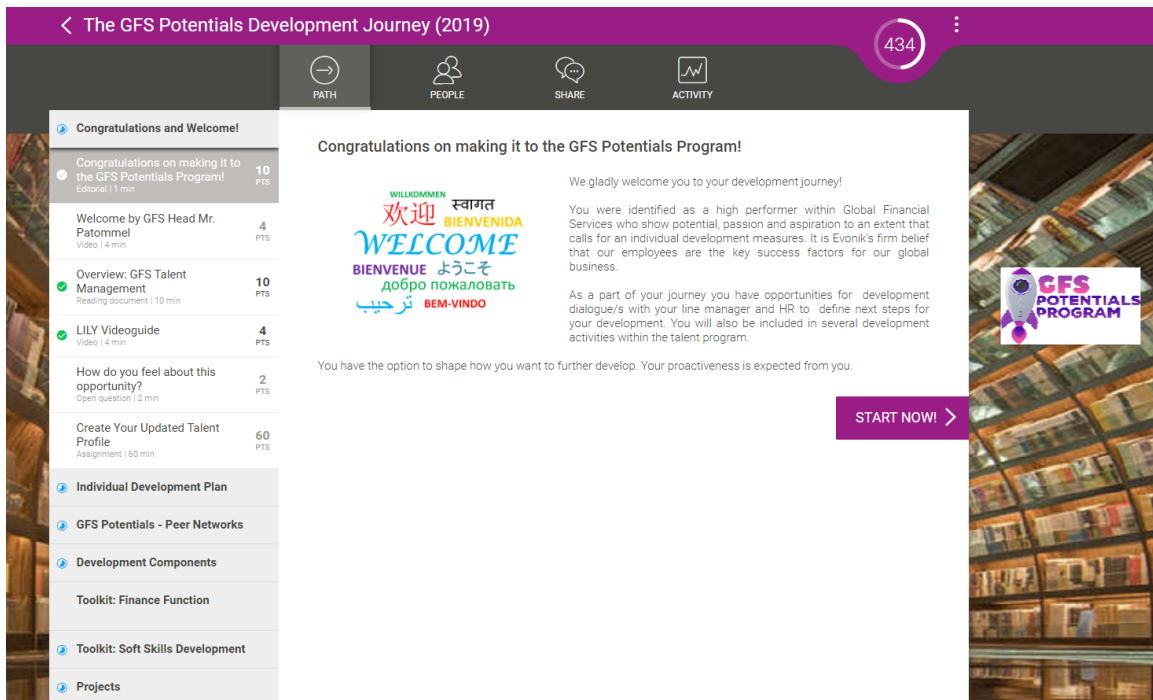
In addition, the social exchange of potentials among each other is to be promoted, self-directed and collaborative learning is to be focused on, new ways of working together are to be created. Integrated projects should enable the potentials to look beyond their own horizons and to network internationally through cross-regional cooperation.

Design of the Program

A structured learning path internally referred to as “The GFS Potentials Journey” was developed in collaboration with the HR Business Partner for Finance and a learning expert from the internal Leadership & People Development. The product was created in an iterative process to quickly have a first solution and then improve this solution step by step after receiving feedback. By doing so, the first prototype was developed after only two months. Evonik’s Learning and Individualized LibrarY (LILY), a learning experience platform from CrossKnowledge, is the foundation for the deployment and offering of the so-called learning journeys which are curated learning paths. A learner can automatically login into LILY and access the platform and learning journeys as needed. They can self-pace their learning and discuss with other colleagues within communities set-up for interactive exchanges. The learning journeys are also accessible through the learner’s mobile devices, thus making learning available at point of need. This format forms the basis for the delivery of the program.

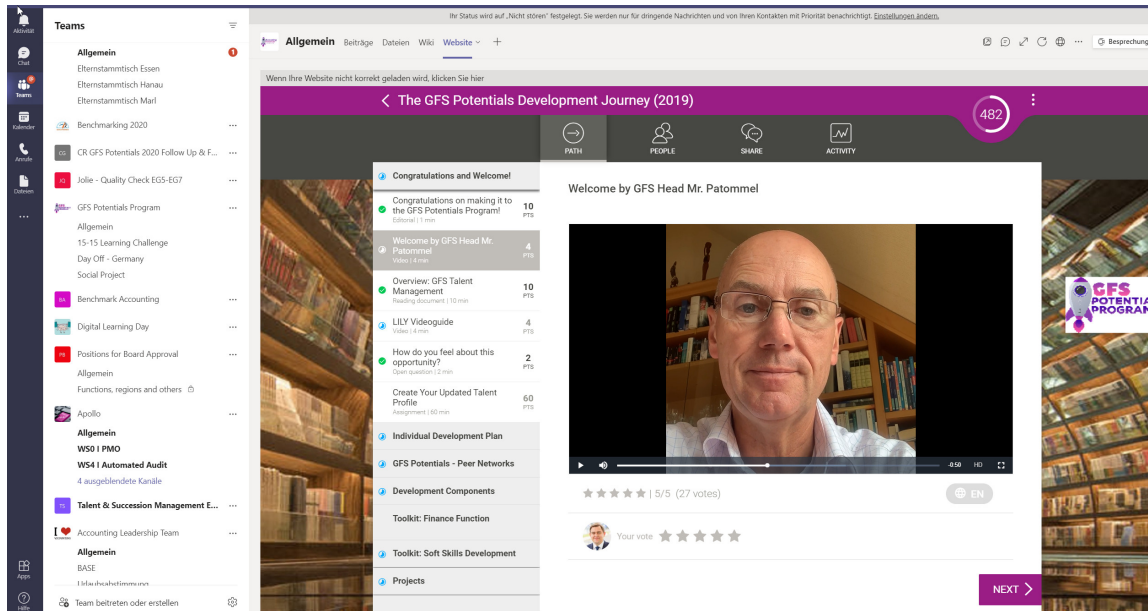
In addition to the inclusion of projects and events in the learning journey, the gamification approach was integrated. The participants receive a certain number of points for each completed step of the learning journey, which are added up over the course of the learning journey. The number of points gained allows the participants to compare their learning progress among themselves. The sum shows which of the potentials can demonstrate the greatest learning progress.

The goal of this learning solution was to have formal learning as a basis but with the inclusion of social and collaborative learning and on the job activities to cover the full range of learning opportunities along the 70/20/10 approach. All of these learning activities were then structured in a learning path for easy access by learners to support their self-driven development.

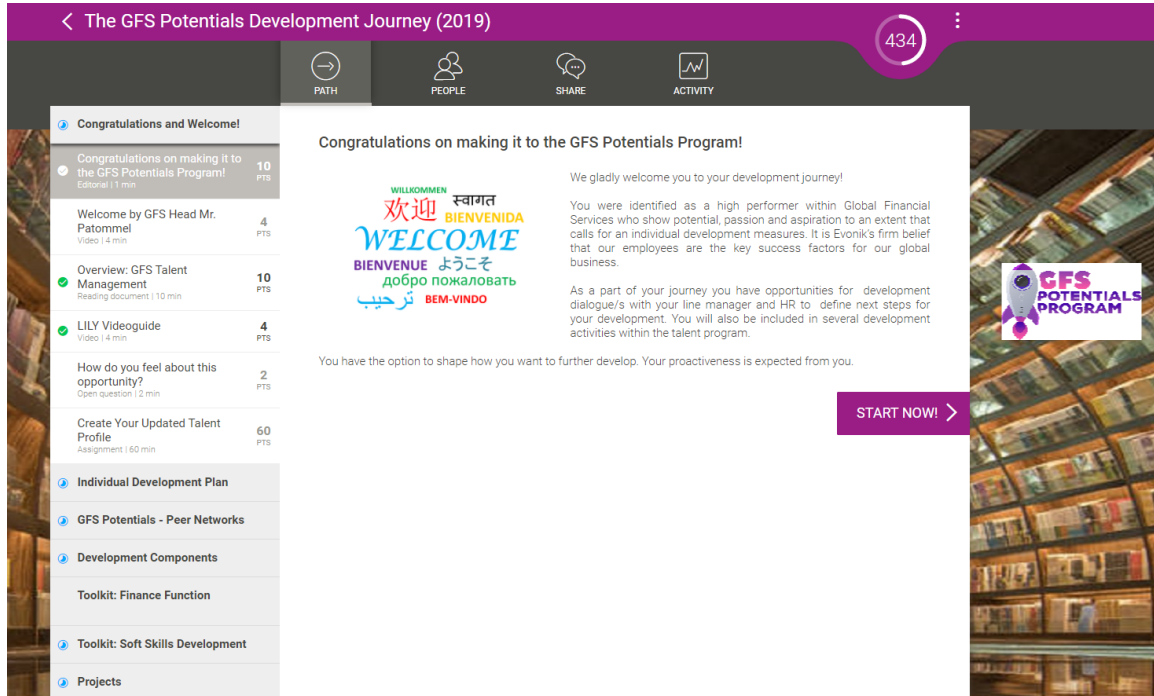
Figure 2: Mapping the Learning Path in the Learning Journey


A significant influence on the design of the learning journey was created by the challenge of participants being in three different locations with different time zones. The requirement for the learning journey was therefore to create a learning solution that can be used regardless of time. Some components of the learning journey had to be individually localized; in particular, content with a practical focus such as projects or events.

A part of the learning journey relates to peer networking. The learning journey is connected to the Microsoft Teams program and participants are guided to the program via a corresponding link. The Microsoft Teams platform is intended to support collaboration in Teams or with colleagues. Likewise, a function in MS Teams makes it possible to go directly to the learning journey via a button integrated in Teams. By doing so, the Learning Path could be used while collaborating with the group.

Figure 3: Mapping the Integration of the Learning Journey in MS Teams


The learning path is structured in seven steps. In the first step, the potentials are welcomed and congratulated once again on their nomination as a potential. The GFS Head then also welcomes the participants in a video. An overview of GFS Talent Management and the learning platform is given. At the end of the first step, participants are asked to share their feelings on being nominated and to create or update their own talent profile. These profiles are a must-have for employees who want to drive their career and are used in the annual Talent conferences to talk about the potentials as well as the development opportunities.

Figure 4: Excerpt of the Learning Journey


The GFS Potentials Development Journey (2019)

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PATH PEOPLE SHARE ACTIVITY

Congratulations and Welcome!

- Congratulations on making it to the GFS Potentials Program! 10 PTS (Editorial | 1 min)
- Welcome by GFS Head Mr. Patommel 4 PTS (Video | 4 min)
- Overview: GFS Talent Management 10 PTS (Reading document | 10 min)
- LILY Videoguide 4 PTS (Video | 4 min)
- How do you feel about this opportunity? 2 PTS (Open question | 2 min)
- Create Your Updated Talent Profile 60 PTS (Assignment | 60 min)

Individual Development Plan

- GFS Potentials - Peer Networks
- Development Components
- Toolkit: Finance Function
- Toolkit: Soft Skills Development
- Projects

Congratulations on making it to the GFS Potentials Program!

We gladly welcome you to your development journey!

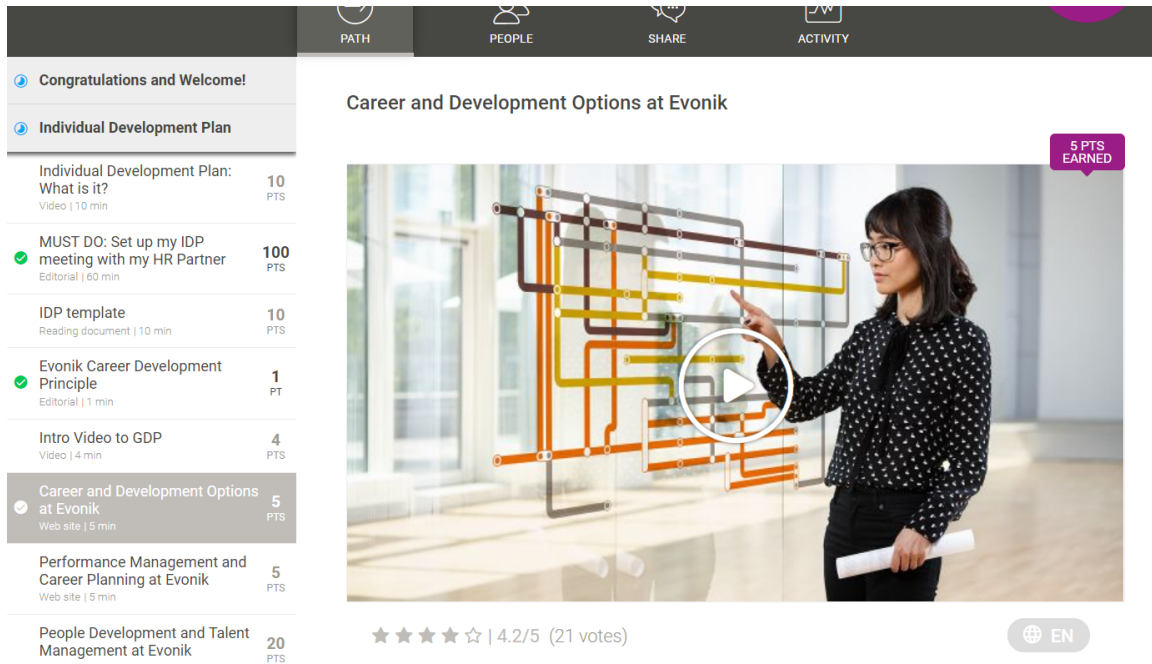
You were identified as a high performer within Global Financial Services who show potential, passion and aspiration to an extent that calls for an individual development measures. It is Evonik's firm belief that our employees are the key success factors for our global business.

As a part of your journey you have opportunities for development dialogue/s with your line manager and HR to define next steps for your development. You will also be included in several development activities within the talent program.

You have the option to shape how you want to further develop. Your proactiveness is expected from you.

START NOW! >

The second step of the learning journey relates to the Individual Development Plan (ID-Plan). First, a video explains to the participants what exactly is meant by an Individual Development Plan. Subsequently, the participants within the learning journey are asked to make an appointment with their HR partner to discuss the Individual Development Plan. To be optimally prepared for this appointment, the learning journey contains a template for the ID-Plan. This helps to support the employees in thinking about their own development, links and information on how learning, Development & Career are understood in Evonik.

Figure 5: Mapping of the Second Step on the Individual Development Plan


The screenshot displays a learning management system interface. On the left is a sidebar menu with the following items:

- Congratulations and Welcome!
- Individual Development Plan
- Individual Development Plan: What is it? (Video | 10 min) 10 PTS
- MUST DO: Set up my IDP meeting with my HR Partner (Editorial | 60 min) 100 PTS
- IDP template (Reading document | 10 min) 10 PTS
- Evonik Career Development Principle (Editorial | 1 min) 1 PT
- Intro Video to GDP (Video | 4 min) 4 PTS
- Career and Development Options at Evonik (Web site | 5 min) 5 PTS**
- Performance Management and Career Planning at Evonik (Web site | 5 min) 5 PTS
- People Development and Talent Management at Evonik (Video | 20 min) 20 PTS


The main content area shows a video player for 'Career and Development Options at Evonik'. The video thumbnail features a woman in a black patterned shirt pointing at a large, colorful network diagram of career paths. A play button is overlaid on the video. A purple badge in the top right corner of the video player indicates '5 PTS EARNED'. Below the video player, there is a rating of 4.2/5 (21 votes) and a language selector set to 'EN'.

A mentor program is also integrated into the learning journey as an important activity for social and collaborative learning. Each potential is assigned a mentor; these are executives or senior managers such as regional/department heads within the finance resort. The mentors were highly experienced and therefore able to support the potentials to explore where they are in their career, where they want to go and how to get there. Within the learning journey, potentials can access an excel sheet where they can see who their mentor is. They can then get more information about the assigned mentor via the Evonik intranet. The learning journey supports the mentoring process by providing additional learning resources on how the potentials can prepare for the first exchange with the mentor and how they can define goals for themselves for the mentoring in advance. In most cases, the mentors are also professionally active in a different area than the mentee assigned to them.

Figure 6: Excerpt of the Steps of the Mentoring Program within the Learning Journey

Congratulations and Welcome!	
Individual Development Plan	
GFS Potentials - Peer Networks	
Link to MS Teams Room	1 PT
The importance of a mentor for your development	2 PTS
GFS Potentials Mentoring	20 PTS
GFS Mentoring	10 PTS
List of Mentors	10 PTS
How to prepare for my meeting with my Mentor?	1 PT
Mentee Preparation: Define goals for your mentoring	1 PT
Reading Material	1 PT
eBook: How to train your mentor	10 PTS
Meet and eat	2 PTS

GFS Mentoring

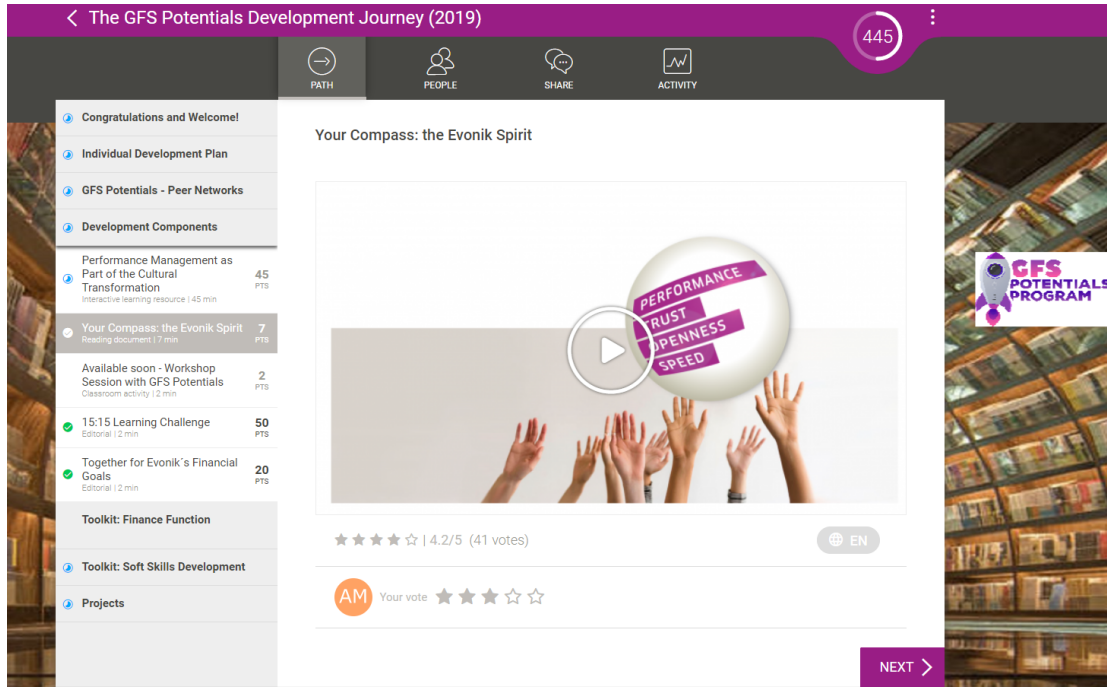


★★★★★ | 5/5 (2 votes)

AM Your vote ☆☆☆☆☆

The fourth chapter of the learning journey deals with the more formal development of the potentials and includes content that is focused on the development of employees and, in particular, their potential. The learning journey thus gives participants the opportunity to learn about important topics, such as Evonik's Financial Goals or Performance Management. The goal is a comprehensive introduction of the potentials to the company structures and to impart knowledge that is essential for their position as potentials within the Global Financial Services and future talents.

Figure 7: Excerpt of the Development Components within the Learning Journey



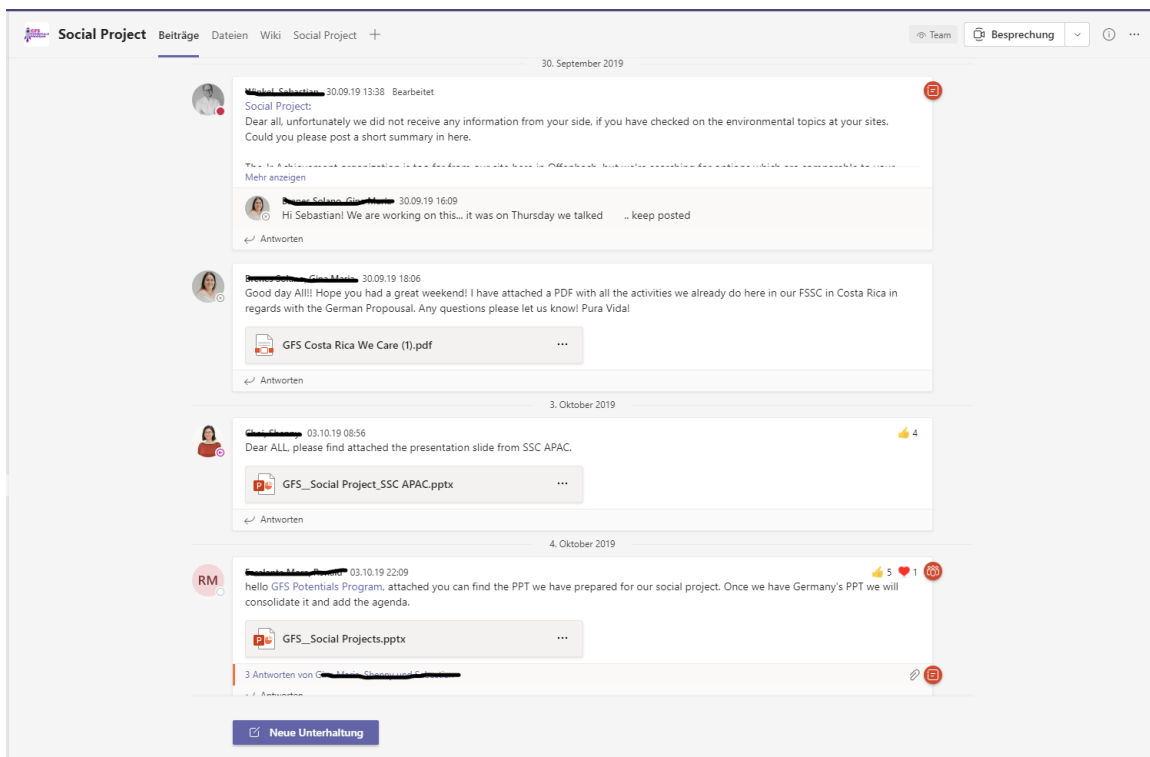
In addition, soft skills should not be neglected during the learning journey. The potentials will be given input on the topics of communication, negotiation, influencing, critical thinking, flexibility and collaboration. The potentials are thus able to be prepared for their further career path and possible classification as talent.

Figure 8: Excerpt of the Components of Soft Skills Development



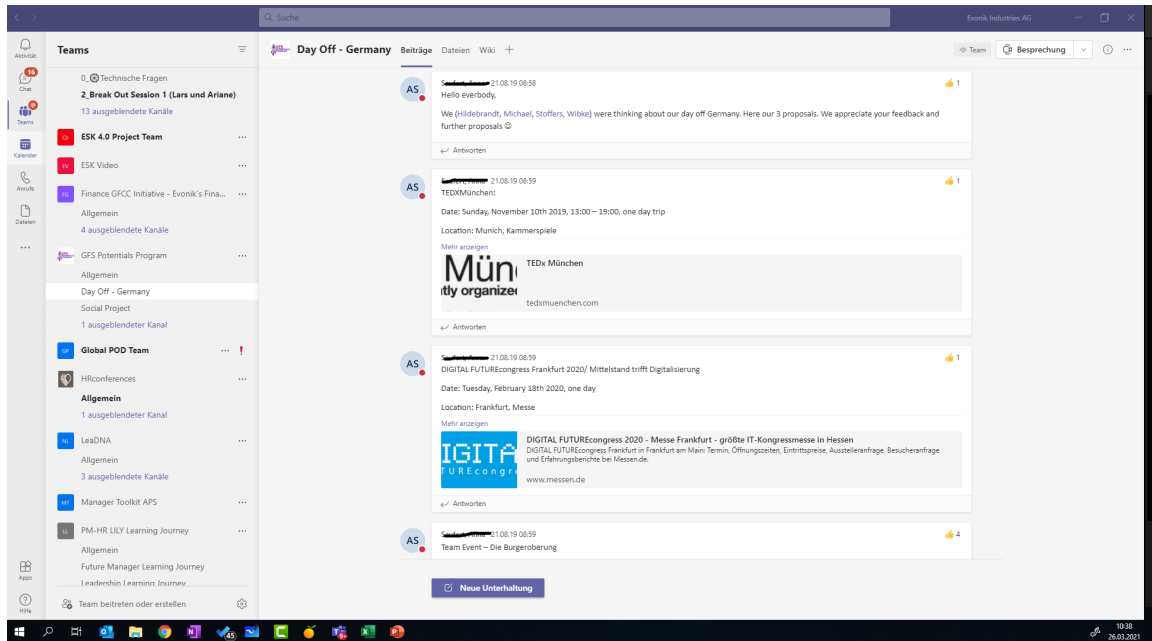
The learning journey is concluded with the integration of a social project. The projects are intended to serve as concrete development activity while working to achieve a goal that they set themselves. The idea of these projects is that accepting responsibility for the environment and society is in the interest of Evonik. Especially as a developing potential it is important to feel responsible for the well-being and interests of the community around them. Within the framework the potentials had to organize themselves to work on a social project, get it approved and implement it afterward. The title of the first project in the first round of the learning journey was “Socially disadvantaged people.” Since the potentials are located at three different sites, regionally different activities were then carried out by the potentials under this title.

Figure 9: Excerpt of the Exchange of Potentials to the Social Project




The “One day off” project is another offering within the learning journey. The local teams can choose a topic that is of particular interest to them and then the potentials are released from work for one day to tackle this topic. In the first round, for example, potentials from Germany visited a trade fair for digital learning. This project also intended to drive the development in a self-organized way within a social event.


In the next round further social activities such as a Ask me Anything Lunch with the GFS head were integrated, too.


Figure 10: Excerpt of the Exchange of Potentials to the Day Off

Figure 11: Mapping Integration of Practical Projects within the Learning Journey

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- [GFS Potentials - Peer Networks](#)
- [Development Components](#)
- Toolkit: Finance Function**
- [Toolkit: Soft Skills Development](#)
- Projects**

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> ✔ <div> Social Project <small>Editorial 2 min</small> </div> <div style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold;">100 PTS</div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> ✔ <div> One day off <small>Editorial 2 min</small> </div> <div style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold;">100 PTS</div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> Your feedback <small>Survey 3 min</small> </div> <div style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold;">3 PTS</div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> ✔ <div> Next Projects to follow <small>Editorial 2 min</small> </div> <div style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold;">2 PTS</div> </div>

Next Projects to follow



This is not the end of your Journey. More interesting Projects will follow here during the year.

Delivery of the Program

Evonik's Learning and Individualized Library (LILY), a learning experience platform from CrossKnowledge, is the foundation for the deployment and offering of the so-called learning journeys which are curated learning paths. A learner can automatically login into LILY and access the platform and learning journeys as needed. They can self-pace their learning and discuss with other colleagues in these community's set-up for interactive exchanges. The learning journeys are also accessible through the learner's mobile devices, thus making learning available at point of need. This format forms the basis for the delivery of the program.

Figure 12: Picture of the LILY Home Page



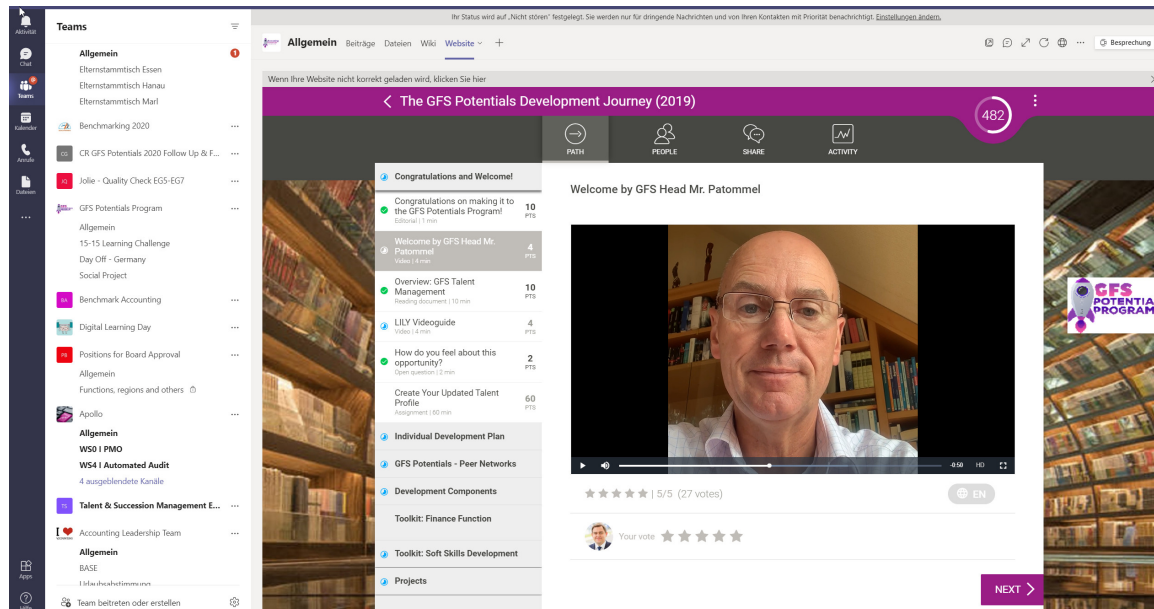
Potentials are defined as those high performers within Global Finance Services who show potential, passion and aspiration to an extent that calls for an individual development measure. Once these employees are identified and selected as potentials at the annual Talent Conferences, they receive an invitation to the learning journey "The GFS Potentials Development Journey." The number of potentials to be appointed is limited to a maximum of 10% of all employees per location.

The prerequisite for participation in the learning journey is the nomination as a potential. In the regions, managers carry out this appointment together with HR. After the potentials have been selected, so-called talent letters are created and presented to the potentials. Global HR managers and area managers sign this talent letter and the potentials' direct supervisors are instructed on what should be communicated to the potential when the talent letter is handed over. In connection with the presentation of the talent letter, the potentials also receive a corresponding email with information on

what is planned as part of the potential program and a direct link that leads them to the learning journey “The GFS Potentials Development Journey.” In addition, there were so-called facilitators who came from the respective regions and supported the participants in the learning journey as digital trainers.

Alongside this, the learning journey has been integrated into the Microsoft Teams platform so that the potentials have direct access to the learning journey via Teams. The integration of the learning journey into the Teams platform is appropriate because the potentials use Teams to exchange information with each other and to plan and coordinate the social projects. After the potentials have logged in accordingly, they are forwarded to the learning journey and are directly greeted with a welcome video by the Head of the GFS.

Figure 13: Integration of the Learning Journey in MS Teams



All illustrations provided by Evonik Industries AG and CrossKnowledge

Change Management Efforts

A major challenge of the learning journey was the cultural hurdles posed by the three locations in Germany, Costa Rica and Kuala Lumpur. There was a good support from management to overcome this challenge. Before the start of the learning journey, the management teams were informed about the program and the contents of the learning journey. This created a good basis for understanding and cooperation. As a result, the potentials were released by management for the learning periods and given additional support where possible. Moreover, the inclusion of higher management; e.g., as mentors created a high acceptance of the development program and supported the potentials by not letting them alone.

It was also a challenge to develop a uniform program for all three sites, which are in different time zones. The solution was found in the use of a digital platform, as this can be used independently of time and enables the use of different information sources for the design of the learning content.

Measurable Benefits

Right from the start of the program and the associated learning journey, the participants were all very grateful for this opportunity. For the first time, clear personnel development was evident for the group of tariff employees. This is also reflected in the feedback from the participants. One of the potentials believes that the GFS Potentials Program was a good opportunity for him to work on his personal growth and his network within the Evonik organization. One element of the program which helped him a lot were the mentoring sessions, where he had the chance for an open exchange with his assigned mentor about personal and work-related topics. Also, the LILY learning journey gave him good insights on how he could plan and build his own career path within Evonik.

Another positive impact of the learning journey was observed in terms of the mentor-mentee relationship. The good relationship between the mentors and their assigned potentials continued after the end of the learning journey and the end of the potential program and in some cases, mentors even brought their former mentees to join their team.

Even beyond the mentoring relationship, many potentials have moved on to other jobs within Evonik and now occupy a more senior position. The learning journey has contributed to the individual development of the potentials and further to the development of their professional careers. The program and the learning journey have also led to a noticeable drop in the fluctuation rate. The prospects created by the program

and the learning journey have had a positive effect on employee satisfaction and loyalty to Evonik.

A significant gain from the learning journey and the program is the ability to realize global assignments of potentials from the three sites. Potentials from Costa Rica and Kuala Lumpur sites are already working as expats in Germany. Of the 41 talents who have taken part in the learning journey so far, 28 have now progressed to a more senior role, taking the next step in their careers. All of them have advanced at least one career level and 10 talents now even hold a team leader function with management responsibility.

Participants length of stay in the learning journey also reflects a measurable benefit. In total, the potentials have spent around 241 hours in the learning journey so far. Calculated on the basis of individual participants, the average time spent on the learning journey is 5½ hours per participant. The time spent in the learning journey is high, which shows a great interest in the learning content. The tracked time is only focusing on the time spend on the digital contents for self-learning. It is great to see because even more time was spent in the social events like the projects, mentoring meetings and so on.

Overall

This year sees the start of the second round of the potential program and thus the learning journey “The GFS Potentials Development Journey.” For the second round, it is planned that each potential can decide for him/herself whether to participate in the mentoring program.

In addition, the second round is intended to fulfill the potentials’ desire for more face-to-face training. Due to the pandemic, implementation on a personal level was not possible, so this format was also moved to the virtual level. Three training modules are planned, each containing five trainings. The first module will be on feedback and communication. The second module will focus on team management and teamwork. The third module will focus on change management and cultural aspects. Two dates for the module training are planned for the locations in Germany and Costa Rica, and one date is planned in Kuala Lumpur.

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