



German in the workplace

Training measure promotes occupational competence with practice-based approach



IQ | GOOD PRACTICE in a nutshell

Adressees for Transfer
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Training measure German in the workplace:

The training measure combines three different language support instruments (German language training in course format, language coaching in the workplace, and company-based language mentoring) which are designed and implemented to meet the needs of the company and of the employees. Implementation on site in the company ensures a high level of practical relevance and delivers a sustainable improvement in competencies for employees with minimal knowledge of German. The qualification picks up on a key aspect of German language support in continuing vocational education and training by both focusing on and integrating professional and language learning.

Project:

Integrated professional and language learning and individual German language support (IFSL)

Organisation:

Arbeiterwohlfahrt Kreisverband Bielefeld e.V [Registered Workers' Welfare District Association - Bielefeld].

Project contact:

Sabine Stallbaum / August-Bebel-Str. 68a
33602 Bielefeld / Tel: 0521/32 92 88 15 s.
stallbaum@awo-bielefeld.de

Provision:

Information about the training measure is available at www.iq-netzwerk-nrw.de/treffpunkt-iq/kartoffelmanufaktur-pahmeyer-15-05-2017.html The 2017 Final Report on German in the workplace at the Pahmeyer potato factory can be downloaded from <https://awo-bielefeld.de/bildung-und-qualifizierung/deutsch-lernen/deutsch-im-betrieb>. All previously published IQ Good Practice examples can be found at www.netzwerk-iq.de.

Starting point/challenge

The German language has grown in importance over recent years as a key occupational competence. On the one hand, employees are increasingly being recruited from abroad to ensure the supply of skilled labour, while on the other organisational changes often also entail new linguistic challenges for employees who have been with a company for a long period. Due to insufficient specialist language knowledge, these employees often remain excluded from advancement opportunities within the company despite having good professional competencies. General language courses frequently fail to meet requirements. The training measure "German in the workplace" is a response to this challenge. The measure has been designed and implemented by the NRW regional network's IQ subproject "Integrated professional and language learning and individual, vocational German language support (IFSL)" in cooperation at various times with the IQ Competence Centre for Work-Related German Language.

Implementation of the training measure

The measure focuses on the combination of three different instruments which are adjusted and adapted in terms of content for the company concerned. The first instrument is group language training in course format. The themes covered, such as protective clothing, hygiene, and employment law, are adapted specifically to the day-to-day work of the company concerned. The second instrument is language coaching in the workplace. As part of this, a language coach supports individual employees for a limited period, for example six meetings of 45 minutes each in the company. Where possible, the language coaching takes place directly in the workplace, and for the majority of participants, it runs in parallel with the language training course. Company-based language mentoring forms the third support instrument. This involves external consultants supporting the company in organising German language courses in the business and in adapting the language of the company to the requirements of the German language learners.



In this respect, measures range from revising materials for hygiene training or coaching units for employees with leadership responsibility through to language-sensitive delivery of training to employees with minimum knowledge of German. Before the individual measures are implemented, a review of the current situation is conducted together with all parties to precisely identify the starting points of the participants and the reality of the world in which they live and work. What should learners be learning, what are they able to and what do they want to learn? Why, how and for what purpose are they learning? This ensures the right content is provided and enables assistance to be offered which is matched to the learner's requirements.

Conclusion

The combination of language training, language coaching in the workplace and language mentoring ensures that learned content is transferred successfully into everyday work and that it becomes established over the long term. This approach has already been trialled in the workplace at the Pahmeyer potato factory. In total, one third of the workforce participated in the German language support.

“Ensuring the flow of communication”

The importance of language support in company processes

The piloting of the training measure “German in the workplace” at the Pahlmeyer potato factory is a success story. Everyday, Marc Vergien, operations manager, observes how employees are able to communicate more easily as a result of the language course and the language coaching. According to Marc, “the goal is that we understand one another.” In terms of the language provision, this is “less about ensuring absolute accuracy each time a sentence is uttered” explains IQ coach Catherine Thomas, “and much more about maintaining the flow of communication in work processes”. The employee Abdelsalam R. is evidence in every respect of the benefits of this practical provision: “I have language teaching once a week. Without German language support, I am not able to work so well.

Now I understand everything better.” That the entire company becomes the learning location is what makes German in the workplace so remarkable- “There is a desperate need for company-based advice and expertise in all aspects concerning language support”, emphasises Catherine. As a result of the practice-oriented approach of German in the workplace, employees are integrated at



all levels of the company. Catherine underlines the importance of this: “Company-based language mentoring spreads the burden involved in the German language learning process.” This means that the individual employees are not forced to take on all the work themselves, “instead, the entire company, in particular the middle and higher levels of management, is behind communication which supports the work process” explains Thomas. As part of the language support, Marc has also picked up on the advancement processes within the company. Employees who develop their language skills are putting themselves forward, in particular for higher level tasks. “By lowering the language barrier, many employees will also be able to take on other positions”, comments Marc.

Three questions for Sabine Stallbaum, head of the IQ project “Integrated professional and language learning and individual German language support”

“Improving competency”



What is innovative about the training measure “German in the workplace”?

The combination of different instruments which help to deliver exactly what is needed to meet the various demands at different levels in the company. What’s more, the overall company is taken into account: In collaboration with all stakeholders, language learning approaches are trialled and individually adapted to the requirements of the company. All stakeholders share the responsibility and commit to a new way of implementing learning in the company.

Is it also possible to transfer this qualification measure to other regions?

The model’s flexibility makes it transferable to all companies and businesses. For example, the company-based language mentoring

involves individual advice in the area of German language support in the workplace and, for every company, may represent the first step towards targeted and tailored support. Implementation clearly requires qualified and flexible teaching personnel for the planning and implementation of the provision. However, an important factor in the success is also the committed collaboration and openness in the company, from management right through to colleagues.

What can “German in the workplace” effect over the long term?

Bielefeld Language Coaching was developed over 2013/2014 in the regional IQ Network North Rhine-Westphalia and since then has been used and adapted accordingly in a range of different areas. At Pahlmeyer, the provision has been continued over 2018 with internal company funding, and both employees and superiors are much more focused on the issue of language learning in the workplace. The vocational and communication competence of employees has significantly improved. The issue of language has been optimised and is now established within the company.

Imprint

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Authors Dr. Johnny Van Hove, Sabine Stallbaum

Editors: Dr. Johnny Van Hove, Christian Zingel, Canan Ulug (ebb GmbH)

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Network IQ

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