



Explain visually – make it memorable!

The visualisation training concept helps advisers to present complex material to their clients in a simple, comprehensible, and memorable manner



IQ | GOOD PRACTICE in a nutshell

Addressees for transfer:

Employment authorities, advice centres

“Visualisierung im Beratungsgespräch” (“Visualisation in advisory sessions”) training concept

The more complex a topic, the harder it is to make it comprehensible. This is often the case in advisory situations, for example at employment authorities or other institutions. It is not always easy for those seeking advice to absorb information, especially if there are language barriers or other obstacles. “Visualisation in advisory sessions” therefore examines the use of visual support to aid spoken explanations. Participants learn about various visualisation techniques and can use them as support in specific advisory contexts.

Project

IQ Service Centre “Vielfalt in der Arbeitswelt” (“Diversity in the World of Work”) Westmecklenburg

Provider

*Verbund für Soziale Projekte gGmbH
(Society for Social Projects)*

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Provision

More information on “continuing training for pedagogical occupations in Germany as a land of immigration” as well as important dates are available at www.iq-mv.de/interkulturelles-training/vielfalt-in-der-arbeitswelt

All previously published IQ Good Practice examples can be found at www.netzwerk-iq.de.

Starting point/challenge

Advisers constantly face the challenge of explaining complex material in a comprehensible manner. The high demand for training in the use of plain language provided by the subproject “IQ Service Centre Vielfalt in der Arbeitswelt Westmecklenburg” offered one proof of this. The new visualisation training from the provider Verbund für Soziale Projekte gGmbH in the Network IQ Mecklenburg-Vorpommern aims to meet this need.

Putting the “Visualisation in advisory sessions” training into practice

Visualisation can complement plain language as well being used on its own terms. The guiding principle behind both topics is, “How can I explain my material in the most simple and memorable manner, so that it becomes ‘noteworthy’ to my conversation partner?” Gaining acceptance for this approach can be particularly challenging in government authorities, as visualisation methods at first seem to be far removed from everyday tasks. However, many advisers already use aspects of visualisation in the form of highlighting things or hand-written calculations. The training builds on prior experience, expanding these competencies in a systematic and structured way. The core message for advisers is: Feel free to use pen and paper if the person you are talking to does not understand what you are trying to explain. Specialist content has to be communicated when giving advice, but it also has to be understood. Structured visualisation can greatly aid this process. The training is particularly aimed at people who regularly have to explain complex information in conversations, for example advisers at employment authorities or similar institutions. The aim is for participants to learn how to present their guidance topics visually, thus supporting their explanations. They test various visualisation techniques



and are encouraged to use them when providing guidance. The approach is focused more on the logical structure of visual representation than on the quality of illustration. This also distinguishes the training from ready-made visual aids, which are also developed and used with the Network IQ. The goal is to enable participants to express themselves individually instead of depending on ready-made drawings.

Conclusion

Once the training session has been devised, the resources to be used take the form of a manageable one-day training event for a trainer tandem. The benefit to participants justifies the time invested. Three one-day training events have been carried out since 2019, one as an open event, two as in-house events in the job centre and an advice centre for migrants. The pandemic necessitated online workshops for all IQ trainers in 2020. The result was that the IQ Service Centre Westmecklenburg incorporated the training concept into its future plans.

“Visualisation should be comprehensible, not pretty!”

Training participants experience the benefits of visualisation

At the start of the visualisation training from the IQ Service Centre “Vielfalt in der Arbeitswelt” Westmecklenburg the participants introduce themselves as usual – but with drawings. “This means the participants engage with the topic from the word go,” says Felix Block, project manager at IQ Service Centre “Vielfalt in der Arbeit” Westmecklenburg. “Some find it a challenge, but by the end all have drawn a few stick figures.” His colleague Kathleen Löpke adds, “This exercise already shows that by using visualisation the participants remember what the others told them much better.” The benefits of visualisation can be demonstrated using any topic. It is important to understand that good visualisation does not require a par-



ticular ability to draw. For this reason, participants learn about numerous visual elements and how to use them. Infogram tools are used to show how a spoken explanation can be converted into a diagram. A large

pool of “moving figures” and “pictograms” consisting of arrows, lines, graphic elements, and drawings are jointly created. All visualisation elements are practised in explanatory exercises relating to everyday topics like employment, family reunions, or professional orientation. As a more complex exercise, the group visualises a real document such as the form that has to be filled out for the medical examination when pupils start school. “The focus is always on free, spontaneous, and sometimes exaggerated visualisation. Participants are often very surprised how much can be expressed with simple drawings to make communication more comprehensible,” says Kathleen Löpke. “Visualisation should be comprehensible, not pretty!”

Three questions for Kathleen Löpke and Felix Block, trainers at the IQ Service Centre “Vielfalt in der Arbeitswelt” Westmecklenburg

“Motivation to make communication more comprehensible”



What is innovative about the concept?

The reaction of participants showed us that using visualisation as a form of imparting information is rather unconventional. The quality of drawings is not very important. This must be stressed, so that participants do not feel they lack the necessary talent. The goal of the training is for participants to reflect on their own existing competencies and establish an effective link between their artistic abilities and their professional communication. Spontaneous visualisation in specific advisory situations is a particular focus.

Is the concept easily transferable?

It is always a challenge for experts to transfer their knowledge in a clear manner to people who lack knowledge in the field. This applies to guidance sessions just as much as it does to lessons, professional

conversations at work, and other communication situations, such as team meetings. Just as important as the need to impart information is visualisation to aid comprehension. We are currently working with both trainers and managers who above all communicate internally, as well as with advisers who tend to work with external clients. In other words, the training can benefit very diverse organisations and target groups. It is particularly effective when the choice of texts and topics matches the participants’ work environment.

How long-lasting are the benefits of the training?

The training motivates participants to make conversations in their everyday professional environment easier to understand. It is up to the participants to put what they have learned into practice. The obstacles are relatively few. Everyone has access to a pen and paper and can gradually become more confident in the process. A follow-up workshop can examine a particular aspect of the training in more detail. This might be prompted by the design of a new flyer or revising an internal orientation system.

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Network IQ

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