

THE PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR WBL MENTORS

WBL

ACCELERATOR



THE PRACTICAL HANDBOOK MAGAZINE
ABOUT SUCCESSFUL **WORK-BASED LEARNING**
STRATEGIES IN EU COMPANIES.



Co-funded by the
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of the European Union

Find more information and practical learning materials for your everyday routine at wblaccelerator.eu/mentor-training or here ►►►



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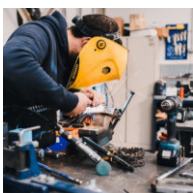


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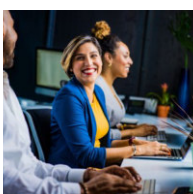
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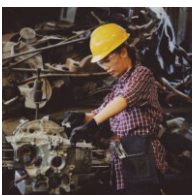
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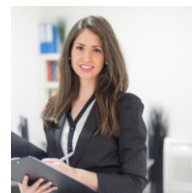


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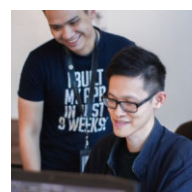
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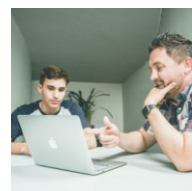
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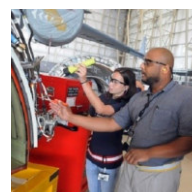
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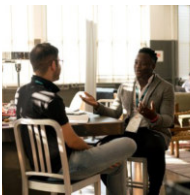

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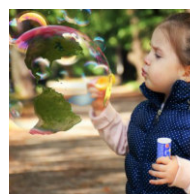
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WORK-BASED LEARNING IN THE WBL ACCELERATOR PROJECT

The WBL Accelerator project offers a variety of resources and opportunities to enhance your mentoring competences and daily routines.

This handbook magazine is one of the core outputs of the EU funded WBL Accelerator project. During a period of 2 years, the transnational partnership of 7 professional partner organisations worked on mainstreaming work-based learning approaches, methods and strategies in the partner countries Austria, Germany, Spain, Ireland, Slovenia and Malta.

The partnership considers work-based Learning (WBL) as a crucial component of vocational education and training (VET) in Europe and aims to foster the cooperation and communication between education and businesses by enabling the actors to „speak a common language“.

The target group of this magazine includes anyone who is responsible for WBL processes in companies who is united under the term „**MENTOR**“ in this project and its outputs. These persons act as mentors for apprentices and interns, they are the link between the company and the learning person and hence they carry a big responsibility.

In order to support these mentors in their task of guiding VET trainees, the WBL Accelerator project offers this magazine, which includes interesting topics from across Europe.



Additionally, a Mentor Training Programme that includes online and classroom training opportunities is available free of charge on the project website and in the partner countries. Take a look and find new ways to make your professional life easier!

**VEREIN AUXILIUM,
PROJECT COORDINATOR**

***"FOR
THE THINGS
WE HAVE
TO LEARN
BEFORE WE
CAN DO THEM,
WE **LEARN**
BY DOING THEM."***

*Aristotle,
The Nicomachean Ethics, 340 BCE*



WORK-BASED LEARNING... WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Let's explore what exactly we mean by work-based learning and how it needs to evolve to shape the labour force of the future.

Many of us have heard of apprenticeships and might even know someone who has completed one. Introduced in the 1960s as an innovation in vocational education, this type of work-based learning (WBL) has been considered an effective model for young people to combine both academic learning with practical skills development required by companies.

But why now in 2020, is WBL experiencing a revival and is it still delivering for both students and companies?

The New skills agenda for Europe (2016) emphasised the value of apprenticeships and work based learning more generally as a proven springboard to good jobs and to developing labour market-relevant skills, including transversal and soft skills'; this is also reconfirmed in the European Commission's 2015 joint report. Against this policy background, there has been a boom in recent years in national initiatives aimed at reforming existing apprenticeships and introducing new ones.

Let's be clear, when we talk about WBL we mean "learning that occurs when people do real work. This work can be paid or unpaid, but it must be real work that leads to the production of real goods and services". It can take on many



forms such as apprenticeships, traineeships, on-the-job training, job-shadowing and work placements.

It is true to say that most people when thinking about Work-based learning think of apprenticeships. Within the family of work-based learning models, apprenticeships are the most formalised characterised by a high intensity or frequency of work integration or real-life work situations. It often combines periods of learning in an educational institution and in the workplace and it can take place on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis. Apprenticeships differ in several key aspects from other WBL models. For example, they typically include a long-term training period and higher amount of training in the workplace in comparison to other forms of WBL.

**THE ONLY SOLUTION
TO COMPARE THE
INCOMPARABLE IS TO
DEFINE A MUTUALLY
AGREED EXTERNAL
REFERENCE POINT.**

A contract links the apprentice to the employer; the apprentice receives a wage or allowance. In addition, the employer must offer apprentice training leading to a specific occupation; with social partners often taking on the responsibility for the quality of the company-based training of the apprentice. Countries with strong apprenticeship systems report very good results in terms of young people's transition to employment.

Learners acquire the skills they need for a first step into the labour market, while employers



**LEARNERS ACQUIRE THE SKILLS
THEY NEED FOR A FIRST STEP
INTO THE LABOUR MARKET**

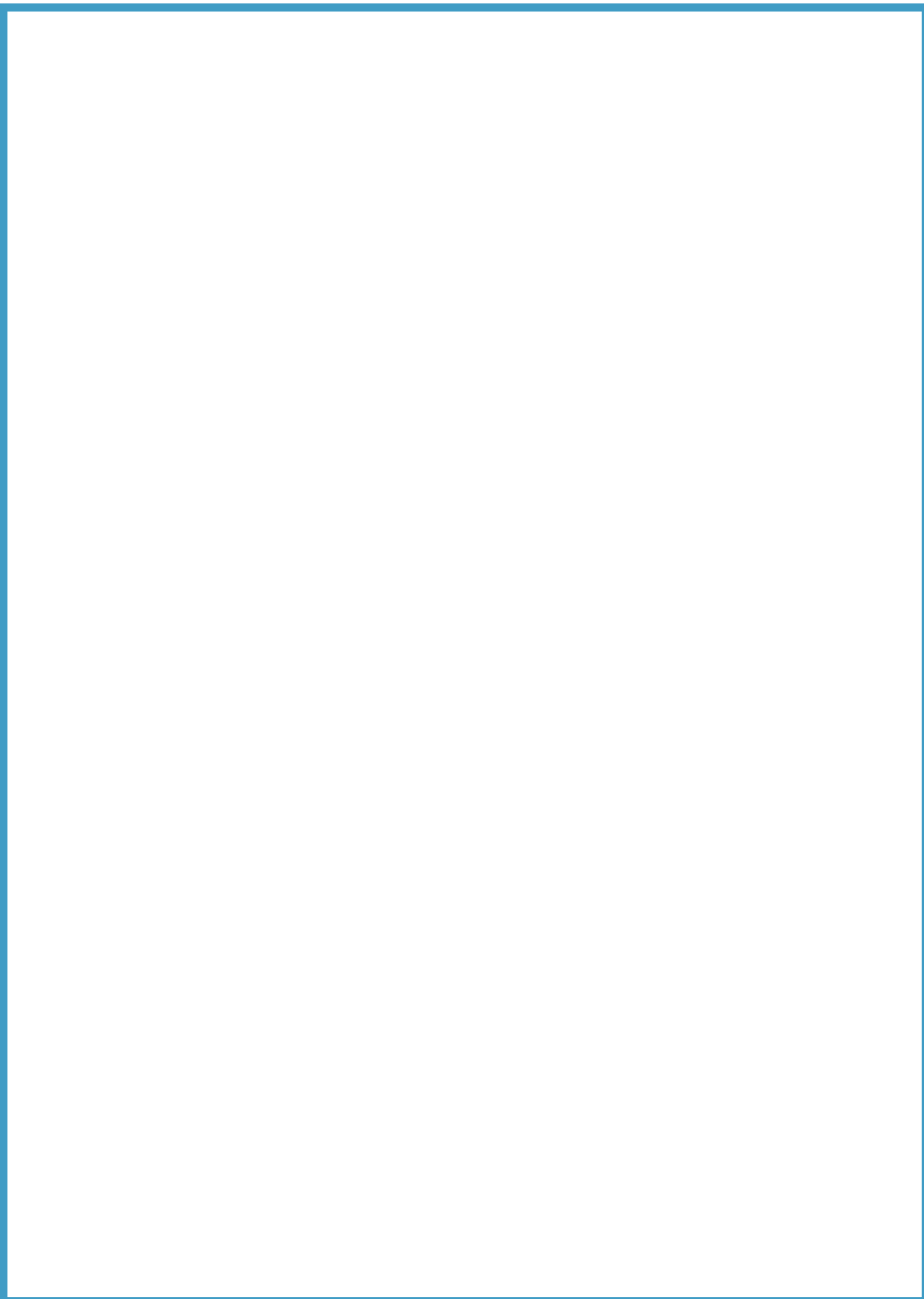
train their workforce with a view to supplying the knowledge, skills and competences which they need to stay competitive. Work-based learning is often described as a win-win-win situation as it provides benefits for all major stakeholders involved – for the learner, for the employer and for society. Employers, social partners, and other relevant stakeholders are therefore looking to increase their participation in vocational education and training system governance, as they seek to adjust training programmes to meet the requirements of twenty-first century labour markets.

What makes WBL attractive to these stakeholders is that it has relevance for all levels of vocational education and training and can be implemented in any sector, from industry to services and agriculture. Work-based learning is particularly relevant in sectors experiencing the most rapid structural and technological changes as it allows companies to input and shape vocational training to meet the needs of their industries. Efforts to strengthen work-based learning in vocational education are increasingly common among the countries of Europe, as they seek to improve the skills and employability of young people, and ultimately the economic competitiveness and social inclusion in the aftermath of a global pandemic.

**AUTHOR:
JENNIDER NOLAN,
MEATH PARTNERSHIP, IE**



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***"WE MUST NOT
FORGET THAT
APPRENTICES
WILL BE THE
FUTURE BACKBONE
OF OUR PRODUCTION."***

*Roland Kaiser,
Siemens Germany,
European Alliance of Apprenticeships*



WHY ARE COMPANIES A KEY PARTNER IN WBL?

In this article, we explore the important role of companies in work-based learning and the reciprocal benefits that accrue.

Across Europe, it is not surprising that WBL policies are highly diverse and encompass a broad variety of work-based learning practices across different work and learning environments. Whilst in some countries WBL has a long tradition in Austria, Germany, Switzerland for example; it is more of a growing trend in a number of other Member States such as Ireland, Finland, and the Netherlands.

Regardless of the state of development in your country, it is worth noting that there are significant benefits for employers to develop and implement WBL programmes within their company; remembering that companies are an essential partner in any WBL programme – without employer engagement they would simply not be possible. So why should companies get involved?

Work-based learning plays an important role in helping to meet your companies' skills needs, while helping people transition into, and progress within, the labour market. In particular, WBL can bring a number of advantages for you as an employer including: the possibility to attract young talent and to ensure a better skills matching as a result of in-house training, increased production, new knowledge and perspectives, a wider and more diverse talent



pool and recognition of your company as a good employer.

Now more than ever, there are a series of policy measures, funding instruments and special initiatives available to increase the supply and diversity of work-based learning opportunities including apprenticeships whilst ensuring that companies and employers' organisation have better access to education systems so that they can influence the content of curricula to ensure their labour market relevance.

Over the medium term, this will benefit companies in terms of meeting their skills needs and enhance apprentices' skills and competences and, therefore, their employability. Having employers in the driver's seat when it comes to the design and delivery of WBL schemes will also help to ensure more place-

IN MANY CASES THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF WBL OUTWEIGH THE TRAINING COST AND DELIVERS REAL BENEFITS TO COMPANIES.

ments and offer opportunities to explore the role of work-based learning in emerging and growth sectors, such as digital and ICT occupations.

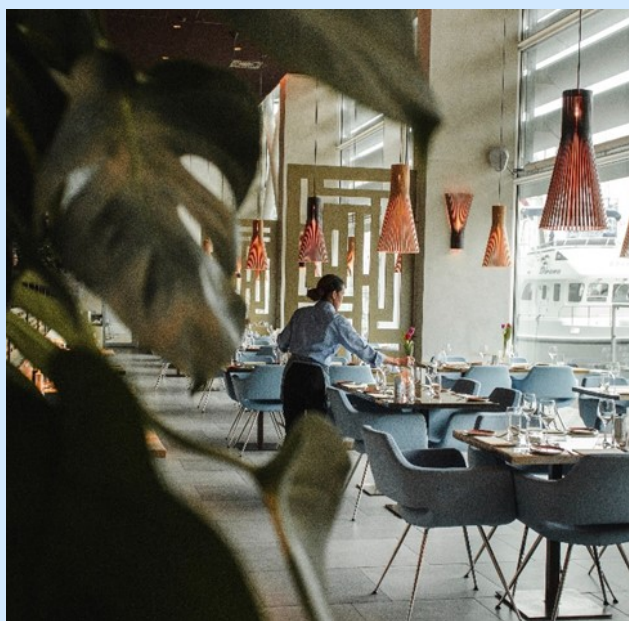
But can the benefits of WBL can outweigh the costs?

While empirical studies on the cost-effectiveness of WBL are scarce, studies carried out in recent decades in countries with well-established WBL systems have shown that the financial benefits of apprenticeships (the apprentice's productive contribution) often at least equal the financial costs of training (lost output plus the

management and administration of training), and that in many cases the financial benefits of WBL outweigh the training cost, even during the training programme. The reasons include

- ▶ the higher productivity of fully experienced workers trained within the organisation compared to those recruited externally;
- ▶ the better organisational fit between employees trained in-house and the organisation's working practices;
- ▶ improved staff retention of apprentices trained within the organisation;
- ▶ external funding of up-front costs of apprenticeships in some countries (e.g. diverse financial incentives);
- ▶ avoidance of the difficulties associated with recruiting suitable fully experienced workers in the labour market.

If your company is not currently involved in work-based learning, we hope this article has presented some compelling arguments as to why you should at least consider it.



OFFERING WORK-BASED LEARNING HOLDS POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR COMPANIES IN ALL SECTORS

AUTHOR:
JENNIDER NOLAN,
MEATH PARTNERSHIP, IE



MORE INFORMATION
◀ **HERE AND AT**
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***"FOR COMPARING
CERTIFICATES OR
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APPLICANTS IN A
COMPANY IS LIKE
COMPARING
APPLES TO ORANGES.
WITHOUT ANY
EXTERNAL **COMMON
REFERENCE** THIS
WILL BE LIKE
THROWING DICE."***

*Dr. Georg Müllner,
Senior Lecturer, 2020*

COMPARING APPLES TO ORANGES – A DILEMMA?

Understanding competences of applicants can be a challenge as you can hardly compare their certificates and diplomas. Find out how to access the information you need!

Imagine you are trying to cover a job vacancy for an administrative staff in your company. From the job description you probably have, you have defined key qualifications or competences needed which are crucial to fulfil this job. At the same time you are defining a certain degree of independent work ability with more or less supervision required from colleagues or direct line managers.

The same challenge approaches when your task is to provide internships or any other kind of work based learning for e.g. apprentices, VET students and you should try to estimate the competences and degree of independent work ability they are bringing with them.

All this is, however, still fairly easy if the job applicants or potential VET students with need of practical training are coming from your country since they are trained and equipped with competences from your education and training system. It will be quite difficult if you are requiring e.g. excellent knowledge in bookkeeping and your applicant approaches with a certificate with a mark 6 in the field of administration and bookkeeping from a different country.

What can you expect from a person with a mark



6 in bookkeeping and administration? How much supervision would he/she need? Is a bookkeeper with a mark 6 from e.g. the UK a better bookkeeper than a person with a mark 2 from Germany? Both are trained in different education systems, have had different priorities and are tested and certified upon different rules and approaches. This is the challenge of comparing apples with oranges.

Of course to solve this problem mostly larger companies are applying the tool of an assessment centre where they are simply testing the potential applicants and their competences against the challenges of their company and the future work tasks in the job. However, especially for smaller companies (SMEs) it is nearly impossible to plan and organise such assessment centres out of time and cost reasons.

THE ONLY SOLUTION TO COMPARE THE INCOMPARABLE IS TO DEFINE A MUTUALLY AGREED EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINT.

You would probably need different and easy instruments to allow the comparison between apples and oranges.

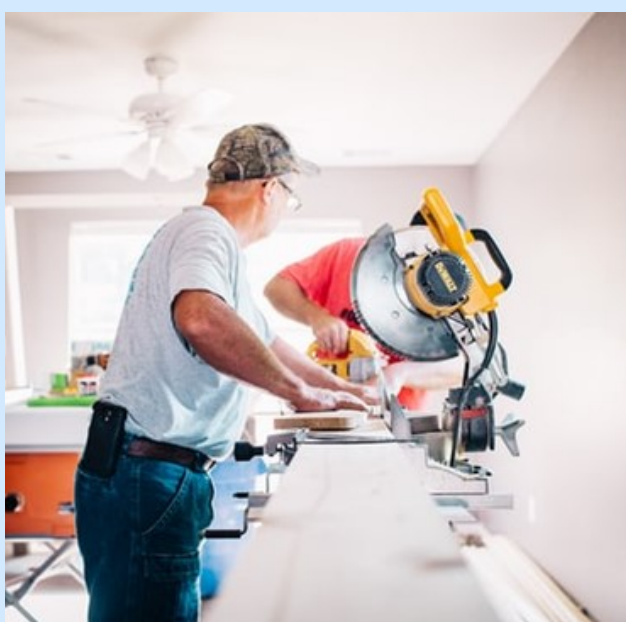
The only solution to compare the incomparable is to define a mutually agreed external reference point. If we know what a mark 6 in one country says in a scale of e.g. 1-10 (1 being bad and 10 being good) and what a mark 2 in another country says on the same external reference scale – voilà, here we are with the comparison.

For the past 15 years, the European Union and its member states have been working on the

development of such mutually agreed reference scales for competences, qualifications and also the estimation of degree of independent work ability.

You are now in the lucky position to freely use and benefit from these 4 European transparency instruments to solve your challenges of finding the best applicant for what job, placement, apprenticeship, internship etc. you are offering. For your daily work as WBL responsible person or HR staff in your company we have defined four crucial questions / challenges where transparency tools are ready to use and help (see on the next page).

By applying these instruments (EQF, ECVET, CERFL and Europass) you have four powerful instruments that allow you to compare “apples to oranges”. There are many advantages connected to these tools e.g. they are free to use, they are well tested and developed including all materials needed and they are the same in all European countries.

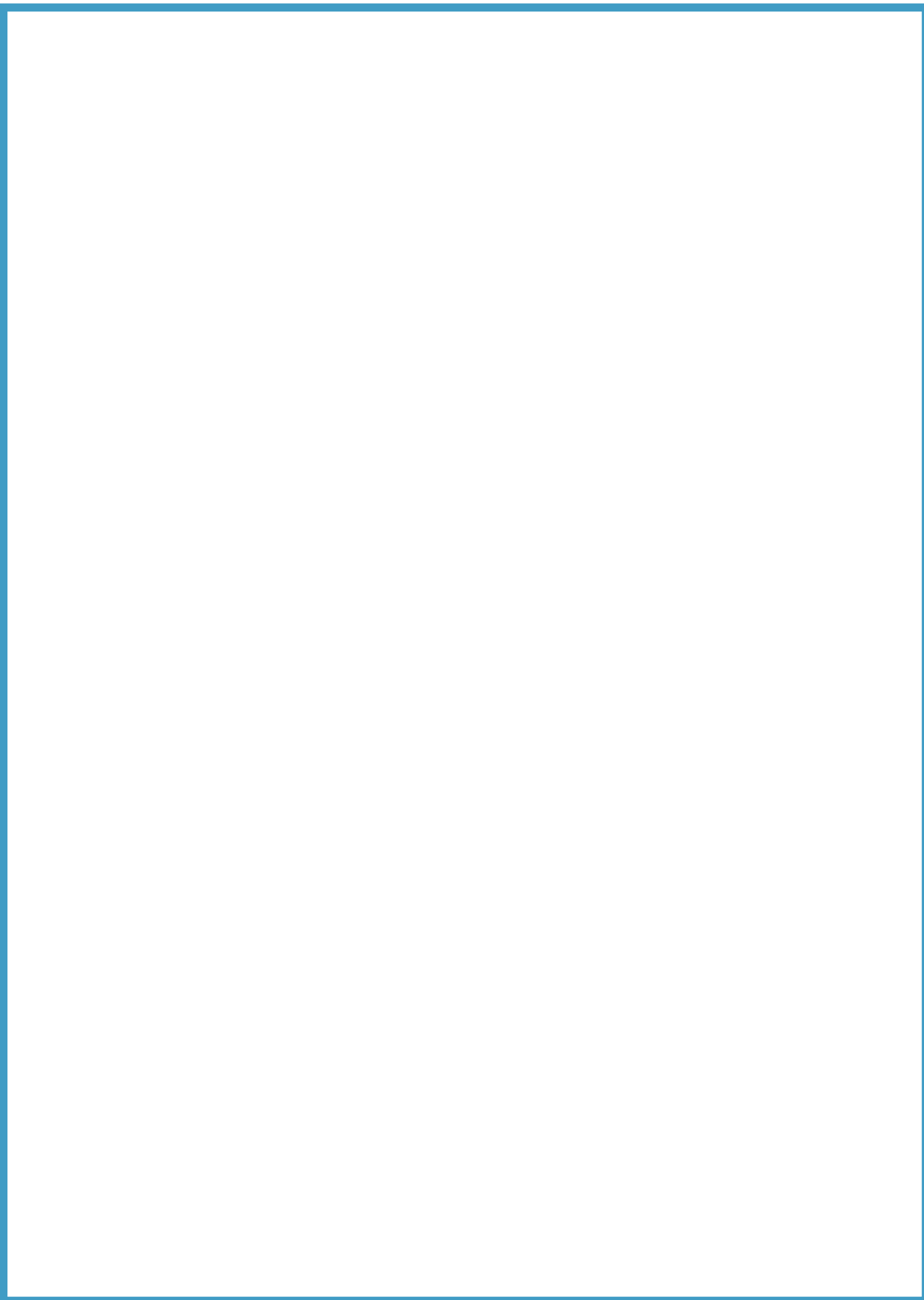


**SUCCESSFUL AND TRANSPARENT
VALIDATION OF QUALIFICATIONS
IS KEY TO MANAGING EMPLOYEES**

**AUTHOR:
GEORG MÜLLNER,
VEREIN AUXILIUM, AT**



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*"ALWAYS STAY
UP-TO-DATE
WITH BUSINESS
JARGON,
BECAUSE IF
YOU **SPEAK**
PROFESSIONALLY,
YOU SEEM COMPETENT
IMMEDIATELY."*

*Carina Maas,
EU Project Manager, 2020*

IMPRESS WITH YOUR PROFESSIONAL JARGON

Show-off your expertise with professional language and impress co-workers and superiors with state-of-the-art vocabulary used across Europe and beyond.

EQF, CEFR, ECVET and Learning Outcomes...? Talent Management, Knowmads and FOBO? What does that mean? It is almost like learning another language! Is it really worth it? Why should anyone remember these acronyms and terms? And does anybody use them, really?

The answer is quite easy: Yes, it is worth it and yes, professionals really use these phrases. And they have many reasons to do so!

While at first encounter, some of the terms may seem new and complicated, they contribute to a clear communication among various parties that probably do not share the same language in other areas. This applies to educational bodies such as vocational education and training centres as well as international business partners.

For example, if your company is offering work-based learning, your trainees probably arrive in your company with a certificate of their vocational centre that states a certain amount of ECVET credits points, an EQF level and verbal learning outcomes. Since this is mandatory procedure of VET centres all across the European Union, you can expect this to be valid in all member states.



As the person responsible for the work-based learning processes in your company it is up to you to put these terms into context. But what do they mean to you and your work?

In a nutshell, the ECVET credits provide you with information on how much time your trainee invested in learning their craft and the learning outcomes summarise what kind of knowledge and skills your trainee is able to do after finishing their training. The EQF level indicates how much autonomy and responsibility you can expect from your trainee based on their competences.

The handy benefit is that these terms stay constant in their meaning across Europe. So even if the scope and quality of vocational trainings may differ, you have these

**BE AWARE OF
THE MEANING OF
MODERN BUZZWORDS!
SUPERFICIAL
SEMI-KNOWLEDGE
CAN BE DANGEROUS.**

transparency terms that help you encode the educational jargon. It may take some effort to memorise these buzzwords and their meaning, but in the long run you can save hours using these transparency terms. No more long and complicated explanations, because these transparency terms could be the shortcuts you need in your everyday routines. If you know the meaning, you can immediately put actions in motion that are on point and efficient.

Apart from these EU relevant terms, there are a myriad of other modern buzzwords, which are

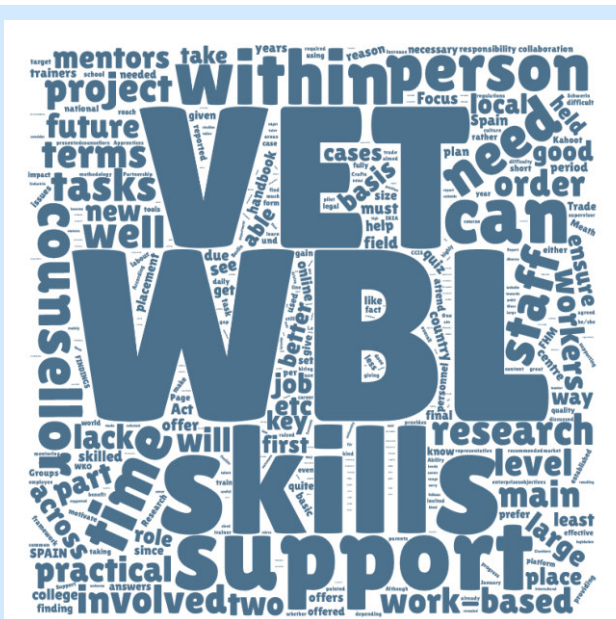
used all the time, but not always understood in the same way. For example: What is the difference between Millennials and Generation Z? How would you describe talent and how would you implement talent management in your company? What is knowledge management and is it related to Knowmads?

If you are already up-to-date: Congratulations! But be aware of the true meaning of these buzzwords – superficial semi-knowledge may be dangerous. Be sure you understand what you are talking about and what others want to say or you might create more misunderstandings than before. Realistically, you will come across these terms sooner or later and their use will probably increase in the future. So, now is your time: get a head start and inform yourself!

It pays off to be confident using these terms and putting them into practice. Use them with co-workers and superiors – or with your trainees! It is not only about sounding smart, but also about understanding those around you. From professional jargon to the simplified and yet complex languages of millennials – know your buzzwords and be on top of everything.

Find all EU relevant terms, phrases and acronyms collected in the WBL Accelerator Glossary and benefit from the additional information provided.

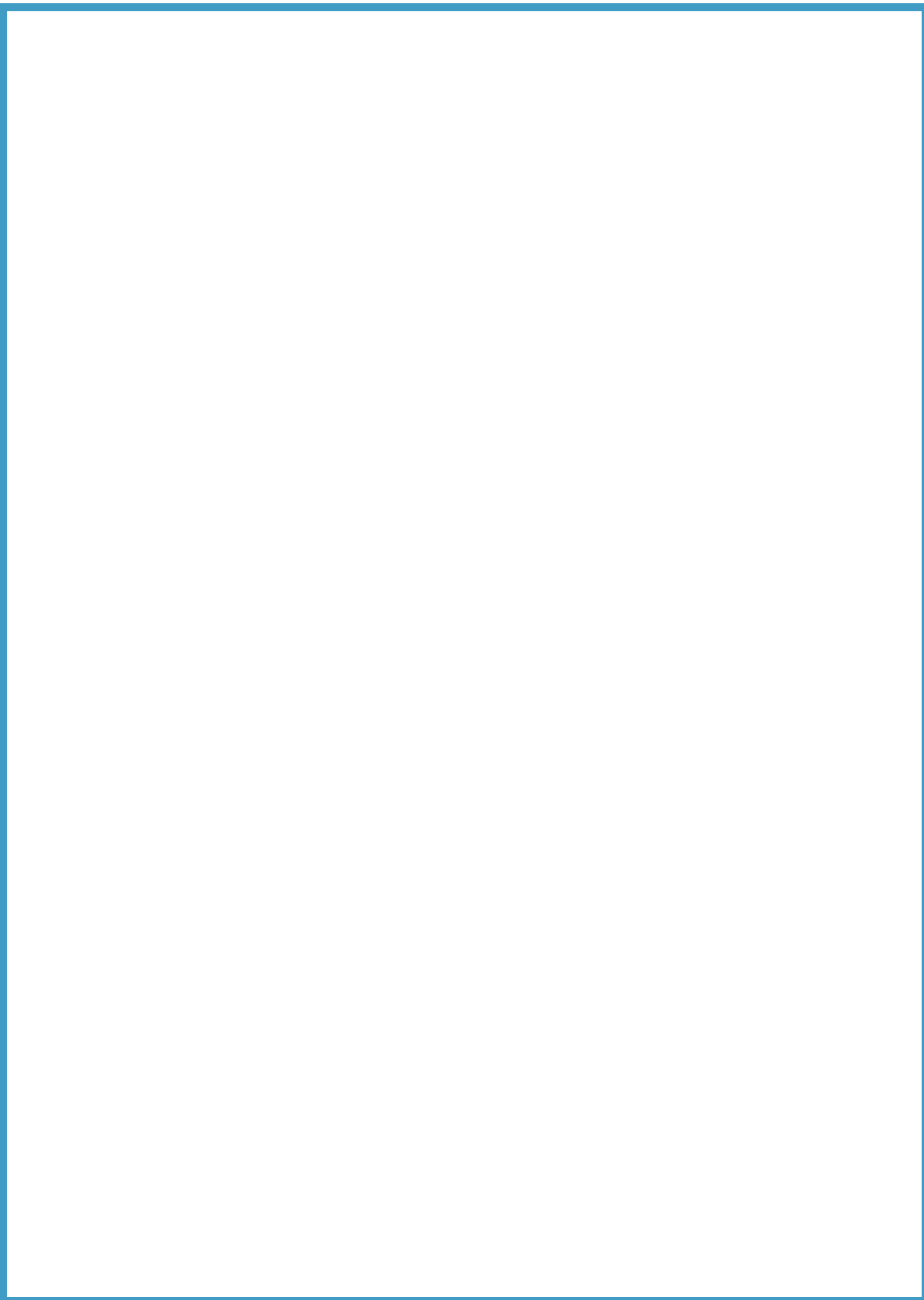
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**WORDCLOUD OF MOST USED
TERMS IN THE WBL ACCELERATOR
RESEARCH STUDY (2019)**



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*"FOR OVER A DECADE,
[THIS INSTRUMENT]
HAS BEEN A
KEY TOOL
TO SUPPORT **BETTER**
COMMUNICATION
AND UNDERSTANDING
OF SKILLS AND
QUALIFICATIONS."*

*Marianne Thyssen,
European Commissioner responsible for
Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and
Labour Mobility, 2016*



COMPARABILITY FOR YOUR PLEASURE

Granted, managing job applications is not a pleasure for everyone. However, use this tool to your advantage and make your life easier! Can you guess what it is?

This tool is especially helpful when you are dealing with foreign job applications and consequently foreign qualifications, as it gives you comparable information about relevant details of your applicant's professional journey. If you are dealing with an applicant within your country, this tool is suitable when you are looking for hard facts you can easily compare. Do not expect a lot of creative design options, though! Your applicants use a standardised template and only the information sets the individuals apart. But do not worry, this is only to your advantage as you will find the same information in the same place – always.

Another crucial part of this tool is that it uses distinct codes to capture complex information that you can assess at a glance. These codes are easily comparable and transferable across EU borders and beyond! You may find it irritating at the beginning to learn the codes, but it is much easier than you would expect! Once you get the hang of it, you can assess the scope of training that your applicant has accomplished, the level of professional responsibility that can be expected, and the level of command of any language in the areas of reading, speaking and understanding. And yes, there is a difference



and it depends on your requirements which areas are most important to the job.

Furthermore, this tool saves you from false expectations! As you may already know, education systems in Europe are quite different and you can probably not expect all graduates of a certain field of vocational education and training to have the same qualifications when they have gone through the training in different countries.

Qualifications are compiled from their knowledge, skills and competences of a certain field and as the trainings differ, so does the realistic expectation of job performance depending on the country of an applicant.

This is mostly related to different requirements in the countries. But there is a solution in place to help you understand what you can expect

**YOUR ADVANTAGE IS
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THE SAME INFORMATION
IN THE SAME PLACE
— ALWAYS.**

and it is called certificate supplements. These supplements are mandatory part of VET certificates in the EU and they state exactly what you can expect from a graduate of a certain vocational sector. By the way, this also exists for university diplomas.

One more benefit this tool brings to your table is an aid to meaningless statements concerning periods spent abroad. Given that every trip abroad provides people with valuable experiences, this is especially true for stays abroad with a professional focus of an internship



**THIS KEY TOOL COMES WITH
A LOT OF BAGGAGE — LEARN TO
USE IT FOR YOUR BENEFIT!**

or similar. The tool described in this article offers a standardised certificate issued by an involved company and lists all necessary information about location, timeframe, acquired skills, knowledge and competences as well as involved parties of a professional mobility stay.

Last clue: This tool exists since 2005 and its scope has been expanded in functions since then. One of the functions is creating a standardised CV and this has been done more than a 130 million times since it started! That is a lot of CVs to compare... Luckily, there is another feature only for employers and it is called interoperability. This lets you transform all CVs in a handy spreadsheet, where you can easily compare information. This could be useful for managing the qualifications and further training needs of your current employees, too.

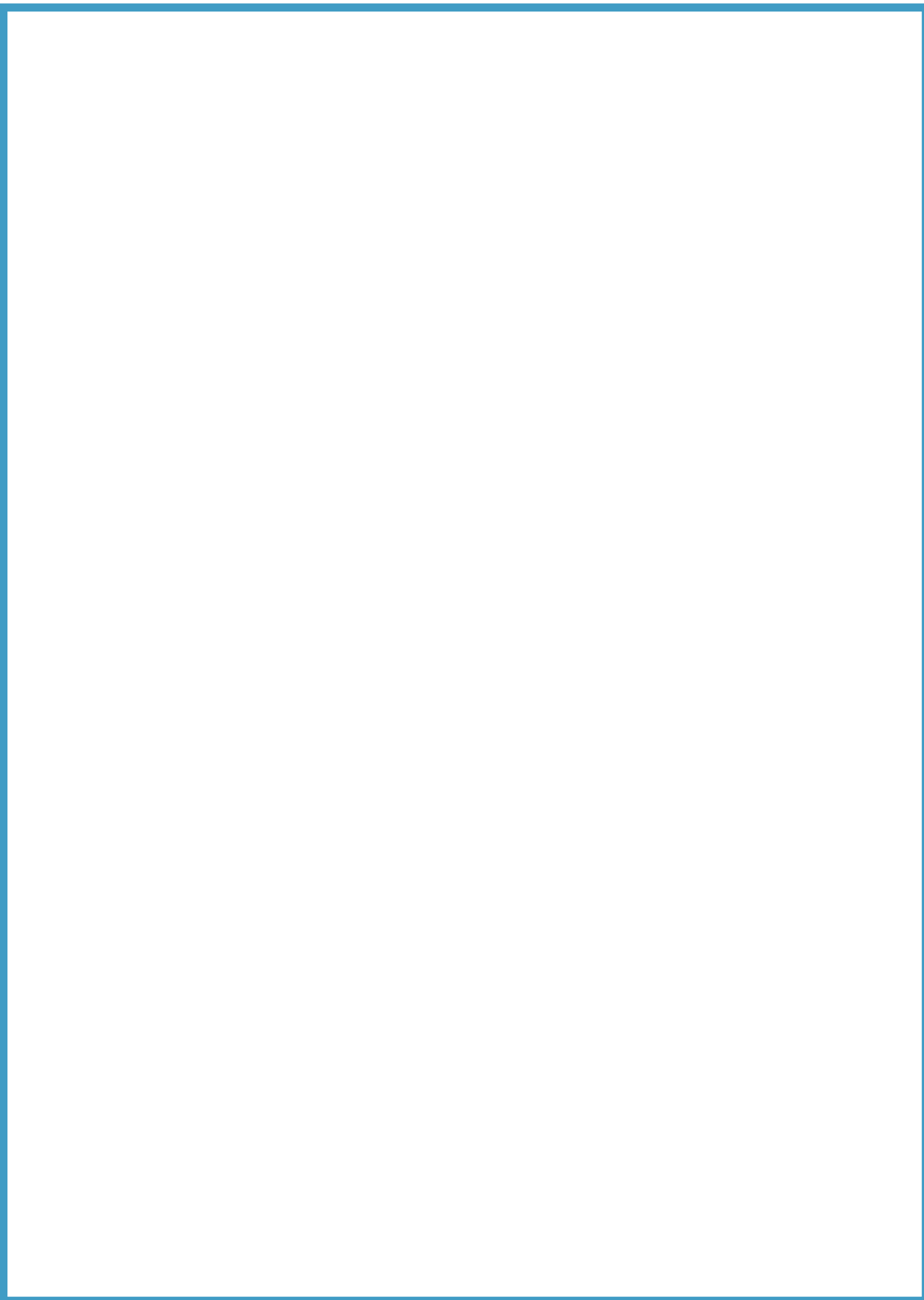
Did you guess it? The tool described was: the **Europass** by CEDEFOP—the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training! Did you know all these benefits?

Learn more using the QR Code below and start making your life easier – the pleasure will come as side effect!

AUTHOR:
CARINA MAAS,
VEREIN AUXILIUM, AT



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***"FOR IT'S GETTING
HARDER AND
HARDER TO **GET**
THE RIGHT STAFF.
HOWEVER,
IN APPRENTICESHIP,
YOU HAVE THE STAFF
IN YOUR HANDS."***

*Mitja Gregorič, MLINOSTROJ,
company for the construction
of technological facilities, 2018*

IS WBL THE RECIPE FOR BEST VET PRACTICE?

Hands-on practice shows promise that it can help increase students' workplace competencies and benefit employers, who gain more qualified employees.

There is not just one straight answer or a good example. It depends on countries' school systems and companies' policies.

Internship, externship, job shadowing, practicum, (basic) training, tutelage, traineeship, studentship, probationary period, trial/test period, indentureship, apprenticeship, WBL, etc. – so many synonyms and so many ways to implement them.

All research, analysis, and interviews from the companies say the same. Young people are coming to companies with too little skills and, consequently, it is very difficult to introduce them to the work process. As a result, we have dissatisfaction on both sides, on the side of the employers, because the new employees do not show them the results and skills that they expected, and on the other hand, the employees who are often too desperate and unsatisfied, so they start looking for a job elsewhere.

The top characteristics today's employers are looking for in candidates include listening skills, attention to detail and attentiveness, effective communication, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and active learning. However, a lot of employers say it is very or somewhat difficult



finding qualified candidates, and they also say schools have not properly prepared students for jobs. Students agree with that. For them finding a job is more difficult compared to their parents' generation. They believe their education has not adequately prepared them for the workplace.

For this reason, the companies must connect with the schools and give the young ones the opportunity to get experience directly in the companies, where they can learn from the best ones.

That is one of the important tasks of every business entity. Providing students the opportunity to practice is just one of the ways the companies can make a contribution.

Perhaps it is time to stop looking at this as just an act of goodwill, and rather accept it as opportunity if wanting to have qualified staff.

EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR CANDIDATES CHARACTERISED BY EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION, CRITICAL THINKING, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND ACTIVE LEARNING.

The other part of the reason for dissatisfaction is the generational gap which is becoming an increasingly serious problem for companies lately. It is very important that the companies adapt their business policies to the generations that are joining the labour market. These are young people who have grown up on significantly different concepts.

In order to acknowledge them, we need to understand them first. The mentoring program provides the opportunity for more experienced team members to encounter the generation of



STUDENTS NEED GREAT MENTORS WHO WILL GUIDE THEM THROUGH THE LEARNING PROCESS.

late Millennials, and partly the Generation Y, in a business setting. Having people with a new, fresh mindset at your disposal is important for companies.

WBL programs and apprenticeships often serve as a workforce pipeline for companies. Employers participating in WBL programs can train students and then hire them upon graduation. Work-based learning's hands-on practice shows promise that it can help increase students' workplace competencies and benefit employers, who gain more qualified employees.

But how to convince students to come to their companies for practice?

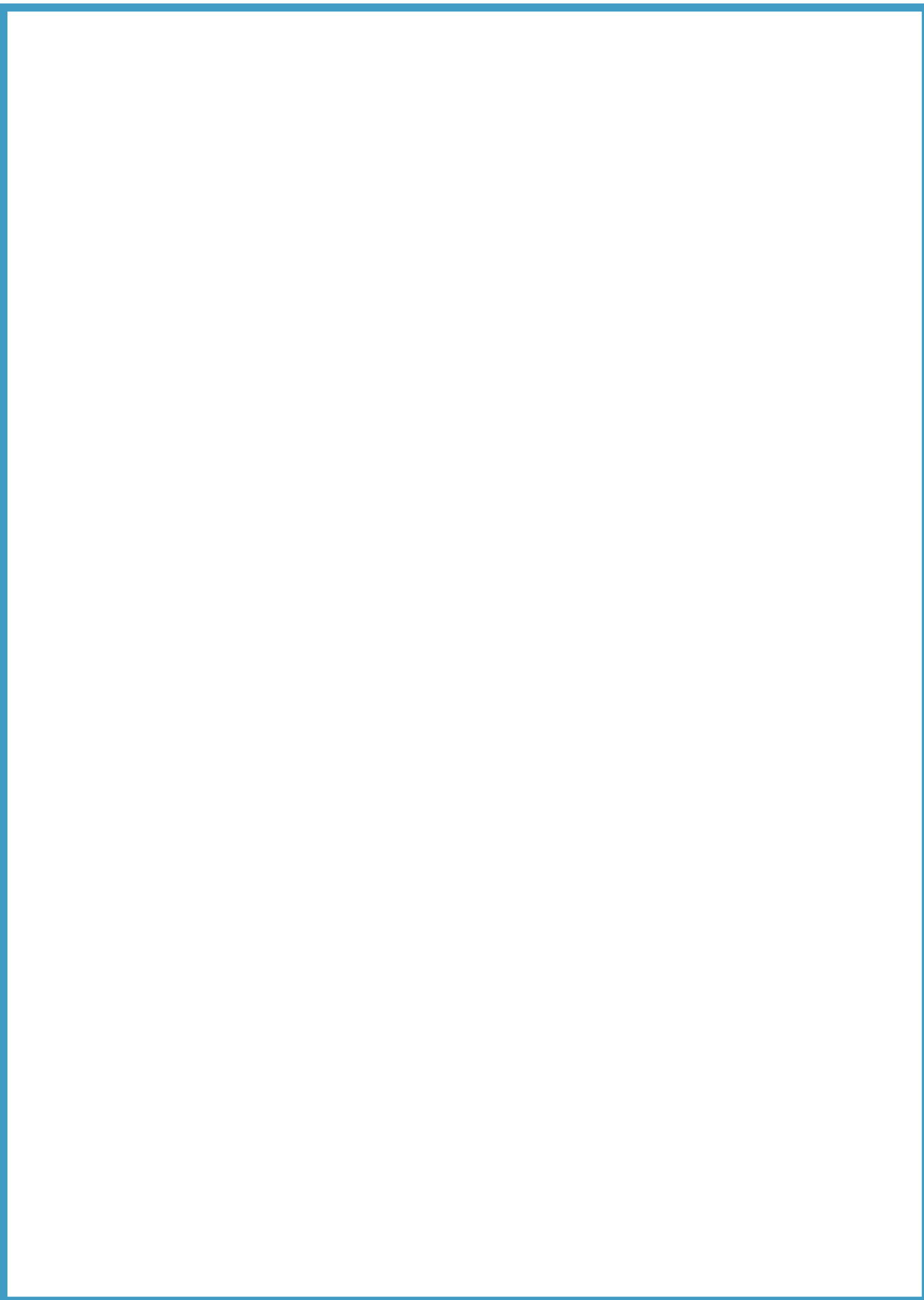
The answer is by connecting with the schools and promoting. With a good promotion, there will come student's applications.

But it is also important to have in mind that choosing the right student is just half of the job. It is also very important to give students the best mentors who will guide them through the learning process from the beginning to the end. To get a fully qualified worker, you need to put a lot of effort into it, but in the end, it will be worth the effort.

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***"THE IN-COMPANY
TRAINING PLAN
HELPS BOTH
OUR TRAINEES
AND THEIR
TRAINERS & MENTORS
NOT TO LOSE SIGHT
OF THE **QUALITY**
OF VOCATIONAL
TRAINING
IN THE WORKPLACE."***

*Heike Bähre,
Certified trainer at the German
Chamber of Trade and Commerce, 2019*



PLANNING & STRUCTURING IN-COMPANY TRAINING

Apprenticeship programmes are an instrument for successful employee recruitment, career planning and personnel development in the company. An example from Germany.

Dual vocational training is one of the export successes in the internationalisation of German companies - not only in Europe, but now worldwide.

On the basis of the Apprenticeship Regulations, there are standardised apprenticeship framework plans for the individual occupations in Germany which, according to § 5 Para. 1 No. 4 BBiG, represent "instructions on the objective and temporal structuring of the teaching of vocational skills, knowledge and abilities". Companies in Germany draw up an in-company training plan structured on this "apprenticeship framework plan" and based on work and business processes typical of the occupation. Upon this framework, an individualised apprenticeship plan is drawn up for each trainee. See how this works in the following case study:

Jessica Bianco* from Italy (* name changed) has successfully completed her studies in German and English at the University of Genoa, Italy and would like to gain professional experience abroad. Through an internet search via recruitment portals she learns that a large



hostel chain in Germany offers various positions and is subsequently invited by the house manager of the hostel in Leipzig for an interview. There she is offered a two-year vocational training as a hotel manager; a combination of work-based learning in a hostel/hotel and attending a local vocational school. The house manager explains that in this way, after her academic training, she can now attach a commercial training to her qualifications. Although this vocational training is formally subordinate to the academic training she previously completed, she would be well prepared to take on management positions at the hostel shortly after completing the training as a skilled worker. Jessica learns that normally she would complete three years of vocational

TYPICAL WORK AND BUSINESS PROCESSES ARE THE BASIS OF PLANNING APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE.

training, but due to her school and academic expertise she can complete the training in two years. The house manager explains to her that she will spend three days a week in a hostel and two days at a vocational school. The apprentice allowance would be higher for her compared to apprentices who join the company immediately after finishing school.

This extra-tariff bonus would mean that she would receive a higher apprentice allowance and would also be able to attend trainee management seminars in addition to her



WBL MENTOR AND TRAINEE ARE DISCUSSING THE APPRENTICE PLAN.

apprentice training.

Jessica quizzes the house manager on the apprenticeship scheme:

- ▶ What will her individual apprentice plan be based on? Does she have a say in this?
- ▶ Is there another contact person for her, a mentor, for her vocational training in the hostel?
- ▶ How does her individual training plan interfere with the training planning system of her fellow trainees?
- ▶ Can she gain experience in other European countries during her training?

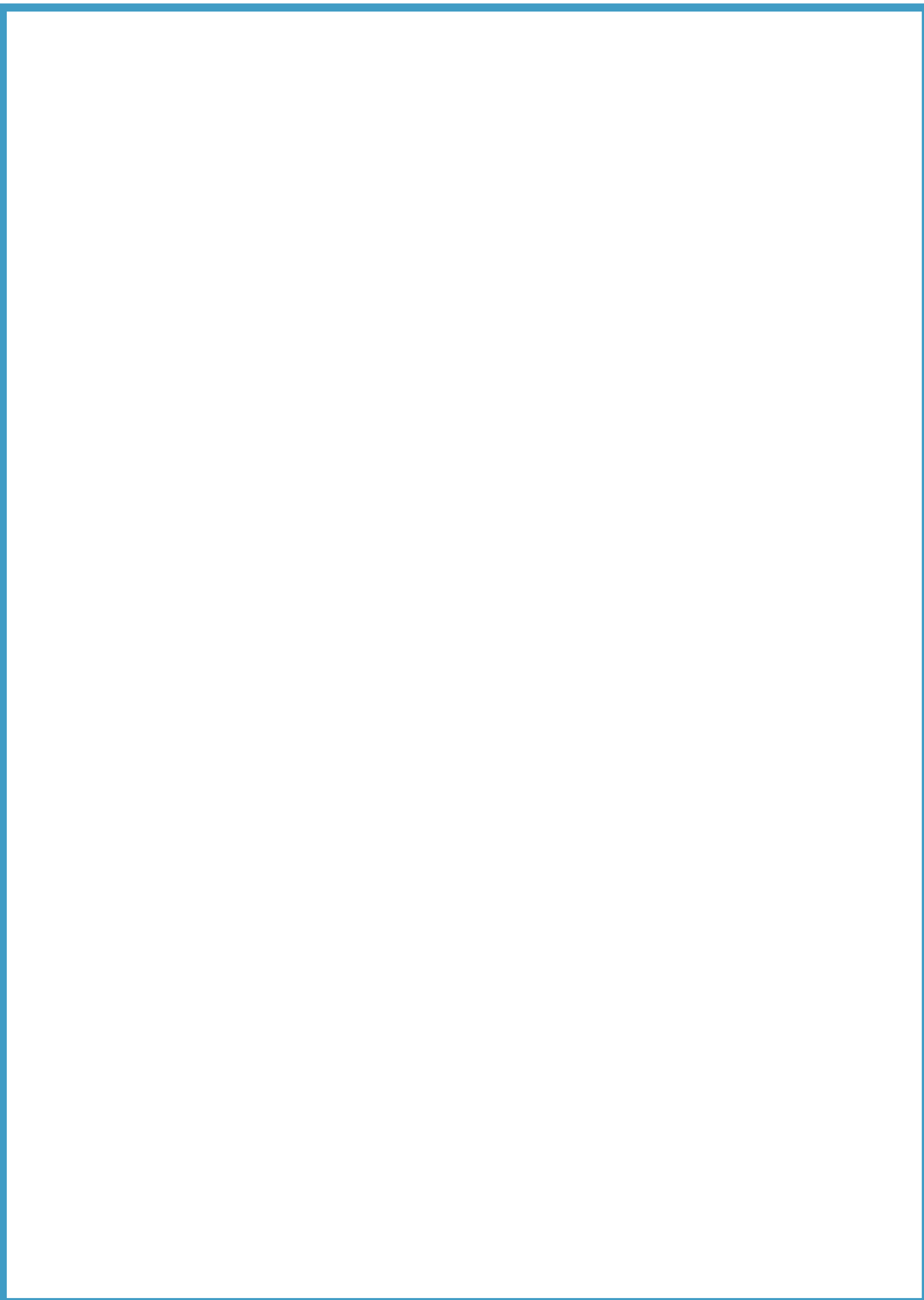
In the meantime, Jessica has now completed her apprenticeship and was delegated to a new hostel opening in a large Italian city, where she took over the house management after a short training period of only 3 months. As well as this, she has also begun to pass on her experiences from Germany to the local vocational schools and vocational training partners in Italy and assists in developing the dual vocational training system for partners in the region.

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*"ALL OUR
TALENTS
INCREASE IN
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AND EVERY
FACULTY, BOTH
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STRENGTHENS
BY EXERCISE."*

*Anne Brontë,
Novelist, 1820-1849*

ROCKET MAN: THE MODERN WBL MENTOR

How can mentors ensure that their trainees will be successful in the structure of their apprenticeship program and that they will reach their target?

Rockets and Missiles: both objects of vast potential, power and energy, and once launched capable of an immense impact.

A rocket is propelled towards its target, unguided and with no steering ability. Once a rocket is launched it cannot change its course to adapt to changing elements in order to correct its trajectory. It may hit its target, however it may also drift off course, oblivious to changing conditions and fly miles from its objective in the wrong direction.

A missile, much the same as a rocket, is propelled towards its target, but instead uses control systems to guide itself in flight, towards its target. After being launched, it can continue to correct its trajectory, based on a continuous process of feedback from external forces and changing conditions. It has the ability to process feedback, to correct its errors and make necessary adjustments in order to reach its objective.

The modern apprentice begins his/her apprenticeship. Young, dynamic, full of energy, immense potential and capable of delivering so



much for their employer, each are launched into a fixed path of learning, mapped out step by step over 3 years to reach their learning objective, and emerge as a highly capable craftsman in their own right. Yet, only under the careful guidance and control of a knowledgeable mentor with critical input and well-timed feedback can the young eager apprentice correct his/her errors, make the necessary adjustments, and change trajectory to get back on their flight path to achieving their end objective.

It is the mentor that ensures that the target is reached. To ensure that each and every apprentice reaches their target, it is the mentor who acts as the control system by putting in place a monitoring structure that delivers critical

THE RECIPE FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPRENTICE- SHIP? CAREFUL GUIDANCE OF A KNOWLEDGEABLE MENTOR WITH CRITICAL INPUT AND WELL-TIMED FEEDBACK.

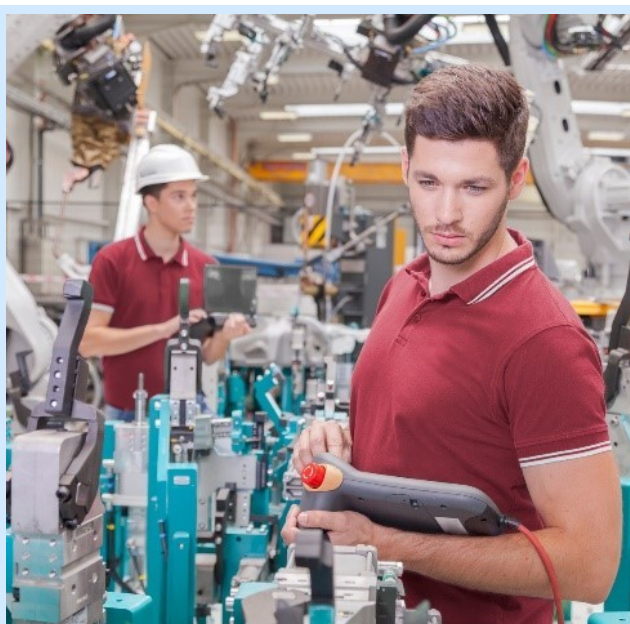
input and allows the apprentice to perform continual learning and processing of feedback. This control systems needs to be both rigid to provide stability and structured learning to apprentices, but also flexible to adapt to the individual needs of each apprentice and their personal way of learning effectively.

How you deliver feedback to one apprentice may not be suitable for a different apprentice, but it all functions within the framework and foundation of solid monitoring structure that

ensures the feedback is delivered and processed.

Flexibility too is required, to ensure the continual improvement of the control system itself, by learning from the apprentices and their valuable feedback and critical input that they can provide to mentor and his methods, and to the monitoring system.

How feedback is delivered, how it is timed and how the adjustments are implemented to prevent the repetition of errors to allow real learning for the apprentice to take place. A control and monitoring system that can process feedback, learn, correct errors and make the necessary amendments and improvements to not only reach its target, but to aim beyond its current capability to even further targets and higher objectives.



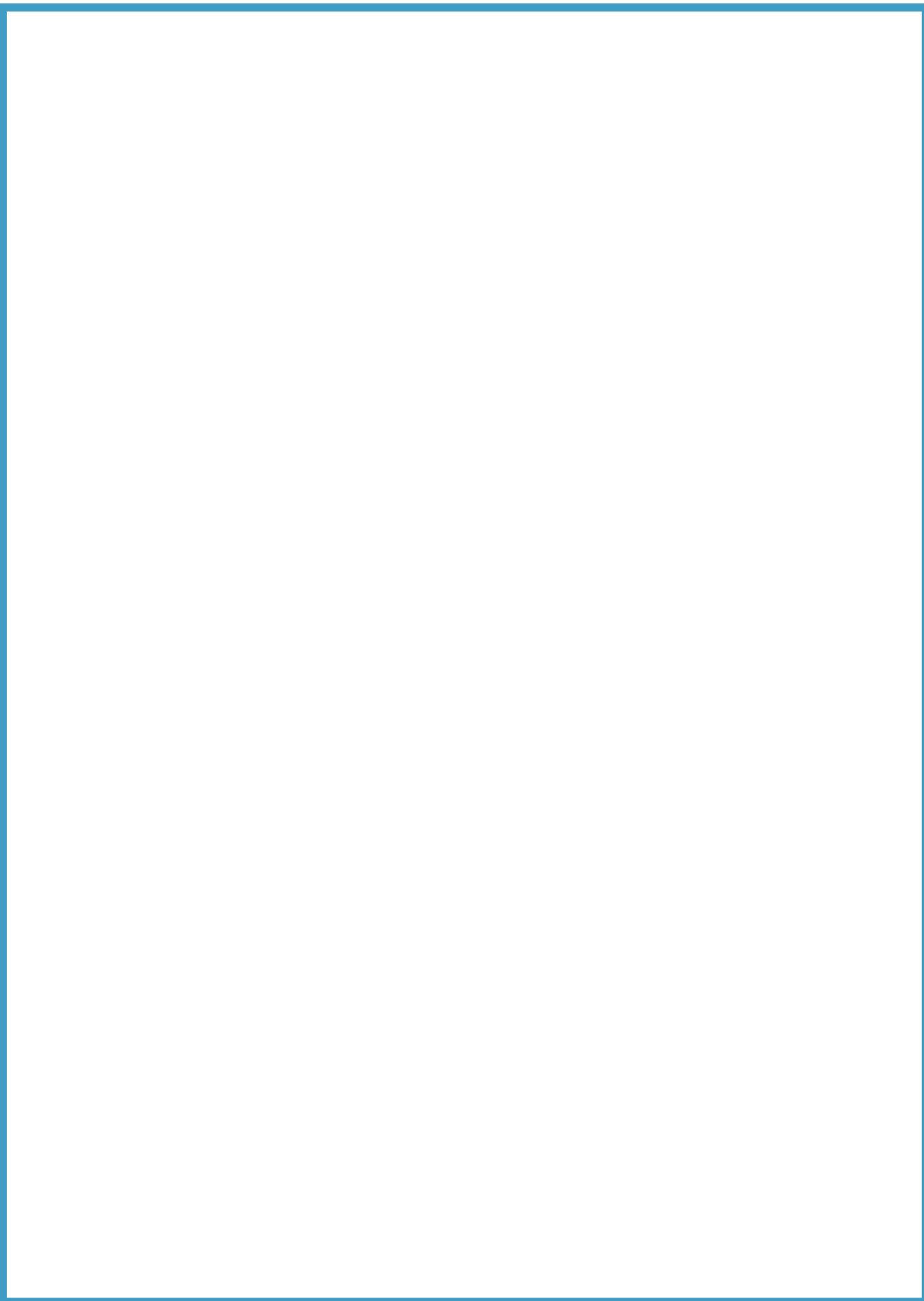
**FLEXIBILITY TOO IS REQUIRED
TO ENSURE THE CONTINUAL
IMPROVEMENT OF THE CONTROL SYSTEM**

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***"THE LABOUR
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*Ian O'Donovan,
International Project Consultant
from Ireland working in Germany, 2020*

SECURING EMPLOYEES BEYOND THE HORIZON

Securing qualified employees or trainees on local level can be a real challenge. This case study from Germany shows that alternatives may wait beyond the border.

In North East Germany on the border between Mecklenburg and Brandenburg, the rolling green hills stretch as far as the eye can see. Between the heavens and the serene countryside, the horizon is dotted with countless colossal wind turbines, standing proud and weathering every wind; Germany's great green hope for next generation energy. And high above the green grass, tucked in behind the rotor blades is where Steffen Schmidt settles in to begin his workday.

Steffen and his team of eight workers cover wind turbine maintenance in the region for a prominent Asian turbine company. With the Asian company investing heavily in this part of the country, these maintenance contracts meant that for Steffen and his team, each of them born and raised in the region, are some of the very few locals who haven't been drawn away to the large cities of Hamburg or Berlin to seek work.

Demand in this sector is growing, and ideally Steffen would like to take on an apprentice to help him cover the growing workload, so he can finally diversify his client base and bid for maintenance contracts from some of the other large companies building wind turbines in the



region. But even with help recently from the local government recruitment center, Steffen has failed to secure candidates for his apprenticeship offer for the last two years running. The local recruitment official advising him, explained that almost all small businesses in the region have the same issue when hiring young people:

"You might get a few applications, maybe even an interview, but the good candidates all end up leaving to go to the big cities and are snapped up by the big companies."

Steffen has more work than his small team can cope with and the very real prospect of more contract opportunities, surely, we cannot allow business and economic growth to be hindered

SURELY WE CANNOT ALLOW BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH TO BE HINDERED BY A SCARCITY OF QUALIFIED WORKERS AND APPRENTICES.

by a scarcity of qualified workers and trainees. Steffen speaks with his brother-in-law Gregor living in the opposite end of the country. He too runs his own small business but in the IT sector and has faced the same recruitment issues as Steffen. After failing to find suitable candidates for job openings, Gregor began also to look in neighbouring countries outside of Germany when hiring new employees. After a slow start, Gregor eventually hired a young Spaniard almost nine months ago and he is very happy with his performance on the job.



**SECURING YOUNG TALENT,
A PROBLEM IN MANY
PLACES IN EUROPE**

A flood of questions race through Steffens mind as he thinks about trying to recruit someone from a different country.

- ▶ Will he have to organize a work permit for a foreign apprentice?
- ▶ What about the language barrier?
- ▶ How would a young foreigner fit in with the other 8 local colleagues on his work team?
- ▶ Where would he even begin to search for foreign candidates?

Steffen wonders if he could seek a similar solution for his apprenticeship recruitments. But Steffens brother-in-law works in southern Germany, and works in IT, which is a very different sector of the economy to Steffen.

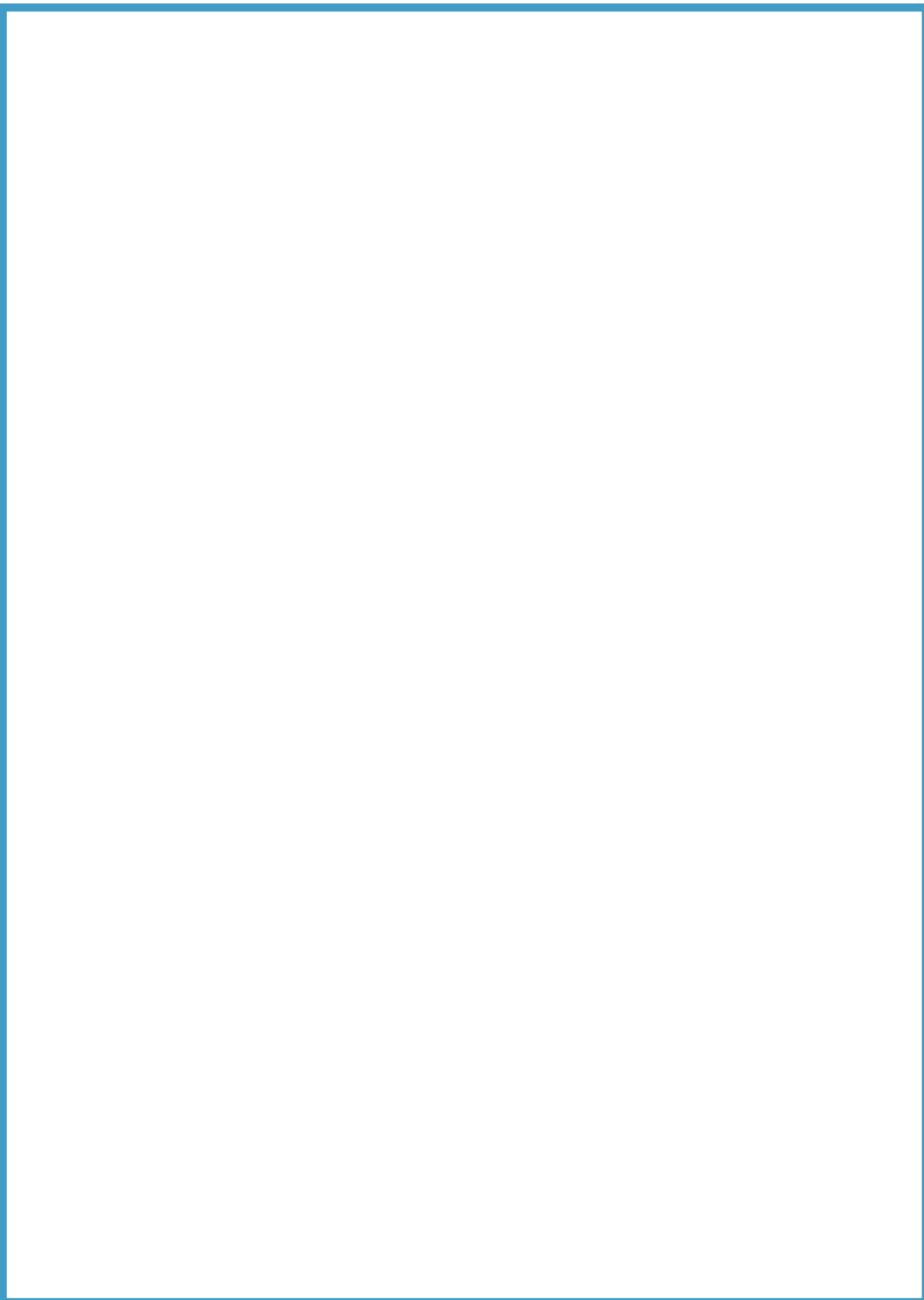
After speaking with the local government recruitment centre, Steffen logs on to the EURES homepage; a website established by the European Union to facilitate business owners who are in exactly this recruitment situation, just like Steffen. Here Stefan has access to thousands of CVs from enthusiastic young candidates from all over Europe. Through the standardized format of the CVs Steffen can check suitability and candidate language skills. Many of the questions that phased Steffen at the beginning of the recruitment are now beginning to be solved as he sees the wave of opportunity that has been opened to him and his business.

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RECOGNITION ENSURES QUALITY RECRUITMENT

In the modern economy with a diverse mobile workforce, how can employers ensure they recognise what qualifications are being presented to them by job applicants?

Outside a large building site in the downtown area the workers clamber down the scaffolding for an early morning tea break. Dozens of work-teams, a dozen different trades, speaking a dozen different languages. All working together as the building slowly begins to take shape.

The building site is overlooked by the city central hospital, and the elderly patients on the 5th floor. Each patient being cared for by a half dozen different nationalities, with a diverse range of professional experience and diverse qualifications. The medical and electronic equipment throughout the hospital is operated by the staff, but serviced by a company with young eager staff sent from a head office that sits in a different urban center, in a different country, far across the continent. This is modern Europe; a dynamic economy, embodied by a dynamic and mobile workforce, and the entire continent in a fixed state of constant transition.

In this dynamic economy, companies across Europe strive to remain competitive, and seek out high quality candidates to fill their vacancies. On the one hand, each business wishes to gain from the benefits that a diverse mobile



workforce can deliver, in order to compete in the global market.

- ▶ With such a range of diversity, and varied pool of talent, how can companies ensure they know who they are wishing to employ?
- ▶ What skills and experience do their potential employees possess?
- ▶ What are they actually capable of delivering for the business?
- ▶ With ever increasing competition between business, can companies maintain high standards of workmanship and guarantee quality to customers in such an environment?

The challenge for businesses and employers is immense.

DO WE REALLY HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE WALL COLLAPSES BEFORE WE REALISE THAT THE MASON WAS NOT PROPERLY QUALIFIED?

Since its inception, the European Union has been putting in place measures to tackle precisely these challenges in an effort to increase transparency across borders, and to allow for movement and mobility of the workforce. Ultimately, to make it easier for companies to do business across the entire continent.

The international recognition of qualifications seems to be already successful – at least at third level education. To the average employer, a foreign job candidate carrying a bachelor degree

is often comparable to a local candidate no matter what part of Europe he is located in. If employers wish to dig a little deeper, then the credit allocation within that degree can be scrutinized. It's all relatively straight forward.

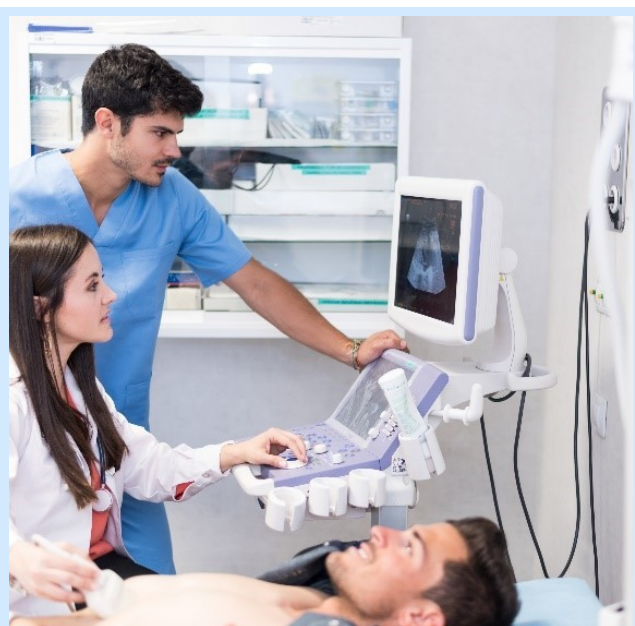
However, at the level of vocational training and apprenticeship, for most employers, the lines tend to become a little bit more blurred. At the vocational level, the only real qualification many employers can rely on is the practical proof of a job well done. But do we really have to wait until the wall collapses in the customers garden, before we realise that the mason was not properly qualified?

At this level too, transparency has become ever more extensive across borders. The establishment of National Qualification Framework now is ensuring that worker qualifications are based on the demonstrated knowledge and competence of the individual, rather than the assigned content of a learning program.

These frameworks set the context for comparing qualifications across different countries and allow for recognition of an individual's skills and competence with use of the so-called European Qualification framework. The complex process of achieving transparency in this area is ongoing and is delivering results for both employees and business, ensuring that companies can make sound decisions about the workers and staff they intend to employ.

AUTHOR:

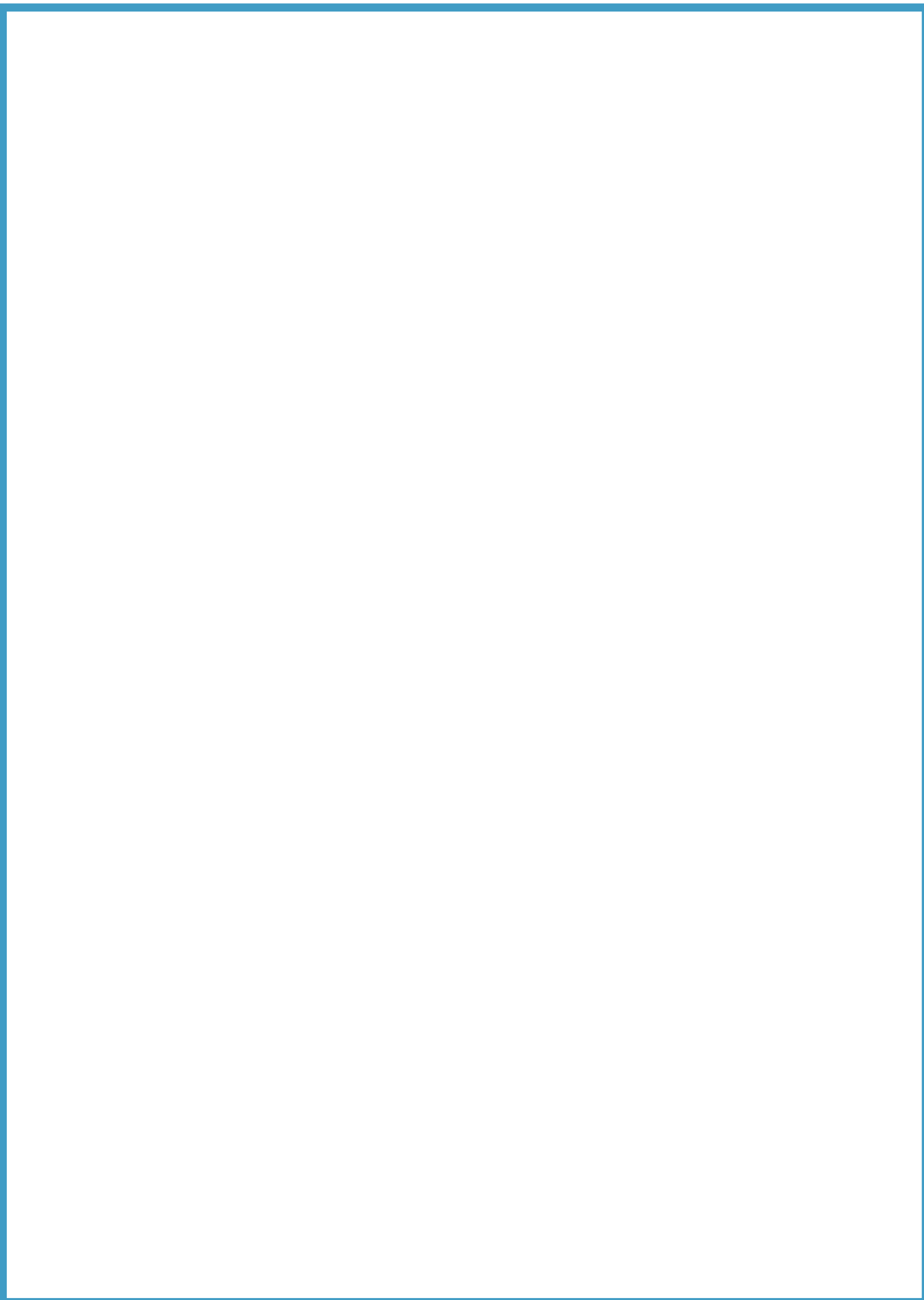
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**MODERN EUROPE IS A
DYNAMIC ECONOMY EMBODIED
BY A MOBILE WORKFORCE**



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*"A ONE OF THE
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CANNOT SEE AND TO
HELP THEM NAVIGATE
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DESTINATION."*

*John C. Maxwell,
American Author, Professional Speaker and Pastor*



THE DAILY LIFE OF A WBL MENTOR

The daily life of mentors consists of different activities, interactions and challenges, that encompass the experience that an apprentice will undertake as part of an apprenticeship placement.

What is expected of a mentor? What are the daily tasks and interactions a mentor faces? One may look at a mentors daily life in parallel to the daily life of a teacher in the classroom. Similarly, to a teacher in the classroom delivering their lesson, a mentor is passing on their advice at the workplace, based on the knowledge, skills, and competences gained earlier through both formal and informal learning experiences.

Donald Sadoway compares his work with batteries to his work with mentoring: "In a battery, I strive to maximize electrical potential. When mentoring, I strive to maximize human potential."

Thus, the daily routine of a mentor includes various activities, interactions and challenges. A mentor needs to identify who needs to be mentored, and how mentoring needs to be carried out. Following this analysis, a mentor organises, and at times also improvises, group or individual sessions or activities, which could take the form of a discussion or even a practical demonstration. The mentoring style or technique is one of the decisions the mentor needs to take, in order to select according to the identified needs.



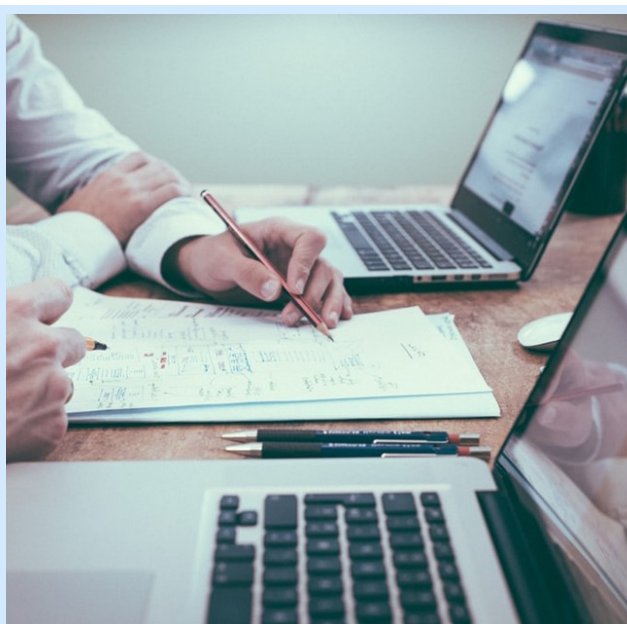
The target is to cultivate the mentor mentee relationship by providing the necessary guidance, preparation and resources which a job demands, and cater to the mentees' need for further insights and perspectives into their roles within the business sector they are working in, in order to progress and develop professionally and ultimately become independent professionals.

John C. Maxwell is quoted: "One of the greatest values of mentors is the ability to see ahead what others cannot see and to help them navigate a course to their destination."

Mentoring is not a one-size fits all role. All mentors are different, use different techniques and mentor different individuals of different talents.

AM I READY TO BE A MENTOR? DO I HAVE THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ATTITUDES?

The work tasks, commitments and duties of a mentor will vary according to the workplace needs and the individuals with who the mentor interacts. Each mentor will use different practices when interacting with mentees, and it is of utmost importance for a mentor to evaluate mentoring practices and identify those practices which will enhancing their abilities and skills to communicate with mentees in an efficient and effective manner, and which in turn will be reflected in the mentee improvement at work when the mentees are performing their duties.



**MENTORS ALSO NEED TO
FIND TIME FOR THEIR OWN
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Communication and a positive attitude are key to the mentor who is a reference point to the mentees along their work-based learning journey. The individuals a mentor interacts with, are of various levels in a business hierarchy, including top-management and the general administration staff. Different individuals would have different mentoring needs. It could be a group session. It is also important to note that a mentor may need to be mentor another mentor. Thus, the daily life of a mentor will vary from professional to another.

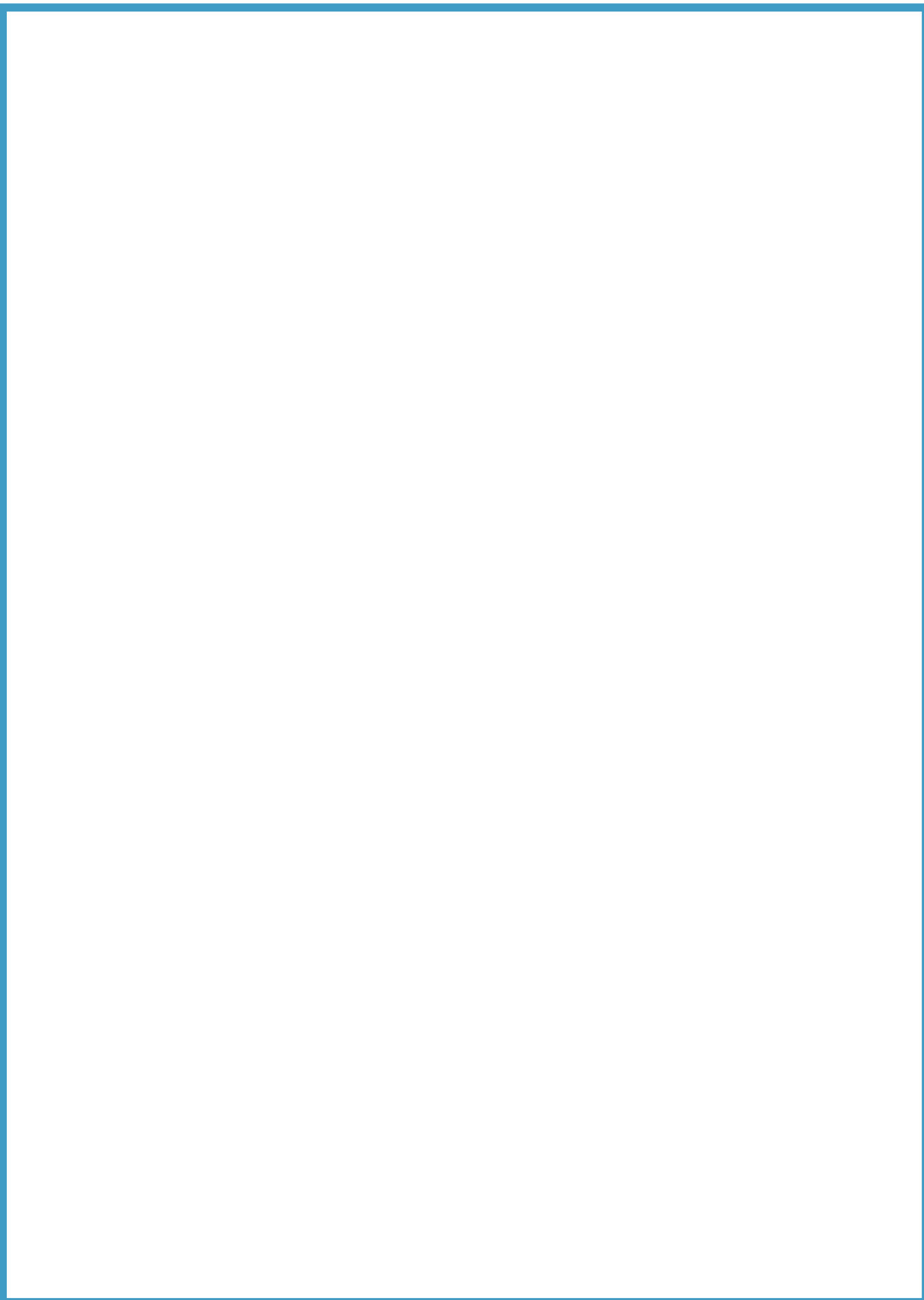
Finally, mentors also need to find time for their own development as they need to remain relevant and improve their own knowledge, skills and competences. Professional development is also part of the mentor's daily routine in the ever changing and constant evolution of today's jobs and workplaces. Thus, the mentor incorporates time to not only improve on their knowledge, skills and competences through reading and following courses, but also allows time for attending seminars and to receive mentoring themselves as part of their ongoing process of continuous professional development.

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***"A MENTOR
HAS A
CRUCIAL ROLE
IN PROVIDING
ENCOURAGEMENT,
SUPPORT AND
GUIDANCE."***

*Ramon Mangion,
Deputy Director-Apprenticeship & WBL, Malta
College of Arts, Science and Technology, 2020*



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A WBL MENTOR?

Think about your own knowledge, skills and personal qualities.

Do you think you have what it takes to be an effective apprenticeship mentor?

Many organisations face particular situations, whereby they would like to contribute to skills development in the labour market by offering work-based learning opportunities. On the other hand, this requires that they provide suitable mentors that can guide apprentices accordingly.

Hence the question is straightforward really "What does it take to be a mentor"?

Nonetheless, prospective mentors also pose a similar question, but having a self-orientation "Am I ready to be a mentor? Do I have the right, knowledge, skills, and attitudes?"

The process of mentoring is about providing mentees with effective transfer of knowledge, skills and experience which they can use to build their confidence. A mentor has a crucial role in providing encouragement, support and guidance. A good starting point, to better understand a good profile of a mentor would be to think about any of your positive experiences as a mentee.

What made these successful? For sure, you will think about the importance of a mentor having good communication skills. Such are essential



for the mentor to provide the necessary knowledge, skills and the sharing of experiences. You will also think of several other skills, such as time management, problem-solving, conflict management, relationship building and more. Ultimately it is worthwhile to note that a mentor may be fulfilling multiple roles or profiles.

In certain instances, the mentor is the teacher, and thus providing the necessary knowledge and skills through suitable pedagogical methods. In other cases, the mentor is acting as a motivator to give the required push for the apprentice to reach set goals.

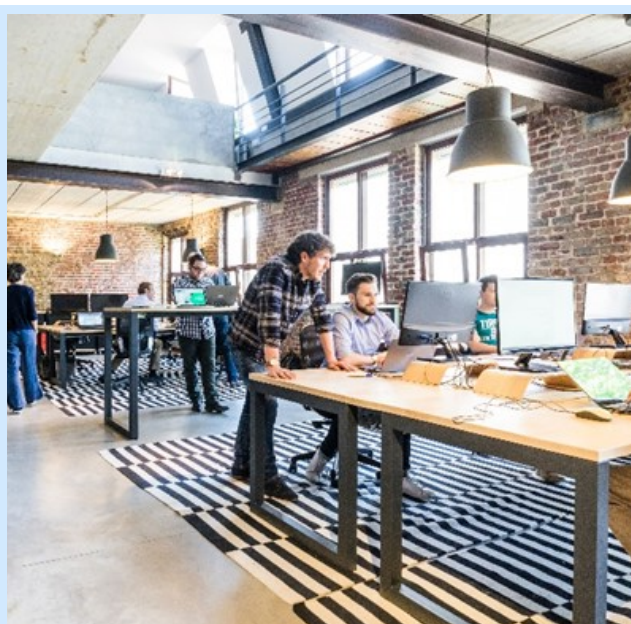
Although the mentor may not have training in counselling, this is another role which the mentor may be fulfilling.

AM I READY TO BE A MENTOR?

DO I HAVE THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ATTITUDES?

Ultimately the apprentice is also a human being with own problems, difficulties and issues that require guidance.

Lastly, it is essential to recognise that the mentor is also acting as a role model. The mentors actions need to inspire the mentee in various areas such as work ethics, training, efficiency, attitudes and much more.



**MODERN EUROPE IS A
DYNAMIC ECONOMY EMBODIED
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Nonetheless, this is a continuously evolving process of self-discovery. One should not be discouraged to develop own skills and build experience in such areas and such a process should not be a one-time event.

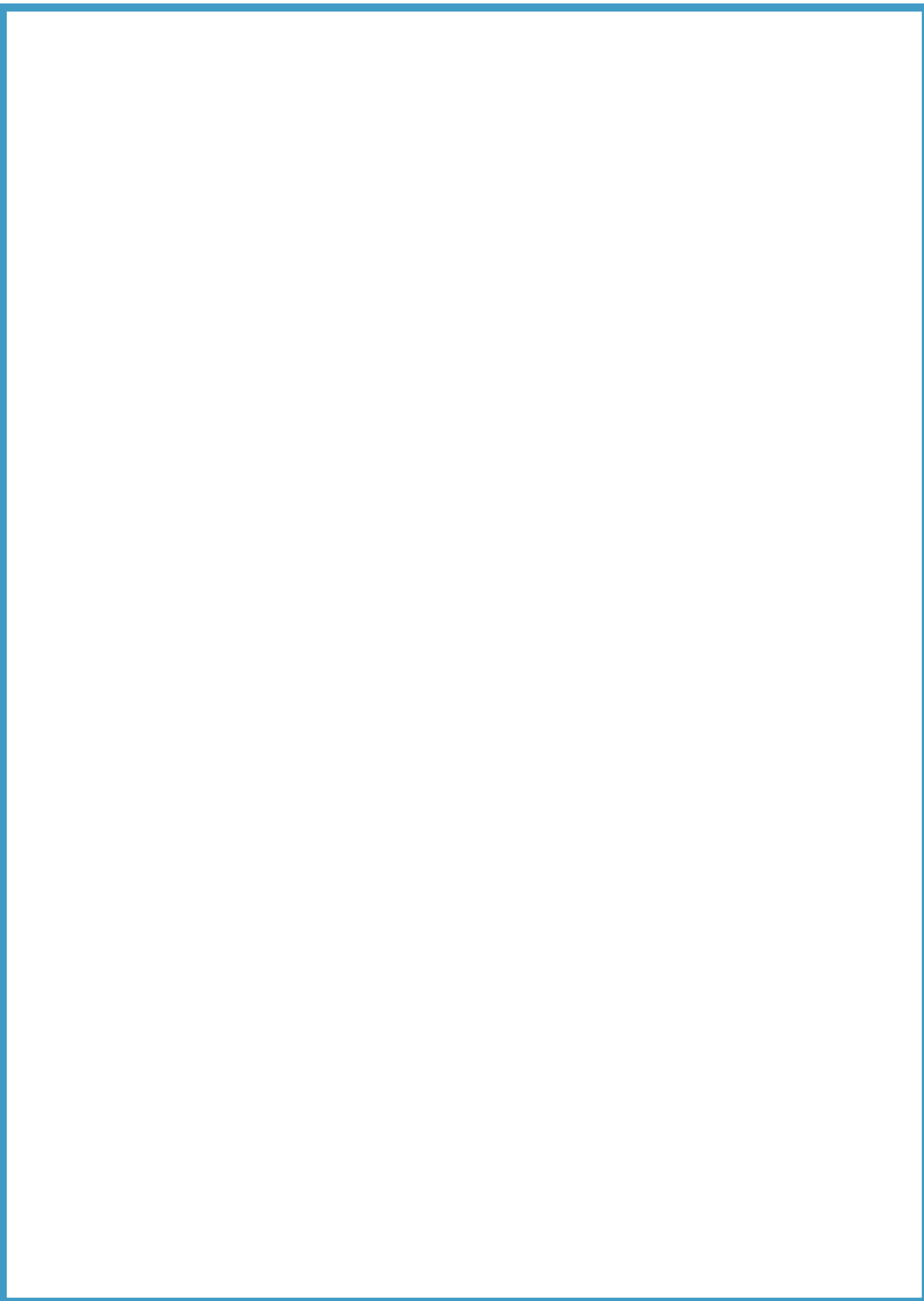
As the saying goes, 'Rome was not built in a day'. There is no perfect formula or ready-made solution for one to fit into the ideal profile of a mentor. However, one can try and do whatever possible to improve accordingly.

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***"ALL GENUINE
EDUCATION
COMES ABOUT
THROUGH
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[BUT] NOT ALL
EXPERIENCES
ARE GENUINELY
OR **EQUALLY**
EDUCATIVE."***

*John Dewey,
Psychologist, 1939*



PEDAGOGICAL OPTIONS FOR WBL IN COMPANIES

A key challenge for improving the quality of work-based learning is to find practical methods of translating experience into learning.

Within the workplace there many ways to increase the extent to which work is learning-rich. Many of these techniques are by now well understood from the theory of and research on work-based learning, such as encouraging people to reflect on their experience; guidance by other workers and by experts; using mentors; demonstration and practice; simulation; task rotation and task variety; project work; providing workers with problems to be solved (PBL – Problem Based Learning methodology); peer review and support, observations and shadowing. Some of these techniques can fairly readily be integrated with the normal cycle of work and production within the company.

Crucial to many is the role of workplace supervisors, and their realization that developing the knowledge, skills and expertise of workers / apprentices is part of their normal job. However, where this is not part of the workplace culture, developing work-based learning can prove difficult.

Many of the methods that can promote and improve the quality of work-based learning can be initiated by enterprises themselves, but this



is often harder for small and medium-sized enterprises. In these cases the assistance of external organizations can be very valuable. Such assistance can take the form of coaching and training for in-firm supervisors, and the development of simple competency lists and learning guides. In the dual systems in German-speaking countries, for example, employers' chambers provide practical assistance to companies to help them develop training plans for apprentices.

In the Netherlands, regional centers of expertise are responsible for coaching the in-company mentors who train apprentices. In Norway, local training offices, funded by the pooling of government training subsidies to small and medium-sized enterprises, play a similar role.

DO WE REALLY HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE WALL COLLAPSES BEFORE WE REALISE THAT THE MASON WAS NOT PROPERLY QUALIFIED?

With appropriate working conditions and industrial agreements, many of these roles are able to be performed by teachers in vocational schools and colleges, particularly when they are responsible for visiting and supervising students who are on work placements. The main supervising teacher's responsibilities include firstly, modeling quality teaching and learning practice, including a knowledge of

a) the subject content to be taught and how students learn;



**APPRENTICES CONTRIBUTE
TO REAL PROJECTS
ALMOST FROM DAY ONE**

b) effective planning, programming and student assessment; and

c) effective interpersonal and communication skills.

Secondly, developing a comprehensive understanding of the provider's specific professional experience requirements in order to guide the planning of learning opportunities appropriate to the developmental level of the apprentices.

The opportunity to learn at work is highly dependent on the day-to-day scheduling of normal work tasks and the cycle of production over the day, week and year. Where the nature of an enterprise's products and services limits the opportunities to develop knowledge and skills that are part of a formal training curriculum, cooperative arrangements between enterprises, or between enterprises and other learning venues, can be put in place to ensure that broad-based learning takes place.

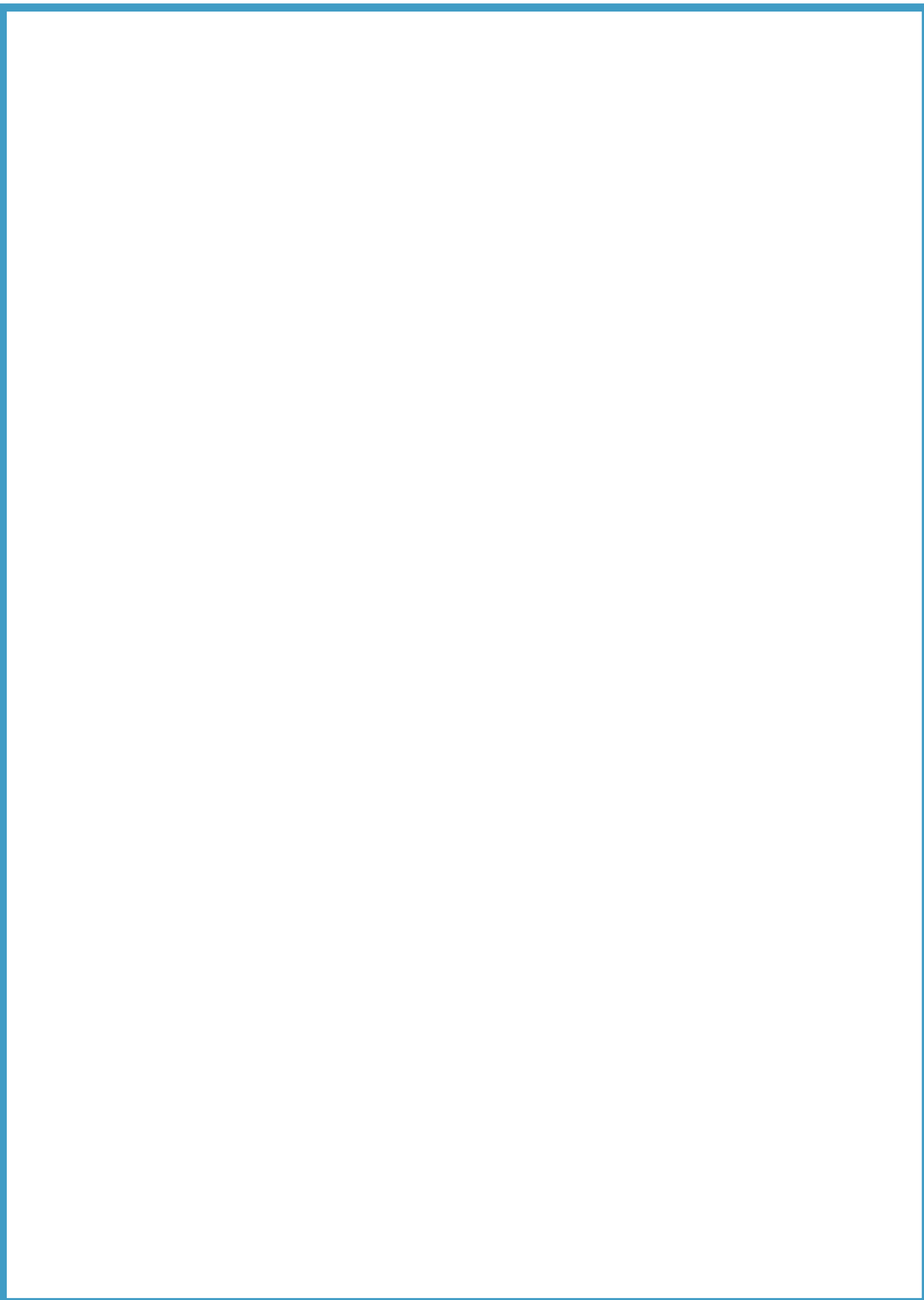
The regional centers in the Netherlands and in Norway referred to above are an example of such mechanisms, allowing apprentices whose employer cannot provide particular forms of experience to spend time in other firms to compensate. The interfirm training centers that are commonly found as part of the German dual system are another example, although in these cases training in workshops or similar venues is often used as a substitute for work-based learning.

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MENTOR-TRAINING**



***"MENTORING IS
A BRAIN TO PICK,
AN EAR TO LISTEN,
AND
A PUSH
IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION ."***

*John C. Crosby,
American Politician, 1939*



COUNSELLING AND MONITORING SESSIONS

Think about your own knowledge, skills and personal qualities. Do you think you have what it takes to be an effective apprenticeship mentor?

Suppose your boss has asked you to be a Mentor for a colleague or a group of colleagues at your place of work. This is the first time you have been asked to carry out such a task. You have no teaching experience, but you have on the job experience.

- ▶ How do you go about mentoring your colleagues?
- ▶ Where do you start?
- ▶ What methods do you choose and use to mentor those colleagues assigned to you?

Building strong and firm relationships is the key to conducting mentoring efficiently and effectively. To cultivate such relationships, it is essential to ask yourself a few basic questions: Who am I mentoring? Why does this person need mentoring? What are the aims/goals of this mentoring? How do I prepare myself to mentor? How will I mentor? Answering these questions will provide a starting point to conducting mentoring.

- ▶ Who am I mentoring?

It is important for the Mentor to know who the person being mentored is. The mentee assigned



could be a new colleague, or a colleague who is having difficulty with a task or needs help with an element or area in which the Mentor assigned is considered to be an expert, or at least is known to have knowledge of.

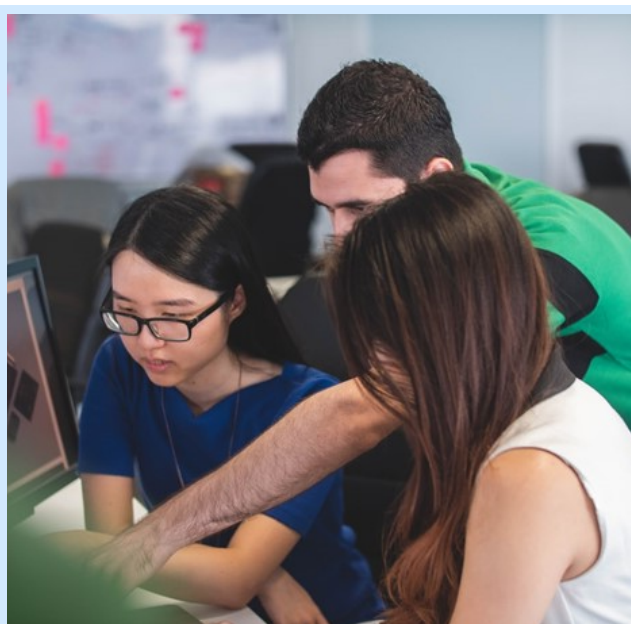
Each Mentee has a different reason to be mentored, and thus each individual also has a different starting point in the mentoring process. For example, a new colleague will need to become familiar with a company's structure and mode of operating, whereas an individual who has been working at the company for a while would already have such knowledge. A Mentor would thus seek such information regarding the mentee or mentees assigned from whoever is commissioning the mentoring. Should no information be given about the individual or individuals being mentored prior to commencement of the mentoring, it is the

BUILDING STRONG AND FIRM RELATIONSHIPS IS THE KEY TO CONDUCTING MENTORING EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY.

Mentor's responsibility to get to know who they are mentoring and use this information as foundation for building a strong, trustful and fruitful Mentor-Mentee relationship.

- ▶ Why does this person need mentoring?
- ▶ What are the aims/goals of this mentoring?
How will I mentor?

It is equally important for the Mentor and the Mentee to understand the reason, the aims, and the goals of the Mentoring, as it is only with these in mind that the Mentor can focus the



MENTORS NEED TO SELECT THE APPROPRIATE METHODS, MODELS AND TECHNIQUES TO ACHIEVE GOALS.

mentoring and guide the mentees through their mentoring journey, and similarly only with these in mind can the mentee make the most of this guidance through their journey to achieving their own goals. The relationship of the Mentor and whoever is commissioning the mentoring is understanding the aims and goals to be kept in mind when mentoring. Altogether, this information will help the mentor in selecting appropriate mentoring methods, models, and techniques for achieving the aims and goals set. Such methods, models and techniques could also be discussed prior to the actual mentoring, for the Mentor to be able to prepare for the mentoring.

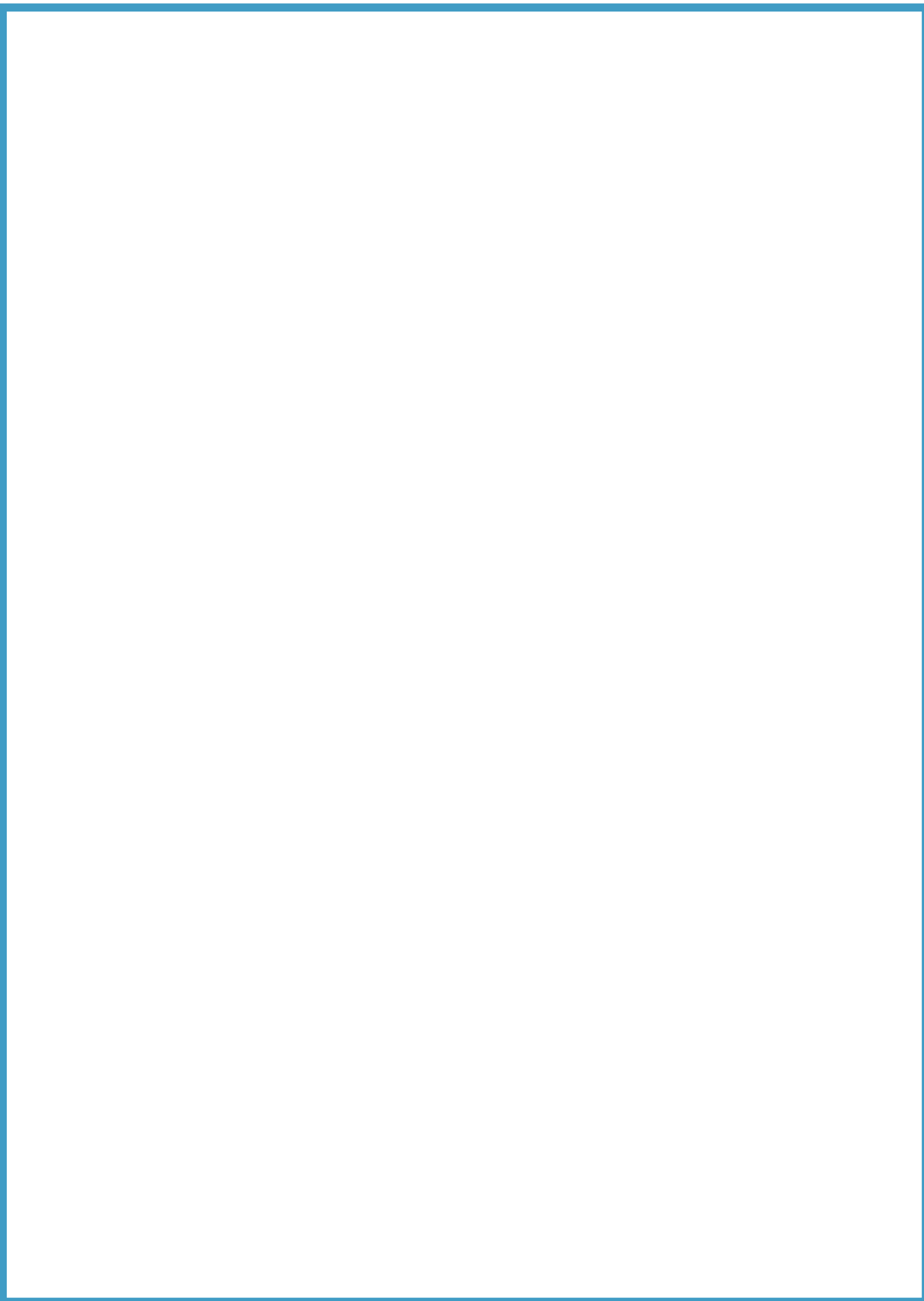
Finally, it is important to keep in mind that each relationship is to be sustained and maintained. The Mentor is responsible for developing the potential of the mentee. Plutarch (a Greek biographer and essayist) wrote that 'The mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting.' It is in this context that the mentor is to carry out mentoring.

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***"THE DELICATE
BALANCE OF
MENTORING
SOMEONE IS NOT
CREATING THEM IN
YOUR OWN IMAGE, BUT
GIVING THEM THE
OPPORTUNITY TO
CREATE
THEMSELVES."***

*Steven Spielberg,
Film Director*



IMPORTANT CORE TASKS OF WBL MENTORS

Good mentors must know the basics of pedagogics and psychology to know how to communicate with the students either verbally or nonverbally.

To be a mentor you firstly need to have students to mentor. If you have problems to persuade them to do the WBL in your company, you must think of ways to promote the company. One of the options is to promote the company in the school. In one of those kinds of events in Slovenia, one of the participants presenting was Sij Acroni, a Steel & Steel Product Company. They are dealing with heavy industry, so the jobs in this company are labelled as heavy and dirty. Consequently, it is difficult for them to get new workers and WBL-students, so they must think of interesting presentations to get attention. Their presentation was very different than the others.

The presenter was their mentor. He was introduced as the most popular mentor in the company. He came dressed in working clothes and brought a lot of equipment along. He told the students how well the owners care for the employees and to prove that he told them that the workers are wearing clothes made by the same material as the F1 drivers.

He then went even further and proved the resistance and good quality of the suit by trying



to cut it with a knife, burn it, and pouring liquid nitrogen on it. He talked about his job with such a passion that everyone in the classroom listened to him. To get the attention of a few teenagers is difficult but to get the attention of all of them attending it is almost impossible. He managed to do exactly that.

Usually, Sij Acroni is lucky to get one WBL student per promotion. This time they got so many applications that they had to reject some of the students. The students knew that they would not get just a "cool" mentor but also passionate and motivated one, with whom they will be able to identify with.

The motivation and passion are very good foundations for a good start and getting attention but are not the only tasks of WBL mentors.

A CORE TASK OF WBL MENTORS IS ALSO THE FAMILIARITY WITH THE LEGISLATION WHICH COVERS THE WBL AREA.

Good mentors must know the basics of pedagogics and psychology to know how to communicate with the students either verbally or nonverbally. They must be very good listeners and know how properly react in conflict situations. They must be aware that they are mentoring young adults who are thinking, functioning and reacting differently than adults. They need to be able to identify with the students. It is also important for them to know the basics of teaching techniques. They need to know how to understandably, coherently and succinctly explain, how to put words into



SIJ APPRENTICES

practice and how to ask questions and give feedback.

A core task of WBL mentors is also the familiarity with the legislation which covers the WBL area. Since the students are mostly minors that means that they have special rights and responsibilities which mentors should know about, respect and follow.

The mentors should also take care of students' documentation which will be part of their portfolio. They should check it regularly and if necessary, tell the students to rewrite or complete the documentation. They must have in mind that these documents will help students in the future as a reflection of their work when they will be applying for jobs. They will be able to prove what competencies they acquired during the WBL.

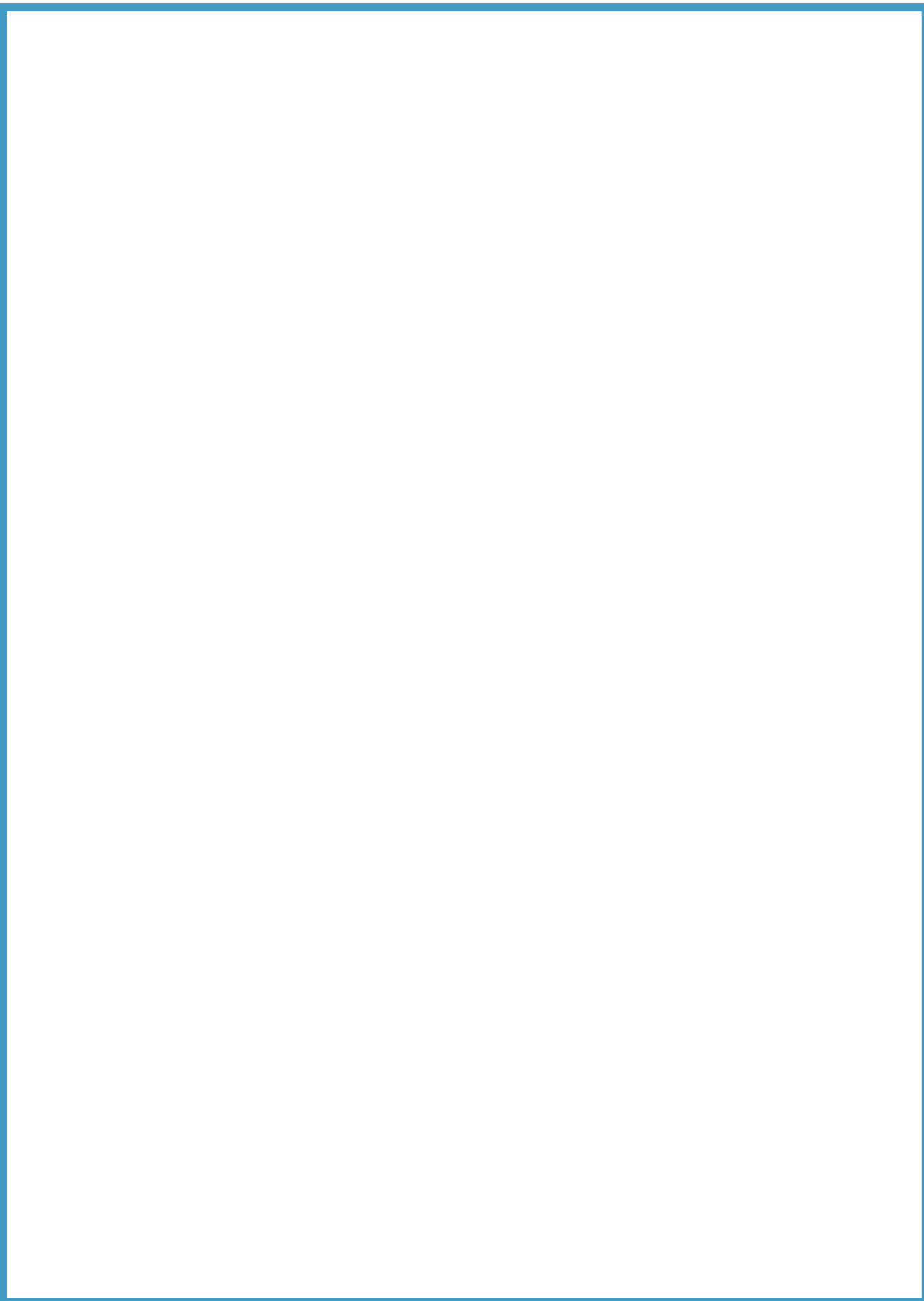
The mentors are a very important persons for students in the years of WBL in the company. They are the ones who will spend a lot of time with students, so it is very important to be a reliable and approachable person. And finally, they should always have in mind that they in the relationship with students can be both – role models and at the same time a father/mother figure.

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***"DIVERSITY
MANAGEMENT
AS
COMPETENCE
AND
NECESSARY
VALUE."***

*Jorge Rodríguez,
Human Resources director
of FM Logistic Ibérica, 2016*

HUMANIZING COMPANIES THROUGH DIVERSITY

The motivations and professional interests do not depend on the age but of the profile, lifestyle and professional moment and the competences of each person.

For the first time in the modern age, we have five generations present in the workplace. From the Traditionalists born before 1945 all the way up until Gen Z, the generational diversity present in most companies can create a wide range of challenges.

Having a multigenerational workforce can, and should, be a distinct advantage for companies today; the wide range of ideas and knowledge from a broad group of people can actually serve the company well.

The truth is that the workforce of the future will be composed of the Millennial and the Z generations, but to achieve this, there is a transition that is taking place today. The oldest group and, therefore, with more experience, coexists with the newest younger workers. The good harmony between each other is a challenge for the Human Resources department of the companies, which sees how their policies and their organizational structures are changing, but also the way of working, allowing teleworking and flexibility to gain weight in the companies.



Thus, people managers must ensure that this coexistence is not only fluid, but enriching. All employee can contribute with knowledge and new points of view that have a positive and productive impact on organizations. Therefore, Human Resources managers should not differentiate between younger and senior generations, but between the most appropriate professionals for certain tasks / objectives, regardless of age. Because neither the youngest have a talent only for being, nor the older ones stop having it because of their age. Age is not a professional factor, it is a personal circumstance, and it is not necessary to value the years but the competences.

PROFESSIONS CHANGE BUT COMPETENCIES REMAIN. IT IS NOT ABOUT LEARNING PROFESSIONS BUT ABOUT LEARNING TO BE PROFESSIONAL.

The study on the future employment of the World Economic Forum predicts that millions of jobs will be lost before 2020, since artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology and other socio-economic factors replace the need for human workers.

In recent years, many jobs that require only mathematical skills have been automated (such as banking workers).

On the other side, roles that especially require social skills tend to be underpaid, since the number of potential workers is very large, for

example, child care workers.

But workers who successfully combine mathematical and interpersonal skills in knowledge-based economies of the future will find many rewarding and lucrative opportunities.

In short, professions change but competencies remain. In a global, digital and changing world, it is no longer about learning professions but about learning to be professional.

Therefore, the transition to a more technological future in companies depends on a change in the culture of organizations, a competence that, to a large extent, must be led by the Human Resources department. "The business culture is going to turn towards people instead of business. Companies will have to incorporate technology, but they will also have to increase the degree of humanity" (Jaume Gurt, Organization and People Development Director of Schibsted Spain, owner group of InfoJobs and Fotocasa portals).



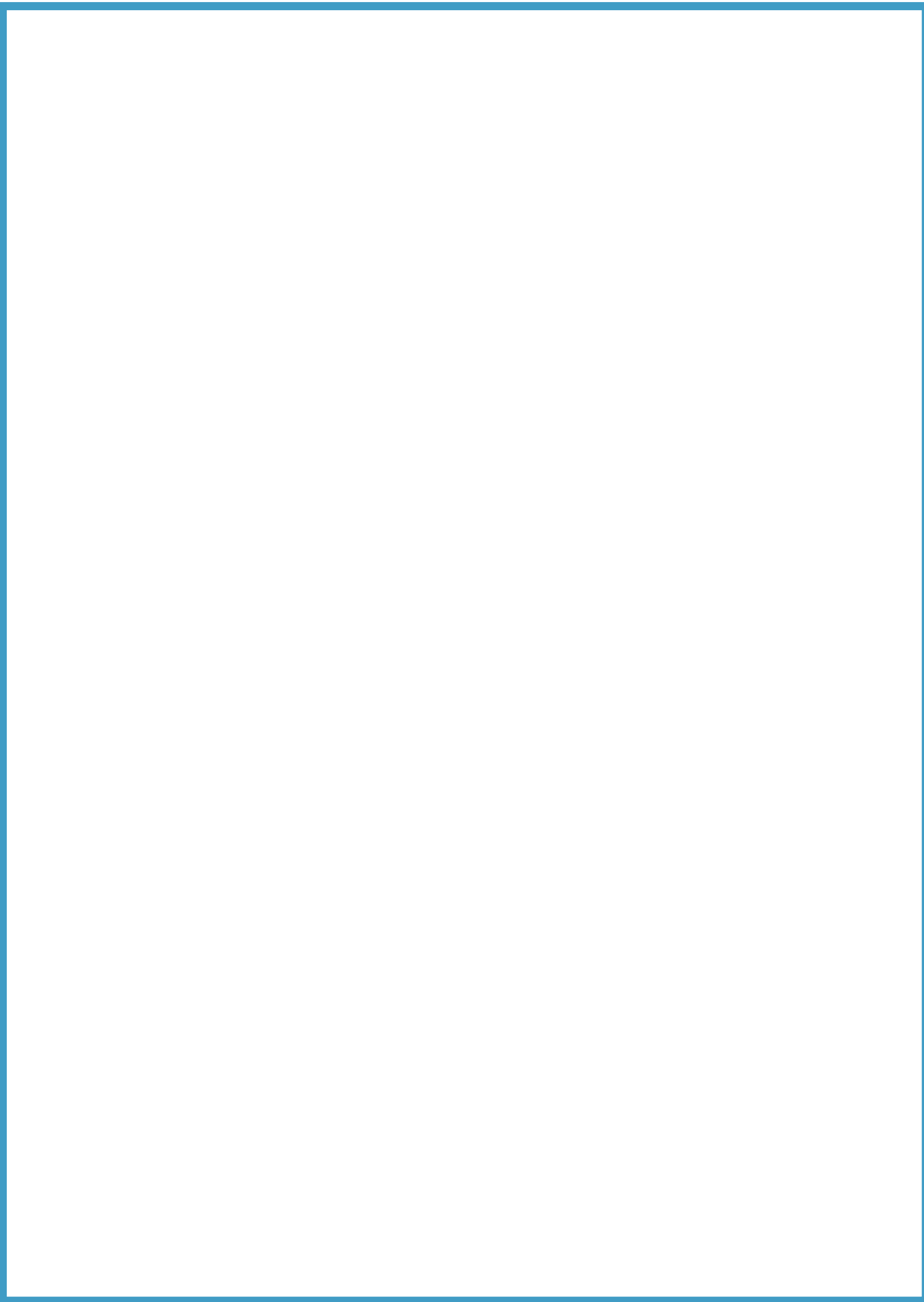
**GENERATIONAL DIVERSITY
AS A COMPETITIVE FACTOR
OF A COMPANY.**

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MOTIVATING THE NEW GENERATION EMPLOYEE

The motivations and professional interests do not depend on the age but of the profile, lifestyle and professional moment and the competences of each person.

The knowledge-based economy's workforce is comprised of five generations, each with distinct qualities that can be profoundly felt in the workplace. As may know well know, some staff (especially workers among the Y and Z generations) often aren't motivated by traditional compensation and benefit perks that more easily secured the loyalty of prior generations (baby boomers). Instead, they seek organizations that champion values they hold dear, including sustainable practices, flexible work, and employee development opportunities.

Employees of the future motivation is the key to creating long term successful companies. Here are some tips (no magic bullets!) that can help any manager to develop and motivate the employees:

1) Engage them. Especially for the Y and Z generations employees, professional development goes hand in hand with engagement. They are not interested in merely punching the clock at the office or putting in their time until retirement. If they do not find their work meaningful, they will have no qualms about walking out of the door.



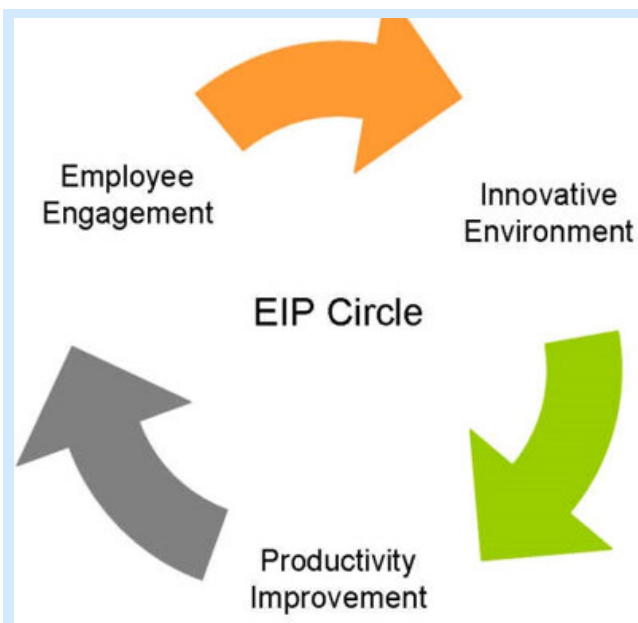
2) Play to their strengths. It's important to treat them as individuals, especially during the goal-setting and performance appraisal process. Ask each person in the company how he/she works best, what workplace benefits he/she values most, and what his/her broader career goals are. Build employee goals around these stated strengths, interests, and preferences.

3) Understand that everyone is motivated differently. Managers often apply the same motivational programs, ideas and processes across the board to the people that work for them. Managers need to understand that all people have different motivational profiles. By tapping into the individual needs of the employees you can maximize the effectiveness of their work.

GIVE ALL EMPLOYEES AN OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN A VARIETY OF PROJECT TEAMS, AND PROVIDE THEM LEADERSHIP ROLES WITHIN THESE GROUPS.

4) People don't always know what is motivating to them. It is important to understand that not everyone knows what really motivates them. Don't just ask employees but get to understand what drives them, find out each person's personality and use data to find out the underlying motivators for each employee.

5) Create an environment of collaboration. Teams in general can be a practical vehicle to increase collaboration and build relationships among the different generations in your workforce. Before jumping into the work at



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS THE EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT TO THE ORGANISATION AND ITS GOALS

hand, allow at least one team meeting for members to get to know each other and the various work styles represented.

6) Provide mentorship opportunities. Offer an open program where employees can apply to be mentors or mentees based on the skills or abilities they can impart and the knowledge they wish to gain. Then match employees based on these needs. Mentoring relationships can be traditional (an older worker teaching a younger employee), reverse (a younger employee teaching an older one), or group (small pods of employees who want to learn various skills from each other).

7) Champion learning and career growth. Involve employees in their own learning and development plan from their first day on the job. Ensure all employees are aware of the opportunities available to them to grow their careers within your organization.

8) Take the time to focus on building relationships. Managers don't often see the benefit of casual conversation, birthday celebrations, team sports leagues, team building events.... These types of things contribute to a more positive work environment and create opportunities for team members to bond.

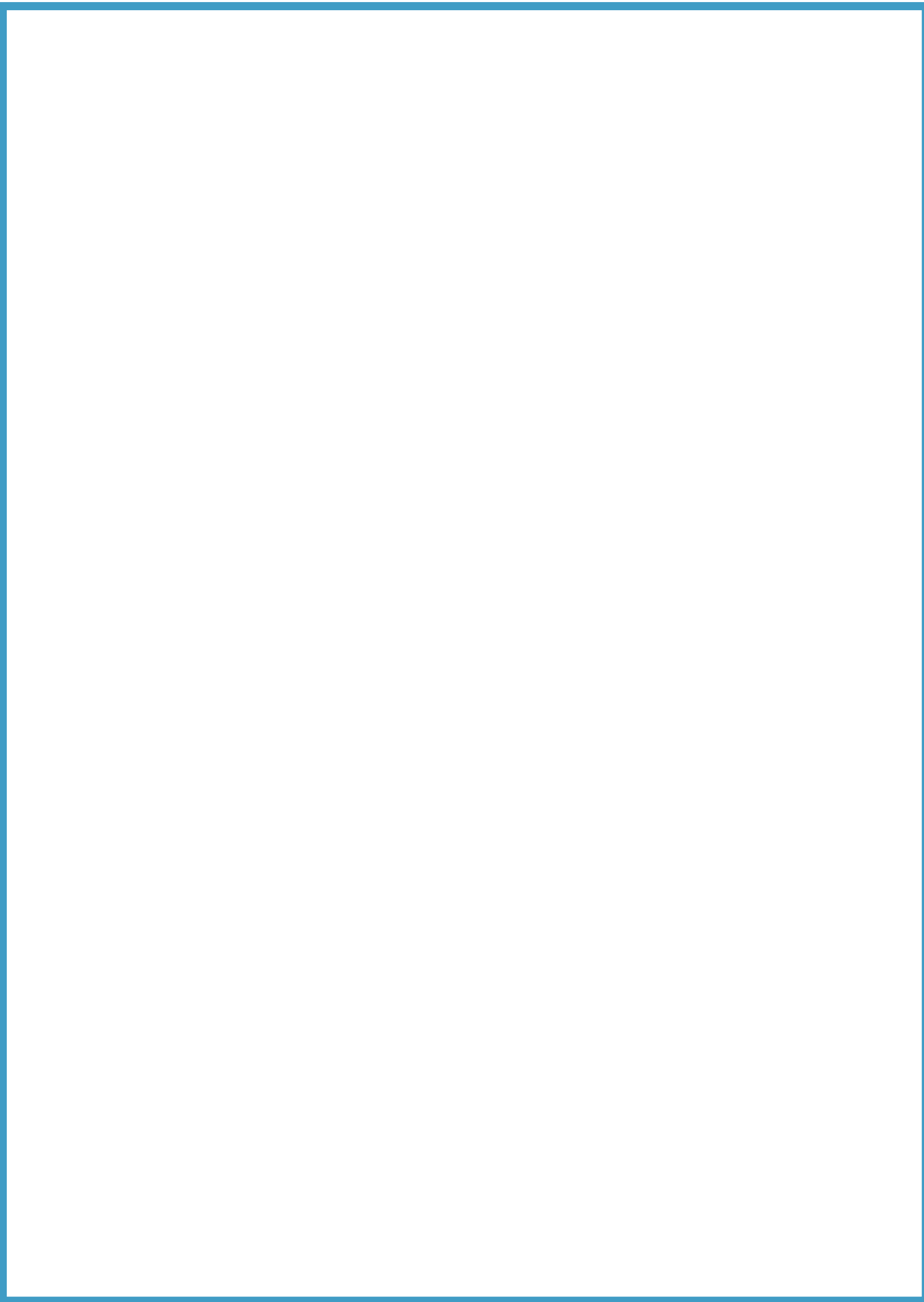
9) Recognize sincerely and in a timely manner. People need more positive reinforcement that is both sincere and timely. As a manager, you need to search for things that the employees are doing and recognize them right away.

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*Jorge Rodríguez,
Human Resources director
of FM Logistic Ibérica, 2016*

ARE YOU READY FOR GENERATION ALPHA?

A new generation will soon enter our workforce. These children grow up in a rapidly changing, digitalised world. They are the future, but are we prepared to identify the future talents?

Have you ever thought of what you can actively do to attract future apprentices and employees in 5-10 years time? Companies and vocational schools currently are dealing with the generations Y and Z - the ones that were born in the 80s and early 90s and the others who were born approximately in the mid-90s till early 2000s. We already live in fast changing times where it seems hard to predict what will be in five years time. Scholars and future experts are already trying to predict possible attributes of this new generation, even having given it a name: The generation Alpha.

The oldest representatives of this new generation are currently only ten years old - these are the ones born with smartphones, Netflix and high-speed mobile internet. In order to attract generation alpha, three things seem to be key:

First we need to develop an understanding of possible key features of this generation Alpha. What will be their main values and expectations towards life and work? Generation Alpha is expected to be much more immersed in technology than previous generations. They



might have a digital footprint before they are born and they will grow up surrounded by all sorts of AI-driven digital technologies such as smart devices, internet of things, autonomous vehicles and virtual and augmented reality applications. They will expect these technologies to provide an excellent and seamless user experience – applications and devices that just work.

This new generation will also learn differently than we did - in more visual and more interactive ways accessing new forms of learning and interaction that are often stated as 21st century skills or the 4 Cs. Mobile devices like iPads will definitely play a central role in learning and cooperation.

PUT A FUTURE-PROOF TALENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN PLACE NOW TO LIVE UP TO GENERATION ALPHA'S FUTURE EXPECTATIONS WHEN THE TIME HAS COME.

The Alphas will have more inclusive and sustainable attitudes and worldviews. They grow up with a changed climate full of natural disasters and extremes facing the constant threat of ecological and social collapse. At the same time they see young people from generations Z demonstrating for radical changes and requesting clear and immediate action.

Secondly, we need to adjust our employer branding strategy taking into consideration what we found out in the first step. Employer Value propositions will change. This generation has



**GENERATION ALPHA SEEMS TO
PREPARE FROM EARLY AGE ON.**

different expectations towards life and work. Their inclusive and ecological thinking demands employers that live diversity and equity and have a strong corporate sustainability strategy and reputation in place. As heavy tech-users, they will also expect a seamless integration of easy-to-use (digital) technologies in their working and learning environments.

Finally it seems necessary now to put a future-proof talent management system (TMS) in place which enables the whole organisation to launch necessary changes regarding strategy, culture and HR-processes for being capable to live up to generation Alpha's future expectations when the time has come. In the near future, a modern TMS will allow your organisation to better attract and identify the "right Alphas" and at the same time offer them a working and development environment that should trigger high performance and long-lasting professional ties.

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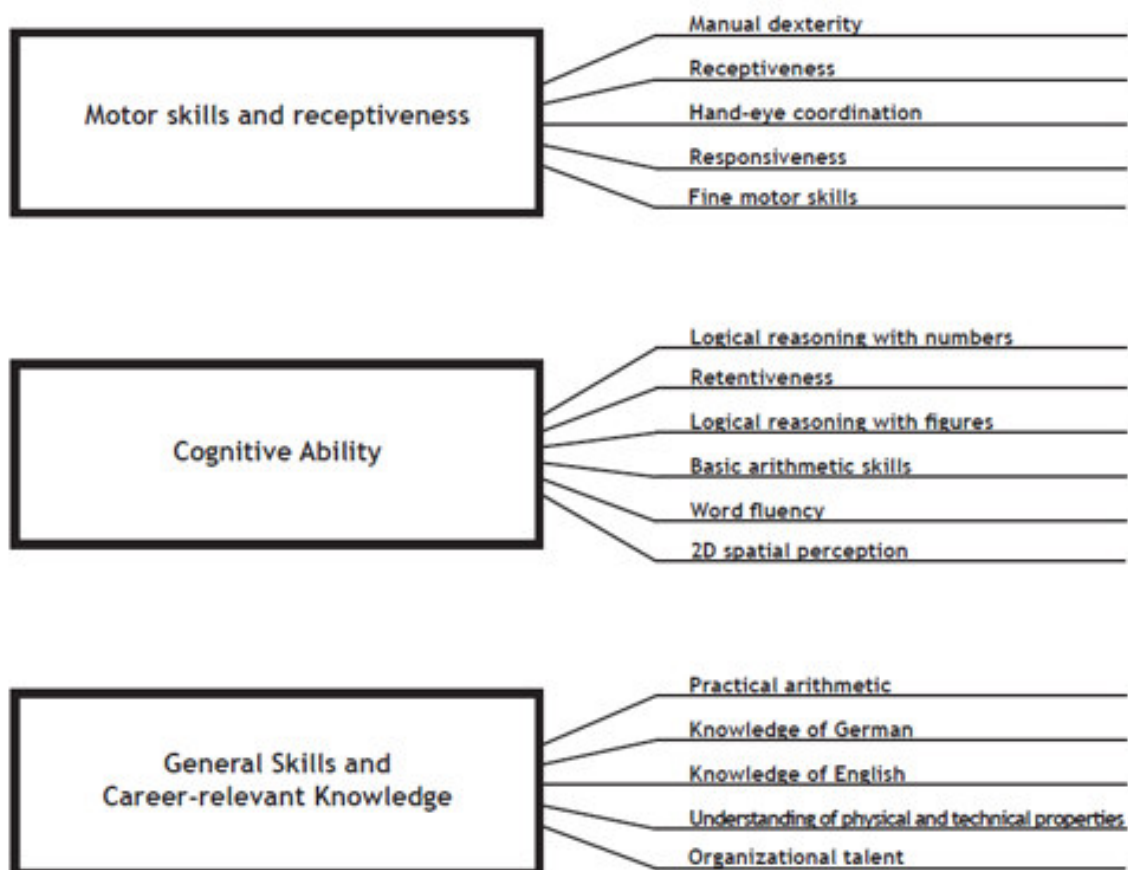
TALENT CENTER



The resulting information is collected and analysed:

- Personal interests
- Motor skills and receptiveness
- Cognitive abilities
- General skills and career-relevant knowledge

The results, a personalised Talentreport, make the professional orientation of the student easier. The profile not only lists potentials and strengths, but also recommends careers with various educational paths.]



***"EMBRACE
BRAIN CIRCULATION
AND START
FOCUSING ON
LABOUR MOBILITY
BETWEEN
EU COUNTRIES."***

*Yvonne van Hest,
Program Director Labour Market Development
Brainport Development, 2015*



GAINING INTERNATIONAL EXPERTISE THROUGH WBL

Nothing comes without a price. But, is it possible to learn how companies of a similar trade are organising their key processes in other countries without spending too much resources?

The quick answer is simple: yes, of course! One way would be to get informed online or to join a specific seminar that introduces international business strategies to the learners. However, if you are working in a small, locally active company, this may not be available for your particular trade. Or maybe your team is very small and it is not viable to spend days away from work. There is a solution and following the trend of this magazine it is all about work-based learning, naturally.

WBL is a great way to train new employees on the job and to obtain new talents. The exciting international component is added as soon as you start thinking outside the box and looking beyond the traditional limitations of doing things the way they were done since forever. An accelerator of this process is learning from peers who have a different understanding of "tradition" as their key processes have evolved in a different environment as yours. Their experiences are as much valid as yours and it is not necessary to overwrite your standards. However, maybe some elements could be very beneficial and get your company to the next level! How could you tap into this potential?



The lowest threshold approach is to offer WBL in your company and to reach out to international trainees as well as to national ones! There are networks and platforms available online for free and you can join them to find suitable personnel in your professional field, for example on EURES - the European Job Mobility Portal.

Hosting a foreign trainee in your company for a short period guarantees you to experience new challenges and to learn how the job is done in the home country of your mentee. It is recommended that you check the status of the vocational education training of your trainee to make sure they are competent - for example by checking their ECVET credits and current EQF level. This gives you transparent information on how much autonomy you can expect and which kinds of tasks your trainee is able to carry out.

THE BENEFITS OF INTERNSHIPS ABROAD ARE MULTILAYERED AND APPLY TO INDIVIDUALS AS WELL AS THE COMPANY ITSELF.

There is yet another way to enhance your business by exploiting techniques from abroad. You can choose to send your trainees abroad for a limited period of time to work in their trade in another EU country. They will network with the hosting company and learn how key processes and procedures are handled there. From professional developments to customer support to local products and more - your trainees will have a lot to tell you. In many cases, a beneficial side effect is that your trainees are more trained in the foreign language spoken in the host country and show massive personal



**EUROPE HAS A LOT TO OFFER AND IT IS
AS DIVERSE AS IT IS COLOFUL.
TAP INTO THE POTENTIAL!**

and professional growth upon their return.

The Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission co-funds internships abroad just like this - they call it "mobilities". This programme is available for VET learners in Europe and the EU provides lump sums for travel and accommodation. You can either apply yourself for a mobility project or you can do a quick internet research if there are any organisations in your region that are specialised on sending and receiving interns from abroad via the Erasmus+ programme.

There are also many accompanying documents and guidelines that guide you, your trainees and your potential host companies through the process.

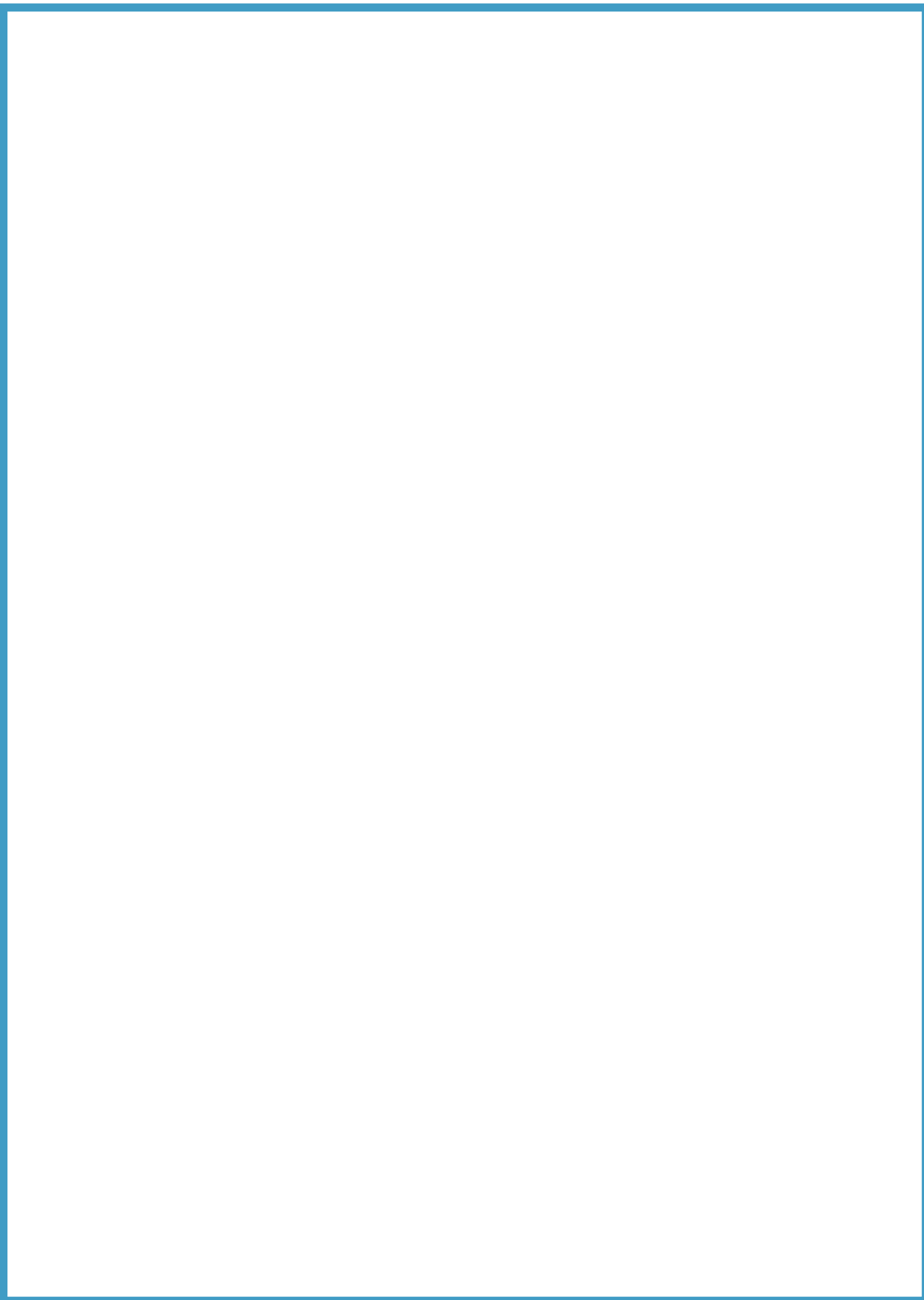
Opening your company to international guests or sending your trainees abroad may seem like a huge step at the beginning. However, the benefits are multilayered and depend highly on the persons involved. Maybe this experience will help you shine in contrast to your local rivals, maybe your trainees and employees come back more motivated than ever or maybe, just maybe, a sustainable network collaboration is formed with the hosting company abroad that enables mutual exchange, support and appreciation.

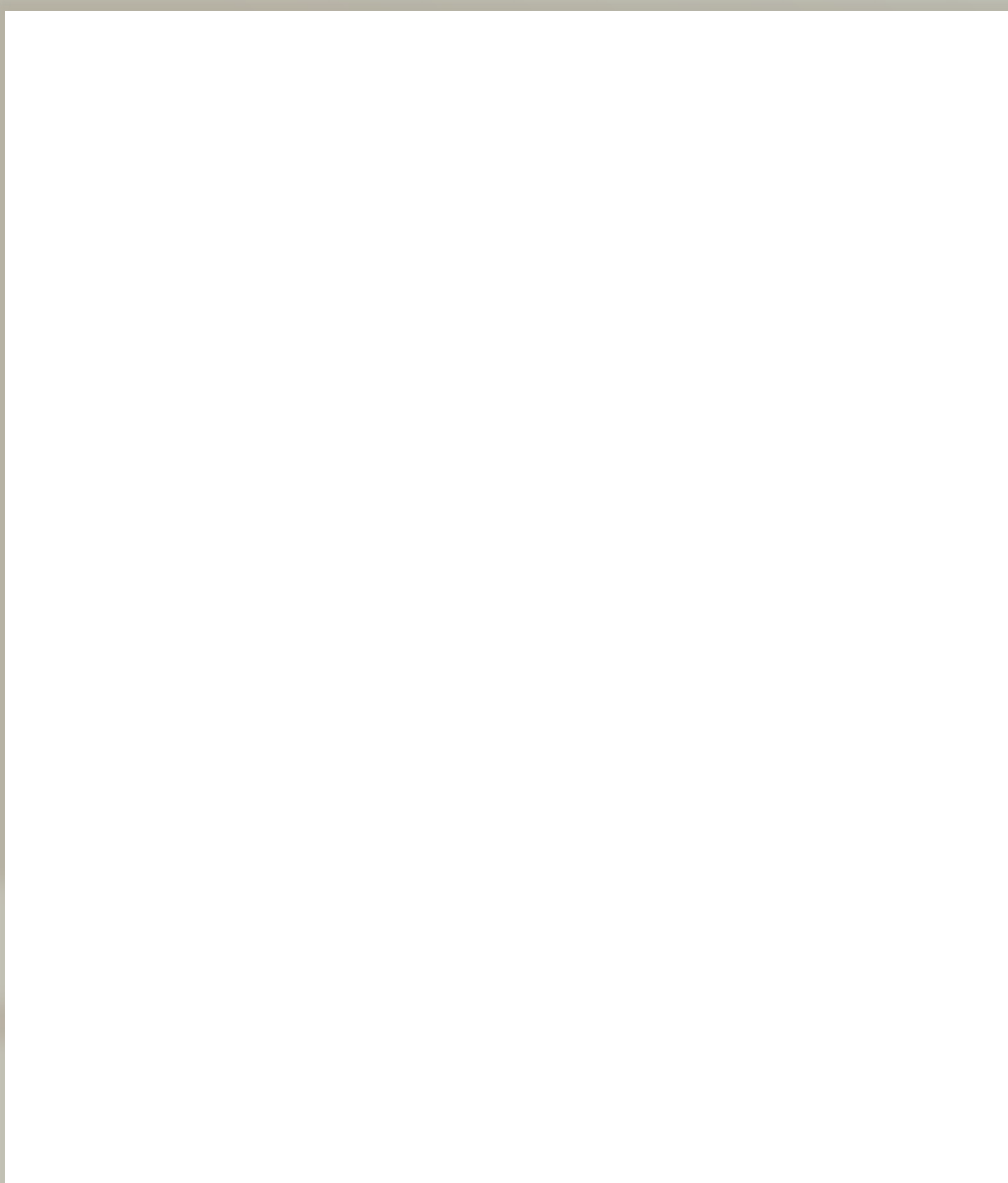
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