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Ball Packaging - How we promote intercultural understanding

Overcoming borders: More understanding, better co-operation

The fact that Brits have a different attitude towards football than Poles and that the Dutch produce cheese in a different way than the French is well known among our employees. However, where are cultural differences in our professional everyday life? Do Germans have a different way of working than Serbs? In our intercultural training courses organized in Bonn, employees will find answers to these kinds of questions.

We started with our intercultural training courses in 2005. In the beginning, the courses were limited to the plant managers, but after having had very valuable experience we decided to focus on a broader target group.

"It is an excellent training course that should be mandatory from a certain level of management upward", says Gerrit Heske, Chief Executive Officer of Ball Packaging Europe.

The courses are offered three times annually for managers and employees involved in our international business. Before the training course, participants have to fill out a questionnaire.

"I have to know where the people come from and why they attend the training course. Then I will tailor the program to their needs", explains Dr Hans-Jörg Keller. He has designed the training courses for intercultural co-operation in everyday work-life in Ball Packaging Europe. It is the goal of the training course to increase mutual understanding and improve co-operation across country borders.

"Only few people are aware of the importance of cultural differences in such a small geographical area", observes Dominique Mercier, President Manufacturing Europe. "These training courses help to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings between cultures."

Gerrit Heske agrees: "The training sessions increase your understanding about the influence of culture on values, behaviour, communication and management responsibilities, even for experienced participants."

There are two different courses. The basic 'Intercultural Awareness Training' focuses on the awareness of cultural differences. Important topics are differences in business cultures, communication styles, leadership, intercultural conflicts, gender roles, humour and concepts on time in different cultures. "Not only language problems create misunderstandings, but also different interpretations of punctuality and other basic rules of everyday life", says Dr Hans-Jörg Keller. "To what extent are deadlines binding?"

Most people from Southern Europe tend to cope with timing much more intuitively than the more structured cultures in Northern Europe. Furthermore, for instance, our employees in Poland and Serbia are far more relationship-oriented than their British and German colleagues.

Topics of the advanced training course 'Intercultural skill building' are effective collaboration in multicultural teams, strategies for conflict resolution, difficult conversations and negotiations, intercultural communication and analyzing one's own cases in international collaboration. In practice simulations, participants are trained for the business world. They learn how to write e-mails in a polite way and how to effectively conduct difficult conversations and negotiations.

Dr Keller offers also training courses for teams and special projects. He has already worked with the personal assistants of our executives of all locations, with the European sales team and with customer service. In addition, he has trained German and Serbian colleagues how to collaborate on the production line in Braunschweig.

Please ask for more information via e-mail: office@keller-leadership.com