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UNIVERSITY OF LÜNEBURG

Steinbeis Innovation Center
Logistics and Sustainability

“REFLECTING ON RESOURCES” LEARNING MODULE

NOTES FOR
TRAINERS/TEACHERS



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CONTENTS

NOTES FOR TRAINERS/TEACHERS

Learning module context	3
Contents of the learning module	4
Summary of the learning module	6



LEARNING MODULE CONTEXT

The following learning module relating to the topic of “Reflecting on resources” is aligned to the contents of the occupational profile positions of “Safety and health at work” and “Work organisation” in the general training plan for vocational education and training in the occupation of freight forwarding and logistics services agent.

One of the focuses of the occupational profile position of “Safety and health at work” is the identification and avoidance of conditions in the workplace that could jeopardise safety or health.

The occupational profile position of “Work organisation” includes the knowledge and skills trainees require in order to plan, execute, and check their work in a systematic way whilst giving due consideration to quality. It also seeks to promote abilities to use company tools and organisational means as well as learning and work techniques in such a way so as to generate profits.

The following learning tasks focus on reflection upon the trainees’ own objectives, requirements, limitations, and stress factors in order to move on to developing approaches and concepts to improve work processes and to ensure health and safety at work.

CONTENTS OF THE LEARNING MODULE

Efficient resources management is one of the main pillars of successful economic activity. Targeted planning of company processes, a useful combination of company tools and equipment, and effective deployment of human labour are all viewed as core elements of effective resources management.

But how is an effective use of resources structured? Do operational decisions take sufficient account of all consequences? What are the long-term ramifications of certain decisions? These issues are all becoming part of the kind of entrepreneurial awareness that is required to do business in a sustainable way.

Sustainability-oriented deployment of the resources of individual members of staff is, however, one aspect that is seldom taken into account. Although “burnout prevention” and “healthcare” are familiar notions at many companies and also lead to the instigation of individual measures in some cases, long-term and comprehensive concepts are not yet widely disseminated. The steps taken in circumstances where specific problems are identified are frequently purely reactive in nature.

What sorts of long-term approaches could be adopted towards addressing employees’ mental and physical health and individual satisfaction? In order for the development of holistic concepts that deliver lasting effectiveness to take place, staff need first of all to be given opportunities to reflect upon their individual objectives, stress factors, and strengths.

STRESS AS A SPECIFIC RISK TO HEALTH

Sharp increases in amounts of information to be processed, shorter decision-making intervals, and a perception that demands are constantly growing are all frequently cited as being characteristics of the modern communication age. The associated changes that are occurring are also having an impact on companies. There are, for example, reports that company-based

decision-making processes are accelerating all the time. This exerts an influence on employees. It thus comes as no surprise that: “The overall stress to which an adult is subjected over his or her lifetime has risen significantly nowadays. The increased speed of all areas of life and a shortening of both human and employment relationships [means that stress is] definitely reaching dangerous proportions” (Gross 2015, p. 17).

Trainees are particularly affected by these developments. They find themselves confronted by new challenges, especially at the start of their training. Stipulated working times, new colleagues, hierarchies within the company, and new teaching structures at the vocational school are just some of the changes with which training entrants need to contend. Many trainees have genuine difficulties in finding time for hobbies and friends whilst attending vocational school and fulfilling their work commitments at the same time. Current studies on the topic of the work-life balance of trainees, for example, reveal that over 80% of respondents believe that it is important to divide time between vocational education and recreation in a balanced way. However, only 20% stated that they had actually succeeded in striking such a balance. One of the consequences of this development is a rising number of training drop-outs. By way of contrast, 90% of trainees expressing satisfaction with their work-life balance wished to bring their training to a successful conclusion.

Against such a background, trainees should be supported in reflecting critically on their personal goals, on the requirements that are placed on them, and on the resulting stresses and strains.

WHAT KEEPS PEOPLE PHYSICALLY HEALTHY AND MAKES THEM MENTALLY ROBUST?

Various medical and psychological investigations have analysed the factors that enable people to remain physically well and mentally robust. The following

Resilience

The term resilience has its origins in physics and describes a material's capacity to return to its original shape after having been deformed. Within a psychological context, it refers to mental resistance. Resilience can thus be defined as a person's ability to return to their former state after experiencing stressful events.

With regard to the various factors that determine resilience, a distinction is drawn between environment (family, friends, working life, etc.) and individual so-called intrapsychic characteristics (intelligence, tolerance of frustration, creativity, emotional control, etc.). The self-efficacy of a person is presented as being particularly significant within this context. Self-efficacy describes someone's assessment of the extent to which they believe that they can exert an active influence on the world and their evaluation of the degree to which they see the further course of their life as being co-determined by their own actions.

Salutogenesis

The salutogenetic model of health states that feelings of health or sickness are determined by individual influencing variables. When creating the salutogenesis model, Aaron Antonovsky emphasised that human health is fundamentally jeopardised by poor external conditions (hunger, war, etc.). However, he also pointed out that differences in people's state of health can be observed even when outside influences are the same. This led him to the conclusion that a person's state of health depends on cognitive and basic emotional and motivational attitudes as well as on external

circumstances. Within the scope of this concept, everyone's individual attitude is designated as their sense of coherence. "Coherence means consistency or integrity. The greater a person's sense of coherence, the healthier they will be. They will also recover more quickly from illness and remain well. [...] The strength of someone's sense of coherence does not depend on the respective circumstances, situation, or roles which they assume or have had to assume" (BZGA 2011, p. 28).

According to Antonovsky, a sense of coherence is influenced and defined by three aspects:

1. A feeling of comprehensibility – a cognitive component that describes how a person is able to structure, effectively categorise, and interpret information received from the surrounding environment.
2. A feeling of manageability – the extent to which a person perceives that they are playing an active role in the world and how they evaluate the challenges of life.
3. A feeling of meaningfulness – an emotional component which describes how fulfilling and significant people feel their own activities and effectiveness to be.

The concepts of resilience and salutogenesis are thus interconnected and provide a differentiated portrayal of the impacts that workload and stress can have on someone and of what keeps a person physically healthy or mentally robust. Targeted concepts for the holistic support of employees' physical and mental health can be developed on this basis, and these may help create a greater feeling of satisfaction in the workplace.

SOURCES

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SUMMARY OF THE LEARNING MODULE

Classification under training regulation: - Safety and health at work
- Work organisation

Topic: Reflecting on resources

Type of learning task: Basic learning task, link-up learning task

Learning venues: Workplace, company or classroom

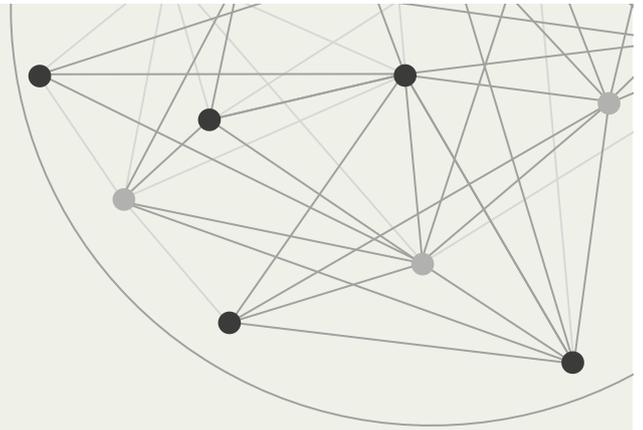
Learning arrangements: Individual and group work

Target competencies: - The trainees present individual objectives, opportunities, stresses, and limits.
- The trainees reflect on their own resources.
- The trainees use the reflection on resources as a basis for the development of ideas for the improvement of company processes.

Brief description and module context: The trainees start by using the “focusing” method of gaining mindfulness to discover which (self-) knowledge can be obtained by carefully considering their own thoughts and feelings. Increased mindfulness of their own perceptions serves as a basis for subsequent reflection on the requirements made of them and on their individual values, aims, limits, and stresses. This provides a foundation for the next stage, in which trainees are given the opportunity to use the design thinking method in order to develop possible solutions for the improvement of company processes.

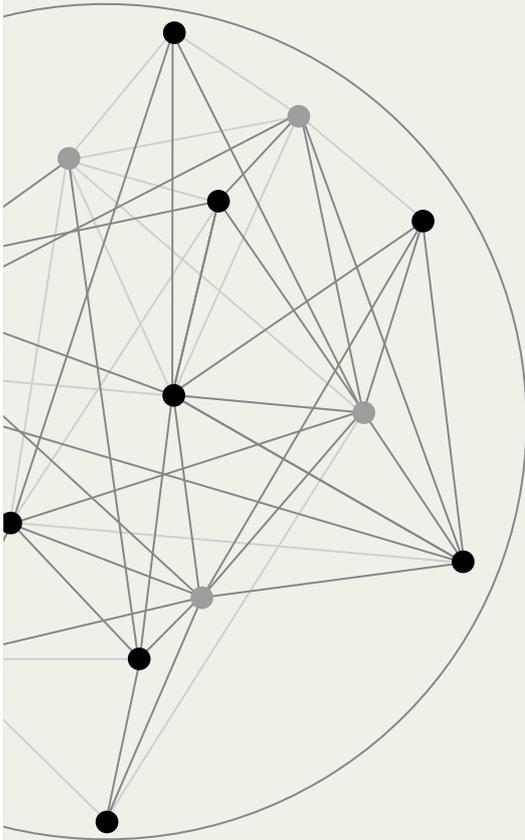
Contents and tasks: - Introduction to the “focusing” method of gaining mindfulness
- A differentiated consideration of individual objectives, opportunities, stresses, and limits
- Introduction to the design thinking method
- Carrying out a “design thinking process” to develop improvements in company processes

Materials required: - Flip chart, flip chart paper, and flip chart markers
- Various differently coloured pens
- Adhesive notes in different colours and sizes (e.g. Post-it® notes)
- Sticky dots
- Various arts and crafts materials (e.g. sticky tape, scissors, glue, coloured cardboard, parcel string, Lego® bricks, wooden blocks, Plasticine™, balloons ...) – you are free to use your imagination



LEARNING PHASES	SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNERS	EXPLANATION OF LEARNING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES	NOTES ON RESOURCES
 THE INTRODUCTORY AND REFLECTION PHASES ARE WELL-SUITED TO BE WORKED ON INDIVIDUALLY			
INTRODUCTORY PHASE	<p>Before trainees reflect upon their individual objectives, opportunities, stresses, and limits, they learn how to apply the “focusing” method of gaining mindfulness. Using this technique enables the trainees to become more aware of their own bodies, feelings, and thoughts. This will allow them to reflect (upon themselves) in the following learning phases.</p>	<p>The trainees are provided with a short information text on the “focusing” method of gaining mindfulness (see Material 1)*.</p>	<p>It will be advisable to make a separate room available so that the trainees can consider the “focusing” method of gaining mindfulness in a quiet environment.</p>
REFLECTION PHASE	<p>Once the trainees have focused on their own feelings and thoughts, they move onto a phase during which they will consider their personal objectives, opportunities, stresses, and limits. Working individually, they read a text on the everyday challenges faced by trainees. They then answer reflective questions relating to their own resources, their individual deployment of resources, their limits and their personal values, objectives, and stresses. The findings identified in this phase can be used to develop improvements to company processes, and this will be the subject of the next learning phase.</p>	<p>The trainees are provided with an information text on the topic of “Reflection on your own resources” (see Material 2)*.</p>	<p>During this phase too, it will be a good idea to make a separate room available to the trainees.</p>
 THE IMPLEMENTATION AND REFLECTION PHASE IS WELL-SUITED TO BE WORKED ON IN GROUPS			
IMPLEMENTATION AND REFLECTION PHASE	<p>In this phase, the trainees use the design thinking method to develop ideas for the improvement of company processes. They draw up these ideas on the basis of the findings which have emerged from the previous (self-) reflection process.</p>	<p>Both the trainer and the trainees are provided with method cards, which give detailed instructions on how to conduct the design thinking method (see Material 3)*.</p>	<p>A large room is required to carry out the design thinking method. The following materials are needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flip chart, flip chart paper, and flip chart markers - Various differently coloured pens - Adhesive notes in different colours and sizes (e.g. Post-it® notes) - Sticky dots - Various arts and crafts materials (e.g. sticky tape, scissors, glue, coloured cardboard, parcel string, Lego® bricks, wooden blocks, Plasticine™, balloons ...) – you are free to use your imagination at this point.

* see Notes for Trainees/Students



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