

Generation Home-Office

The conflict of goals for our future viability

If there was one topic apart from technical innovations at the trade fairs in recent months, it was the shortage of skilled workers and managers. I have already tried to point out possible solutions and approaches to this several times in the past. Unfortunately, there is now an exacerbating aspect that cannot be ig-



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nored: due to the Corona situation that has been with us for a long time, a “home office” generation is being raised that believes it can control production from its desk, so to speak. It is certainly possible to understand processes with “artificial intelligence” much better today than ten years ago. But one should not think that everything that cannot be objectively communicated in “Teams” or “Zoom” does not exist.

Where is the generation just entering the workforce supposed to get to know a normal working day if they are taken to empty offices or simple school internships can no longer take place in production, the bank, the craftsman's shop, etc. because everyone is afraid of direct contact and prefers to keep their businesses self-contained rather than continuing to operate and make them interesting with the appropriate effort?

The young people lose the social contact that is important later on, to interpret interpersonal sentiments correctly and to actively pursue a common goal together with others – and this also gladly

in constructive, controversial discussions that open up a larger solution space. Process optimisation must take place directly on the processing machines in a timely manner. Only those who understand and experience the interaction of man, machine, material, and environment can achieve a good result. This is not possible from home, when time just fits between – unfortunately today not always self-directed – activities such as unscheduled childcare and doctor's appointments. A company cannot wait, it only makes money when things are going well.

If you look further into the future, it becomes very exciting. The generation that is now growing up is forgetting how to lead, promote and motivate. Where are inspiring entrepreneurs and leaders supposed to come from if the “home office” generation is left to its own devices and is not even allowed to really try itself out on the playing field? A good leader must be experienced and chosen as a role model. That can only be done live!

On the other hand, and this is a contradiction, the job market is really soaking up every applicant right now. Graduates are hired by companies so early that research institutes have difficulty filling their positions for young scientists. Where is the free innovative power supposed to come from in the future? Only from the companies? We are in a clear conflict of goals for our future viability!

Our sector in particular is struggling with an image problem spurred on by politics and the press. Young people would rather get involved in other areas than understand plastics technology in depth so that they can make a competent contribution to solving the challenges associated with plastics. Will the “home office” generation work on practical solutions without ever getting their hands dirty? Corona waves need to be properly understood and managed with foresight. But we have an equally great responsibility to teach the next generation more than just looking at the screen and not daring to do anything. ■

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