

A new management style: Modis ITO GmbH in Erfurt - living diversity

Erfurt Modis ITO GmbH in Erfurt lives diversity - from flexible working time models through to in-house talent-management.



*Living diversity is not merely a soundbite for Sven Lehmann and Claudia Borst from Modis ITO GmbH.
Foto: Sibylle Göbel*

Not inviting an over 60-year-old for interview just because he will be retiring in a few years? Barring a young mother from getting a job because she prefers to work part-time?

For Claudia Borst and Sven Lehmann this is not an option. The two managers at Modis IT Outsourcing GmbH do not hire by criteria like, "young and dynamic" - for them this represents a different era and an outdated management style.

Custom work hours

For these two managers of the company, which is a sort of IT first aider for customers all over the world, from its branches in Erfurt, Gera, Leipzig and Böblingen, what counts the most is that someone for a start is excited about working for the company, is willing to learn and is customer-oriented. Everything else is secondary.

"If someone can only work four hours a day due to family reasons then I say: 'Great, then we can set that up for you'", Sven Lehmann describes a conversation about custom work hours. He assures us that this does not just have to do with the competitive labour market. It is also based on the recognition that it is useful for a company to have people with very different requirements, life situations and experiences working for them.

450 employees only in Erfurt

If, for example, an eligible applicant can only work for a few hours, you try to schedule him or her especially at those times when there are a lot of inquiries. "Mondays are always extremely busy," Sven Lehmann says. If part-time employees intercept such peaks, everyone - customers and colleagues alike - will benefit. And it is also an advantage when, for example, students help out mainly during the semester breaks. "Because then those who are otherwise there can go on holiday."

Claudia Borst and Sven Lehmann are convinced that diversity of any kind, not only in the traditional sector of gender diversity, enriches a company and should be consciously promoted. Modis ITO, which has 450 employees in Erfurt alone and around 750 in total, has customers in 130 countries: Banks, insurance companies, automotive suppliers, food service companies and many more.

More than 40 nationalities

On average, 320,000 customer contacts are generated each month. Many of those can be answered in German or English, but by no means all of them. It is therefore an advantage that the company's employees currently speak 17 languages and have more than 40 nationalities. Sven Lehmann says that IT problems can often be solved quickly. However, if a customer is addressed by a Modis employee in his or her native language, and there is a little small talk, the customer feels particularly well taken care of. That's why the company is flexible when an applicant with foreign language skills asks for the opportunity to practice his religion during working hours: Modis ITO has created spaces for the practice of religion at its headquarters near Erfurt airport. The fact that an employee takes a break to pray seems unusual at first. "But we allow it," Sven Lehmann says. "As the respect we show, is given back to us in return." As a result, the working atmosphere is excellent.

Yet it is not only people with a migration background who get an opportunity, but also people with disabilities. "For example, we have employees with visual impairments," Claudia Borst says. In order for them to still be able to operate a computer, their workplace will be adapted accordingly. "Of course there are subsidies for this. But our software is very specific and has to be further developed especially for them. Nevertheless, we are pushing this so that people like these have the opportunity to work for us." The same applies to those changing career path: Since IT specialists themselves have to be trained for the work in the company, everyone else who is not a specialist gets a chance too. Sven Lehmann: "Whoever is a little IT-savvy can learn it." Claudia Borst adds that training is always designed to suit strengths and potential of the respective employee. It is important that everyone understands how much ultimately depends on their work: Because if, for example, a food service customer suddenly has a cash drawer that will no longer open, that means a loss of turnover...This means: support must be provided quickly and competently. In some cases 24 hours a day.

Much depends on every employee

However, it is not just the training to become an IT agent that is specially designed: Modis ITO is also keen to recruit managers from its own ranks: 92 percent of current team leaders and 82 percent of department heads have been recruited internally. "Anyone who wants to get on and achieve something is given the opportunity," Claudia Borst assures us. The fact that the proportion of women in her company in a sector more dominated by men is around 30 percent, and that even in management, almost every third person is female, is something Claudia Borst is proud of. Personality counts. Not gender, not ethnic origin, sexual orientation or religion.

Not even age: Modis ITO GmbH currently has employees between the ages of 15 and 65, amongst the eldest are both those who have been with the company for some time as well as new starters. "Such employees are very valuable," Sven Lehmann says. They are not only experienced and highly motivated, but also bring a certain level of calm and serenity to young teams, which sometimes tend to be hectic and reactive. Customers also benefit from this, and the working atmosphere even more.

Source: <https://www.tlz.de/wirtschaft/ein-neuer-fuehrungsstil-modis-ito-gmbh-in-erfurt-lebt-vielfalt-id227179599.html>
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