



## Werner & Mertz averts shortage of skilled labor

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Joint efforts to counter shortage of skilled labor (from left): Regine Hemer (economics instructor at Steinhöfelschule and the originator of the initiative), Katharina Schönbrodt (business administration training at Werner & Mertz), Stephanie Gabler (director of Group Personnel at Werner & Mertz), Monika Kindgen (PR specialist at Werner & Mertz) and Joachim Veigel (school director at Steinhöfelschule) at the signing of the training cooperation agreement. **Mainz – Werner & Mertz has signed a training partnership agreement with the Steinhöfelschule.** Through this initiative the manufacturer of sustainable dishwashing liquid, cleaning products and laundry detergent intends to counter the lack of skilled labor, particularly for jobs in natural sciences, industrial trades and business administration. Every year Werner & Mertz hires 10 new trainees and currently has 25 young people on staff in eight different occupations. Depending on the career choice, the training period lasts between 2.5 and 3.5 years. When selecting applicants, the company considers technical suitability and soft skills such as engagement and team spirit.

"The training partnership with the Steinhöfelschule is the first collaboration of its type for Werner & Mertz," said Katrin Schönbrodt, who is responsible for the company's training program for business administration. The process of selecting a suitable partner has been going on over the past few years. Groups from the private business school have visited Werner & Mertz on Germany's Green Day and at other times to get a look at the complex work processes used by the manufacturer of sustainable cleaning products and detergents. "The students reacted



so positively that a training partnership was the next logical step," said Monika Kindgen, PR specialist and director of training and youth development, about the outcome from the previous years' cooperation. Students and faculty at Steinhöfelschule are delighted with the cooperative partnership and with the opportunity to gain experience for life. "In lessons we took up the subject of packaging and combined it with environmental protection and packaging waste," said business instructor Regine Hemer in explaining the functional link between industry and education. Among other things, the school wants to promote discussion of sustainability and encourage reflection and a rethinking of the issue.



Stephanie Gabler, Katharina Schönbrodt and Monika Kindgen of Werner & Mertz with teaching staff from the Steinhöfelschule. Photo: Werner & Mertz

The idea for training partnerships came from the IHK Rheinessen (Rheinessen Chamber of Commerce & Industry), which helps companies in the region to search for suitable trainees and young professionals in good time to avoid a shortage. Even today companies are finding it difficult to fill all the available training spots in some industries and occupations. On the one hand, applicants often lack basic qualifications for entry to an apprenticeship and, on the other hand, the effects of demographic change are becoming apparent. Within the scope of training partnerships, companies can become acquainted with and win over potential trainees. As a result, businesses can reduce their personnel recruitment costs and fill their training spots as needed. Schools benefit from cooperating with companies like Werner & Mertz through the real-world application of the material learned in class and the establishment of personal contacts in the business world. "Training partnerships give schools and companies a good way to agree on priorities for their joint work. The initiative can come from the school or the company. Such a partnership also gives companies the chance to meet potential trainees and offer them career opportunities," said Timon Zapf, training consultant at IHK.

That's the way the Steinhöfelschule sees it. Through their shared commitment, Werner & Mertz and Steinhöfelschule smooth the way for students making the transition to vocational education. "Our school is very interested in making course content as realistic and practical as possible in order to give students the best possible preparation for their careers. To that end, it is extremely



important to have contacts and long-term relationships with regional companies," said Mrs. Hemer of the Steinhöfelschule. "Werner & Mertz is the right training partner for us."

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