



"Solve complex problems in the morning – rock out at night"

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From left: Sabine Bätzing-Lichtenthäler, Rhineland-Palatinate Minister for Social Affairs, Labor, Health and Demographics, Moderator Trixie Kuklinski, Minister-President Malu Dreyer and Werner & Mertz Group CFO Ralph Wenner. Photos: Herbert Piel/Werner & Mertz

Former trainee Sebastian Lawall of Lonsheim began studying at the Fachhochschule in Mainz during his apprenticeship as an information technology assistant and became part of a new trend in Working World 4.0. A drummer in his spare time, Lawall summed up his generation's life philosophy – "solve complex problems in the morning and rock out at night" – which was soundly confirmed by his peers at the 13th JAV Forum organized by Malu Dreyer. The state minister-president and the Minister for Labor Sabine Bätzing-Lichtenthäler had invited 180 young people from Rhineland-Palatinate to the event in the main office building at Werner & Mertz, where they dealt with the trainees' current situation and prospects in traditional occupations that require training. The JAV group talked about the many opportunities the new "Working World 4.0" offers and speculated on the future shape and structure of "Work 4.0". The latter includes protection of co-determination and employee rights, questions about health and safety at work and the steadily increasing demands for continued education and training. The usual subjects such as the prospect of being taken on after an apprenticeship were also part of the discussions.



Ralph Wenner, Werner & Mertz Group CFO, welcomes guests to the 13th JAV Forum with Malu Dreyer at W&M headquarters.



"Digitalization brings economic benefits because it makes production less expensive and more resource-efficient," said Minister-President Dreyer. "Furthermore, work processes become more transparent and flexible." Together with Minister Bätzing-Lichtenthäler, the minister-president promoted Rhineland-Palatinate's campaign for professionals and the dual study program. "We have more than sixty dual study courses and are prepared to set up a new one every week," she said, addressing her words to regional employers. Although fully aware of the challenges posed by "Work 4.0", Minister Bätzing-Lichtenthäler sees the opportunities too. "Our work environments and work processes are changing continuously as a result of globalization and demographic sifts," she said. At the same time, growing demands are being made on employees for productivity and flexibility. "Digital technology can be very supportive here," Bätzing-Lichtenthäler said and asked that training methods be adapted and creativity and problem-solving skills be integrated in vocational training.

"We think the training of young people is very, very important," said Gabler from the corporate perspective. Applicants are especially interested in the dual study program, she reported. The company currently has 36 trainees among its 500 employees at the Mainz site. Werner & Mertz offers training in 10 vocations and acts in accordance with its sustainability and forward-thinking philosophy. "We invest in our trainees," said Gabler, "and want to keep them on board."

Something that will not fall out of fashion in "Working World 4.0" or at Werner & Mertz is the practice of learning from each other. "We do not live completely detached from experience in this new digital world," said Group CFO Ralph Wenner. "Information, regardless of its source, is available all the time via Messenger, YouTube or WhatsApp. But everyone has to gain his own experience. And we can all benefit from each other's experience." The JAV Forum is the right place to share experience and a good source for young people's wishes and suggestions. The ideas collected there are forwarded to committees responsible for regulating vocational training and making the programs fit for the future.

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