



Jaqueline Kalis and Patrick Wannhoff present their project

The next generation

Henk International has been running a programme to encourage and support young movers in their careers. **Rob Coston** spoke to Manuela Henk, Director at the Düsseldorf-based Affiliate, to get the details

FIDI Focus (FF): Why did Henk International decide to run a programme for young movers?

Manuela Henk (MH): We realised that we have a lot of young people working for the company, and so we needed to establish an approach to talent management. So often you hear that companies have trouble finding, keeping and motivating young people; we thought that, as we have so many – and they are motivated – we should do something to keep them motivated!

The idea for this programme was floated at our annual strategy meeting, where the management team meets to discuss and review our business strategy. The strategy team consists of our unit managers – Joachim von Seggern, Director of Commercial and Office Moves; Kosa Freihöfer, International Move and Assignment Management; Frank Otto, Special Project Moves and Operations Management; Mike Allison, Sales Director; Hendrik Donner, Head of Administration; and Ludwig Henk and myself, Board of Directors – seven members, and an external coach.

The strategy meeting was established six years ago and has a specific topic every year. Last year, our focus was on 'new ways of working'; we came up with one

'It is a great opportunity for young professionals to gather experience in project management, specialise, increase knowledge... grow their personalities, and discover management skills'

operational and two sales projects, and thought it would be a good idea to get our young professionals on board. Their way of approaching a situation, solving a problem or selling a product is different from the way our established staff would work.

We also noted that we all have an increasing number of projects to work on, and the available time to work efficiently on new ideas is decreasing.

Our Operations Manager, Frank Otto, suggested bringing the young professionals on board and getting their opinion about the projects we work on.

The strategy team was interested in the idea, so we started to discuss who could be involved and how it would work. After talking about it for a while, Otto suggested leaving the three projects to the young professionals completely. All of us thought that this was a brilliant idea. Then we realised it had so many more advantages.

It is a great opportunity for young professionals to gain experience in project management; specialise; increase their knowledge; learn how to cooperate in a group; make compromises for the benefit of

CONTINUES OVER



the project; grow their personalities; and discover management skills or a personal talent.

FF: Did you give the programme a name?

MH: The strategy meeting's project name was 'new kids on the block'. We thought this could be a good name for the group, but it didn't really matter to us.

After our first meeting with the young professionals, we realised that they didn't like that name as it had too much of a boy-band connotation! So, in the end, they called the group 'Youngsters'.

FF: How many young movers are involved?

MH: The group consists of six people. It's quite diverse, with two women and four men, and three nationalities. The three major business units are represented – commercial moves, international move management and office logistics. The youngest member is 19 years old, and is doing a dual study of logistics and supply-chain management; the oldest is 29.

FF: I understand the young movers were split into three smaller teams. Could you explain why, and what each group focused on?

MH: To split the group of six into teams was the decision of the entire group. We had three topics, and they decided it was most effective for two people to work on each topic, then give presentations, get feedback from the other group members, and use the comments and suggestions to continue. They thought that small teams would be more efficient than discussing a topic with six people.

At the first meeting – which we held at a mystery hotel – the group decided who would be in which team.

FF: How did the programme proceed over the months?

MH: The group started in November 2016, and the final results were presented to the strategy team in May 2017.

The Youngsters experienced the ups and downs that are common with projects. During the first meeting, they were a little sceptical about whether they could handle the projects. After a few days, they were euphoric, the idea settled, and they were thrilled with the idea that they would find trailblazing solutions.

Then the research and data-collection phase started for each group, which is not very thrilling and can sometimes be boring – but they came to realise this is also part of working on a project. At that point, the support and the guidance of the coach was very helpful for their motivation.

The teams developed at different speeds; one was very self-confident and even a little casual about the project. After one of the stage meetings, the other group members and the coach helped them to get their feet back on the ground. Another team had research problems with their sales topic, as there was no relevant data available, and they ran short on ideas for drawing up a business model. The third group had a storage and logistics situation to solve, and they realised – after a few weeks without any progress – that they needed an expert to support them.

FF: So, did the young movers have some mentoring during the process?

Each group had a mentor who gave some input on theoretical matters such as visualisation, analysis and business-modelling tools. The mentor attended the



The young movers meet to discuss the project

The Youngsters experienced the ups and downs that are common with projects'

first group get-together, oversaw progress, organised group meetings and was available when the teams had general questions. He also pushed them when he had the impression that progress was slow.

During the project work, the individual teams also had external support from specialists.

FF: What have the results been, so far?

The teams finished their projects with presentations to the strategic team.

Solutions and new processes suggested by the logistics team were accepted, and a new warehouse structure and concept is now being implemented.

The team that developed a new service/product is continuing with its project, and building on what they have discovered by developing it and applying the appropriate marketing tools. At the beginning of July, they received their first request for proposal (RFP).

The third team is improving a service that is already being offered, and is established in the market. They are continuing with the project and have already had the first sales successes. Through their work, we realised that the service can be offered to different target groups. The appropriate marketing tools are being developed.

CONTINUES OVER



So, overall, we have created a win-win-win situation for the customer, our business and the individual participants. How great is that!

FF: How has participating in the programme helped the young movers involved?

MH: I think it has helped them all to develop the following skills:

- Working in a team
- Research skills
- Strategic thinking and how to find solutions
- How to deal with setbacks
- Presentation skills
- Technical knowledge
- Independent working, taking responsibility, and decision-making
- Theoretical skills and methods in an existing and practical situation

I forwarded this list to the teams, and they told me these are exactly the outcomes they have experienced.

FF: Were there costs involved in running a programme such as this for your young movers?

MH: We had external consultants and a coach, including a consultant who worked with the team on the storage project for a week. The initial meeting where the group got together was held in a hotel.

FF: Why is such a programme important for the

'I am convinced that the programme helps to increase our employer branding'

company and the international moving sector?

MH: First, talent management. There are not many training opportunities for young professionals in our industry, so the programme helped us to train our team in a variety of skills. The motivation of the Youngsters also increased tremendously.


The young professionals talked about the programme and communicated it to customers, suppliers, and to friends. I am convinced that the programme helps to increase our employer branding.

The company improved its ability to develop innovations and its decision-making process for whether to continue with an idea or drop it. Consequently, we now have an active influence on our competitiveness.

FF: Is this a programme you would repeat with other young movers in the company?

MH: Yes, definitely. We already have plans for what to do next year.

Some of the team members are still involved in their projects, but the rest might be involved again in new projects – and we could bring in new people, too.

Our next new project might be looking at how we can improve training, quality, security and safety. Perhaps we might expand the programme to include young employees on the operational side – as we have trainees learning packing and moving – and find some topics that they can work on. 

WHAT THE YOUNG MOVERS SAY

The six participants in this programme were: **Lilly Luetticke, Jaqueline Kalis, Patrick Wannhoff, Maurice Henk, Benjamin Samp, Kalle Kowalk**. Here, Kalle, Jaqueline and Lilly share their views.

FF: How have you found working on the projects?

Lilly: It's been interesting, because we have learned a lot about research and teamwork. Sometimes it was a little bit difficult, as there wasn't enough data on the internet or we got stuck – but it was very helpful to have a mentor who could guide us in the right direction.

Kalle: I agree, but I would add that it was a really good experience to do something completely without management, so that most of the time we could do whatever we wanted – and sometimes even do the wrong thing.

Jaqueline: I liked that, when we started out, our big group of six had three topics to choose from and we were free to decide how we would address them. First of all we thought about the topics and each of us decided which we wanted to work on. It was quite nice to choose. It was also useful that we had the small groups, but could always get together and talk

with the others – someone always had a helpful idea! The coach helped with theoretical things we didn't know about.

FF: Has working like this changed the way you think about the moving industry?

Kalle: It has a bit, yes. Not so much from the daily business perspective, but – having a look at my project – I keep on working on that and pushing to get the first responses from clients. It has helped me to get to know other young people in the company better.

Jaqueline: I've been able to gather different points of view. It gives you an insight into the various departments in a moving company that you don't normally work with, so you're not just thinking about what you do every day, but about what others are doing. You also get to try out management roles.

Lilly: It's kind of opened my eyes to logistics in daily life. The

project I worked on was based on a very creative idea around hotel logistics – afterwards, I saw logistics in every kind of work!

FF: Would you recommend running a programme such as this to other FIDI Affiliates, and would you encourage other young movers to take part?

Lilly: Yes, of course. We learned so much by doing it! It was like jumping into cold water, but we had a coach on our side.

Kalle: I would definitely recommend it, but would also say it might be quite difficult depending on the size of the business. That said, I think a programme such as this would be very helpful in improving your company by bringing in different views – whether those differences are because of age or from alternative perspectives on the world. At the end of the day, it was a really good experience – and also valuable for the company.



The young movers gather at the start of the programme