

Spiritual counsellor on the assembly line

05/03/2015 Employee counsellor Guido Lorenz worked on the final assembly line in Zuffenhausen for two weeks where he gathered impressions about the everyday working life of colleagues on the production line.

Final assembly: this means working shifts on a production line. Mostly in a standing position. Hard physical labour. But also a strong team spirit. Guido Lorenz plunged into this world of work for two weeks. Just like any normal apprentice. Only that he is 60 years old. The graduate Catholic theologian is company counsellor for the diocese of Stuttgart-Rottenburg. Workers as well as unemployed people can turn to him with their troubles and needs. Mobbing, burn-out or existential fears are only some of the topics he deals with.

Lorenz understands his work like this: get closer to the workers regularly. That's why he continually exchanges his office desk for the workbench or the assembly line and goes out in search of dialogue with the workers. He does not expect everyone to open their hearts to him straight away.

Refuse collector, postman, fork-lift truck driver, long-distance truck driver

Through his work assignments the employee counsellor has got to know many professions over the past years. Among others, he has worked as refuse collector, postman, fork-lift truck driver, long-distance truck driver and as day labourer and storeman for a temporary employment agency. His experiences were not always positive, says the graduate theologian. Not so when he started his assignment at Porsche, where he had already been on duty 30 years ago.

"Shortly after I started my job as employee counsellor, it was my first assignment in a large company," he says. Since he felt really at home with his colleagues, he wanted to come back again. At the request of the works council the production division approved his appointment. His impression: "Before, the structures were much more hierarchical." Today, every member of the team knows how to carry out every single operation. "This improves the mutual understanding within the group."

Just like 30 years ago, the talks were not the only thing that Lorenz achieved during his assignment at Porsche. In order to become really acquainted with the everyday work life of assembly workers, the 60 year old family man gladly lent a hand after a short course of instruction by expert colleagues such as Ivica Cevis. On this Wednesday afternoon, Lorenz was fitting transport windscreen wipers to the cars. The late shift had just begun. One sports car after the other rolled past him at the same speed as for all the other workers in assembly – there is no exception for anyone.

Strong identification with the Porsche brand

But nothing can disconcert Lorenz. Almost like a seasoned worker, he takes the windscreen wipers from the material container and fits it with a few operations. A final scrutinizing look through his glasses – done. Foreman Mario Niksic is also satisfied. "Actually we were able to take him on straight away," he said laughing. But after two weeks, the work assignment is over for the company employee counsellor.

His conclusion: "There is a really good team spirit among the colleagues here. No matter what gender, origin or age you are. Team leaders, shop stewards and foremen all make their contribution to this," he finds. And what's more, "It's impressive how strongly all Porsche employees identify with the brand and when you look at the sports cars, it's easy to understand why."

You can reach the employee counselling office in Stuttgart on +49 (0)711 56 1084 or by email at bs.stuttgart@t-online.de

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Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart