

Germany



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# Making it easier for all

Place of action:

**Trading company distributing throughout Europe**

Storyteller:

**Ms. Möller, owner of the company**

Synopsis:

**Nick, an employee with autism spectrum disorder, works in the construction and packaging part**

## **I offered him a job**

"I was trained as a horse trainer. During this training I had many contacts with people with disabilities. It was then that I became motivated to give them a chance in my company. I had a vacancy, and I contacted the employment agency. They introduced Nick to me. Nick came together with his job coach. Nick really convinced me about his capabilities and his motivation, and I offered him the job.

## **Understanding routines**

"My employees were initially cautious in their contacts with Nick, as they had no previous experience with people with disabilities. Fortunately, over time, the situation has eased. The team now spends breaks together and Nick is well integrated in their communications. Also, his colleagues have understood his routines when eating and see it now as 'part of Nick's habits like they all have their habits. Nick has a special routine when eating. At first, he takes four buns or bread slices, then he chooses spreads or fillings, he layers all four buns, and only then does he eat them. He can only start eating when all buns or sandwiches are fully prepared."

## **A difficult decision ended up well**

"Nick works in the construction of wooden products and in packaging. He was very hardworking and willing to work from the beginning. However, he needed supervision, which was unfortunately lacking in the first year, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were left alone with its problems. Nick often felt overwhelmed with the situation, we couldn't

handle it no longer and we had to decide to say goodbye to him. The good thing about the whole situation is that we had to contact the Integration Office, to finish his contract. It was then, that they supported us in how to continue the employment of Nick, now with the help of a job coach. Nick also played an important role. He did not let up and gave himself and us, as a company a chance."

## **The key of the job coach**

"It was since then, that we both received regular support from a job coach. Nick and me together, received weekly counselling. Today, counselling does not take place on a regular basis, as I can handle most situations myself. However, the possibility to contact the job coach as needed gives me a feeling of security. Because of the re-established contact, the situation could ease up. Our close cooperation with the job coach and the integration office led for me to employ two more people with disabilities. It runs smoothly."

## **The key of supervision**

"This first time with Nick, made me realise how important supervision is. "I see myself as responsible for Nick doing well in the company. I have learned to master most of the challenges. However, I know, the job coach from the integration service is always at her disposal. I call her as needed, and she gives me advice. In the long run, I want to leave more tasks to Nick, such as preparing and printing labels. Nick has a slow familiarisation with the new tasks, he needs more time, and I give him more time."

### **The win of a more productive team**

"One of the good changes since the coming of Nick, is the change of the induction procedures. The procedures have been revised and restructured, with the help of the job coach and Nick. This was needed because they weren't clear for Nick. I included Nick in the development of the new procedures, work processes and instructions, to prepare them in such a way that all employees understand them. Now, the induction instructions have a clear and understandable structure, and all employees whether with or without a disability receive the same instructions during their induction. This restructuring has made the team more productive. I see this as the added value of employees with disabilities."

### **Be open for the opportunity**

"I would do it again. It is worth giving people with disabilities a chance because it is also a chance for the company. The social interaction has become more humane. The colleagues show more consideration for each other. One should be open to this opportunity. Once you are open for it and give it a try, it is important to learn and their way of thinking and working. In this sense, it is very important to cooperate with integration offices. They will be of great support. My advice for fellow employers is: Contact the service provider!"

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