

Austria



Co-funded by the European Commission

an enrichment for the company

Place of action:

Intersport Fischer, Sports Retail Store, five locations

Storyteller:

**Hermann Ammann,
HR-manager of the company**

Synopsis:

Simon, having a hemiparesis and a visual impairment and Reinhard, also having a hemiparesis and having difficulties with learning

Impressed and open for it

"It was about fifteen years ago that we were approached by this service provider for people with disabilities. I still remember their first introduction sentence: "We have young people with a disability eager to work and we are convinced that they can do well in your company". Why not, we thought, we have no idea what it means for us, but we are open to give these young people a chance".

An inclusive apprenticeship

"After some trial days, where we get to know our future colleagues and they get to know the field of work and their future colleagues, we signed an apprenticeship contract for both Reinhard and Simon. They both had a sort of an inclusive apprenticeship. This meant a partial apprenticeship where they were allowed to learn just some parts of a sports store, combined with limited school requirements. It was all adapted to their performance possibilities, where the others needed to learn all. For us and for them, this phase was intensive and lasted long, since we had to find out what worked and what not. Fortunately, we were supported by this service provider who informed us about all the possibilities for support and funding."

Finding the right spot

"Both Simon and Reinhard were welcomed very open by our staff in the different stores. We really wanted to go for this new adventure and give both this chance. Soon, we found out, it would take some effort to find the right department for them; the right department from our sight, from their sight and from the sight of the customers. This took some time. Let me give an example. For instance, Reinhard is a cross country skier, he has huge knowledge about all different products and their usage. It was our idea to let him sell this equipment in wintertime, then we found out our customers were not convinced by his expertise, and we had to find another department for him to continue his apprenticeship."

It was their friendliness and motivation

"Their task was to learn, improve and achieve their individual goals of vocational training. For us, it was all a new experience, we had not gone down the path of training teenagers with a disability. Our knowledge was limited and our expectations open and uncertain, but their friendliness and motivation made it easy for them to become part of the team. It was the same with customers."

We gave support

"Simon and Reinhard sometimes needed more support, which took more time of our staff. For instance, Reinhard had great knowledge about cross country skiing but when he came to other departments, he needed a lot of support to give information about products and how to use or present them. We were compensated for this with a grant from the Social Ministry."

We were supported

"Throughout this whole period, we were supported by this service provider who introduced the two adolescents to us. They supported us in combining our expectations and the requirements of the vocational school. They made product posters for the school and the presentation of goods was practiced, and specialist knowledge of materials was repeated. This helped us to focus on the task of making progress in our daily work as sales educators. I was relieved that it wasn't obligatory for the two of them to go through all departments. The focus could be placed on the department that they liked best. Interestingly, for both of them it was mountain sports. It was impressive how the two of them were able to present shoes to the customer in a sporty, casual way, this was done with one hand and the other arm as a support."

Some small adaptations

"Simon's workplace was adapted by installing a camera and screen on his table, so it was easier for him to read lower case letters and numbers. This adaptation was financed partly by the insurance company, the local state and the Social Ministry. Reinhard did not need any adaptation."

Two experienced employees

"After their apprenticeship, we hired them both as regular employees. Compared to Simon, it took some more years for Reinhard to receive his signed apprenticeship. That is now more than ten years ago, and they both like to work here. Simon's role is to advise customers in the field of mountain sports. This includes mountain boots, backpacks, sleeping bags and everything else that has to do with mountain sports. Reinhard is specialised in selling mountaineering items, which includes advising customers, ordering items, replenishing merchandise and labelling products."

There are there for us

"We can still count on the support of the service provider; we are happy with their specialist knowledge and active attitude. At the same time, we hardly make use of it. Reinhard and Simon also have the possibility to contact them if they have any questions."

We see the added value

"We have now reached the status quo that Simon and Reinhard are 100% integrated into the company. And, if a suitable candidate emerges, we are again open to hire somebody who needs support. Of course, this means a certain amount of effort, but the job market as a whole is very challenging when it comes to finding qualified employees."

It's an enrichment

"We have now been able to harvest the positive results of this decision. We would for sure do it again. We now have four employees with a disability. In fact, we ask our service provider to introduce people with disabilities to job vacancies in our company. I can only recommend my fellow employers to offer integrative workplaces. It is an enrichment for society, the team and the entire company. And, it is also worthwhile economically."

" If a suitable candidate emerges, we are again open to hire somebody who needs support"



Inclusion simply makes great enterprises



Co-funded by
the European Union