

Podcast: Inclusion with success

Podcast II (Liliane Mreyen in conversation with Tina Derwald and Thorsten Maraite)

Stay Inclusive, the inclusion podcast. Ideas and examples about the transition from sheltered workshops to regular employment with Liliane and Ursula from the VHS educational institute non-profit organization.

Liliane: Hello, nice to hear our podcast. Today we would like to introduce you to an example of successful inclusion from Belgium. As part of our project Include, we collect best practice examples for the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the primary labour market. The aim of our project is to find a method to improve this inclusion. We have a guest for our conversation today: Hello Tina, would you like to introduce yourself briefly and explain to us a little bit what you do for a living?

Tina: Yes, I'm Katharina Anna Derwald, I'm from Eupen and I've been working here at the Bütgenbacher Hof for 16 years. Before that, when we were at school, we did an internship and I had already done an internship at Hotel Boston, but they didn't take me on and I already know the family here, the Maraite family. And then I did my first internship here, that was my boss's birthday. Weeks later I had a conversation with Therese Maraite and then she told me and announced that I would be taken on completely, here at the Bütgenbacher Hof. And I always wanted to work in the hotel business. And I also had cooking or household work at school before and I'm very proud of myself that I've been here for 16 years. And then I always had to laugh with the boss, Mrs. Maraite. Then she always says, Tinnen, you're part of the inventory. And then we both have to laugh.

Liliane: What do you particularly like about your work?

Tina: I think it's very special to be part of a large company and I have no idea how many colleagues we have. We actually get along well. So sometimes a little squabble, but that's not so bad. But as I said, everyone is in a bad mood sometimes, you can't change that. And then we get along again.

Liliane: Yes, nice. What do you like to do most? What is your favorite task to take on?

Tina: Yes, mainly I'm downstairs in the laundry room. I take care of the table linen. Then I'll iron the towels down here as well. Sometimes also fold to help in between. If I don't have anything now and I see my colleagues who can't do this and that, then I'll help.

Liliane: Ah yes, nice. You do that quite autonomously? Do you do it alone or do you always have a colleague to help you?

Tina: Sometimes, when colleagues are there and they have nothing more to do, they do my work. It's the case that I don't really like when they do that.

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Liliane: What else would you wish for your future here, at work?

Tina: The fact that I can continue to stay here, I like it when I'm among people.

Liliane: Do you wish that it would stay that way for a long time?

Tina: Yes.

Liliane: Nice, great. Then we thank you, Tina, for answering our questions here.

Tina: With pleasure.

Liliane: Thank you very much for that.

Tina: Yes, here you go.

Liliane: We have a second interview partner today, namely Thorsten, Tina's employer.

Thorsten: Yes, hello.

Liliane: Thorsten, can you perhaps tell us what change it will bring within the staff or for you in the company when Tina is here at the start?

Thorsten: It definitely brought a change, especially the beginning, i.e. the first contact. Tina is the first person with a disability who has worked for us. And we often had guests with us. And we never knew exactly how to deal with it. For example, if you brought a menu, you tend to ask the parents who were there or the family who sat there, you actually often talked to the parents, to the relatives and ignored the person a bit. And through Tina we learned how to deal with people, so that you can deal with them normally, just like with anyone else. I mean, they want that too or is also important for the person. And since Tina, we have really been able to welcome our guests with disabilities as normal or know how to deal with it. Even before that, it wasn't bad will on the part of most people. It's just easy because you don't know how it works or how to deal with the people.

Liliane: Yes, that's right.

Thorsten: And that's actually the most important thing that Tina has brought back to the company. I think she has already brought a lot to everyone.

Liliane: And what is the atmosphere like within the staff, with female colleagues?

Thorsten: Yes, that works well. Of course, Tina likes to eat very much, so you always have to be careful that she doesn't eat everything away from the others. But otherwise, Tina is accepted as normal, and everyone makes their jokes with Tina. So, especially me, I'm always after Tina a lot and do my jokes with her. But I think it needs that too. She also likes it when you annoy her a bit. But it actually fits well with the other colleagues. She has her work and what she does. She already has her own routine. I think she also needs that, so that she knows in the morning, so now I'm going to make the napkins, then I'll come up and fill up nuts or things like that behind the bar. You can't stress Tina now, like another employee. But she knows that, and everyone knows that and it actually works very well.

Liliane: Would you have needed support in hiring Tina? Was there help from the public sector?

Thorsten: I don't really think so. That was a few years ago. As I said, that was my thirtieth birthday. That's 16 years now. My mother was still the boss at the time and she also did the hiring with Tina. Of course, you had a different wage level. Tina does get something, but not as much as a normal employee. I don't think there was any help that a person was really here. There has always been a contact person when there are problems. But I can't remember anyone in the company showing us how best to do it. I think that actually worked quite well right away.

Liliane: Would you like that, if you now think I'm taking on another person with support needs, would you want more support?

Thorsten: Of course, support is not bad. Only, we have noticed ourselves that we have already tried, perhaps a second person or even a third person. Some of them have introduced themselves. I think that will quickly become too much. Especially with us in the catering industry, because it's so fast-moving. So with us, everything always has to happen directly. And then it's very stressful. Even then, we said that a person would be able to take him with him. But if you have two people, then the employees also become, I don't want to say aggressive, but annoyed.

Liliane: Or other things where you think that was a big challenge for us to overcome. Or do you say, looking back, that it worked out so well the way it is?

Thorsten: Nope, I have to say, it actually worked out well, the way it is. Okay, there are always things that happen where you might turn a blind eye to Tina. Of course, you also have to explain this to the employees. With Tina, you tend to turn a blind eye and talk to the employees about it. They have to understand why it went through with Tina, but that it wouldn't go through with them. But I think that if you talk about it, they will understand it.

Liliane: But acceptance is there among the staff, in retrospect.

Thorsten: Exactly, they all get along well with Tina, and she is also an open person.

Liliane: Great, thank you very much for the interview and for the exchange and then we wish you good luck together.

Thorsten: Thank you very much.

Ursula: Dear listeners, thank you very much for taking the time to focus on this important topic. That was Stay Inclusive, the inclusion podcast. Ideas and examples about the transition from sheltered workshops to regular employment. A production from the Include³ project, co-financed by the European Union. You want to learn more about Include³? Then visit us on our homepage www.include3.eu and follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.