The "boomer" at work.

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If you don't know what the word "boomer" is all about, there is a good chance that you are a boomer yourself. Why? The term "boomer" is based on the common generational definitions and roughly refers to people from the post-war generations with high birth rates. In other words, those people who were born between 1950 and the middle of the 1960s.

Why this well-known fact from sociology is worth a story of its own to us? Because the so-called boomer generation represents a not inconsiderable part of the workforce, especially in the highly qualified professions with an academic background. Because the general discourse often revolves around giving younger employees a good start in working life, but less often around what employers can do to ensure that older employees also feel integrated in the company until they retire. Job satisfaction should not be a demographic issue. So how do you create a working environment in which older people feel comfortable? Some food for thought.

It’s (not) all a question of age.

The most important food for thought for employers: focus on each employee’s merits and key skills, regardless of their age.

In general, it can be said that the boomer generation has experienced the technical development of the last 40 years and is also fit in analogue culture and working techniques. This combination can

be of huge benefit to everyone involved in a company. Boomers have a high level of expertise combined with a great deal of experience. However, this can be counter-productive in times of digitalisation and become a stress factor. After all, digitalisation is almost radically changing the way knowledge is processed and communicated.

Many boomers can't keep up with this, quite the contrary: they often insist on their practices and are reluctant to deal with the new media and tools. This can be clearly seen in the current corona crisis with working from home: what works completely intuitively with no problems for digital natives, causes difficulties for some of the boomers. They have to deal with modern cloud-based collaboration tools that were not essential in the past. But learning by doing is the best teacher here too. Targeted support from the employer and active involvement in teamwork is required – coupled with clear guidelines and a systematic approach. This is where we come full circle as the boomers are particularly strong in this respect.

It’s all in the mix.

Each age group has valuable skills for the big picture. And small teams with a good mix of ages make it possible to work together productively on equal terms. In best practice, every employee feels heard and understood. And no one overtakes or gets left behind. Ideally, all generations are willing to learn from each other. A meaningful team, in which everyone feels comfortable, can only be created through cooperation and exchange. All this is not a question of age or belonging to a cohort, but one of respect. And respect is, more than ever before, a universally valid component in the workplace that should not be a question of age.