

Skills help to weather the crisis

Buderus Edelstahl is using short-time working to train its workforce ready for the upturn

The current economic crisis is confronting many companies with the challenge of adapting their capacity and their payroll costs to reduced demand. When business was booming, companies were complaining about the impending shortage of skilled labour and the fear of not having enough qualified staff.

Bearing in mind these critical factors for success both now and in the future, Buderus Edelstahl also asked itself the question, will the company have enough qualified manpower when the upturn comes? The shortage of qualified employees is becoming increasingly acute because of demographic and structural changes, which will make it very difficult and expensive to recruit skilled staff once the crisis has passed.

Buderus Edelstahl has recognised this risk in good time. Contrary to the trend in many companies affected by the crisis, training places have been further increased in recent years. There are currently a total of 136 trainees in the training workshop, preparing themselves for jobs in the three Buderus Edelstahl companies.

Buderus Edelstahl has massively expanded its qualification activities to equip its workforce for the future. The aim of this company policy is to use short-time working to expand the competence of its workforce, and emerge from the crisis with a better qualified team.

The Federal government supports companies in their commitment to using the crisis as an opportunity, and is providing around € 150 million. Another € 17 million is being contributed by the European Social Fund (ESF). The government funding is targeted at training employees with few qualifications, whereas the ESF primarily promotes training for skilled workers.

This year alone, the Buderus Edelstahl Human Resource Development team has organised more than 180 state-sponsored training courses. In addition to the normal administrative effort associated with organising courses, from selecting the train-

ing provider through to paying for the hotel room, the Human Resources staff has increasingly had to deal with the bureaucracy involved in applying for grants. "But we are exceptionally well and competently advised and supported by the work agency in Wetzlar", declares Michaela Lorenz, Human Resource Development Officer.

The training promotes for example technology-related qualifications such as CNC turning, CNC milling, and welding. Other qualifications tailored to the company focus on core knowledge such as structure and properties of metals, principles of heat treatment, and annealing, hardening and tempering. One key aspect is training in the field of quality control. 15 employees have been or are being trained in performing,

assessing and evaluating non-destructive ultrasound, magnetic-particle and penetrant testing to gain their DIN certificates. Further courses in chemical analysis and spectroscopy and hardness testing complete the range.

Many employees are also using the opportunity to train as boiler operator or as skilled workers in materials technology or in stockholding and logistics.

The courses run from one day up to seven months, depending on the extent of the learning material. For example three employees of the Works Fire Service were trained over six months at Frankfurt Airport to become qualified works fire officers. From 2012, all full-time works fire-fighters will be required to have this training.

Employees are being kept fighting fit in the commercial area too, with sales training courses or courses in cost accounting and costing, or in SAP applications.

"We must use this time now to prepare our people ready for the future. This is creating a long-term effective value-added for our employees and for the company", says HR Manager Holger Kison.

One particularly heartening aspect is the commitment of employees, who de-

Normann Becker, Heiko Gerlach, Waldemar Hundt, Said Rahmani-Tehrani, Marcel Rieck, Markus Heidbreder (back, from left to right), Raphael Schlafke, Damian Kupka, Jan Christofer König, Peter Kaczmarczyk, Robert Sandig (front, from left to right)



spite the financial sacrifice involved, are not just using their short-time working as an opportunity to relax, but are seeking to purposefully develop themselves.

The training providers have also been struck by this. "In our courses we notice that Buderus Edelstahl employees are distinguished by a particular degree of enthusiasm and commitment", high praise indeed from Ingo Poschmann of the training provider Werkstoff Service GmbH. "We have



Michaela Lorenz, HR development, Ertan Arslantas, HR services, Holger Kison, HR management, Mira Michaela Haschke, HR development (from left to right)

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also noticed the high level of discipline and mutual helpfulness."

Many employees at Buderus Edelstahl have realised it makes sense to grasp the variety of opportunities offered by their employer. Because now it is important to gain qualifications to distinguish yourself from the crowd, and make yourself more employable. So the message for the crisis is, do not bury your head in the sand – bury your nose in a textbook.