

What helps people

LET`S SWING, MANAGER!

Budding business students deepen their basic knowledge with music.

In my experience, music can be successfully used in change work with people. I have developed a concept for this which I call "coaching, teaching and learning with music". Music can be a great motivator. It opens our senses, speaks to us and amplifies the lyrics that it sets to music. It addresses cognition and emotion together. This is also my concern as a coach. With my method I clearly distinguish myself from superlearning, where music is used in the background for relaxation while learning. In my approach, music is the content carrier and part of the learning process. The songs are, so to speak, the sung summary of the content of the respective learning material to be taught.

I have worked for several years as an innovation manager in industry and I am now a coach and lecturer with this object. The trainings I lead in companies and universities support my participants in finding innovative solutions for projects and tasks that lie ahead. Sometimes it is also about looking into the future and finding a task for oneself there. The students, for example, with whom I also work, still have their lives largely ahead of them. In the university field, I offer topics such as innovation and international marketing and teach about the product development process and entrepreneurial action in connection with innovative thinking and leadership behavior. In the industrial sector, beyond pure innovation and technology management, topics such as resilience, intercultural competence or even integration are often involved.

Swinging Innovation

How can the power of music be used, for example, to capture the fascination of innovation in sound? How can abstract concepts such as creativity, technology, mobility, change and idea generation be conveyed through music in such a way that they lead the seminar participants to knowledge, perhaps even an insight? For this purpose, important content that is to be recognized and understood must be written directly in the lyrics, which is already made clear in the title. The song "Fascination Innovation" conveys from the first line a positive attitude towards the central theme and reinforces it musically as a swing through repetitions in the powerfully elated chorus: "Fascination Innovation, don`t stand back no hesitaion...".

Music has always meant a lot to me as a means of expressing my feelings. At some point I began to perform my laudation musically at a celebratory event. And it was very well received. I am now making this experience again, using the power of music in coaching and teaching management topics. For the common work I won my friend and musician Nicolai F. Böhlefeld (guitar, bass, piano, synthesizers and arrangement). I myself contribute lyrics, composition and vocals. And again and again I experience it as amazing how dry manager German (or English) can be turned into catchy songs.

The swing rhythm in the song "Fascination Innovation", for example, conveys exactly the atmosphere of departure that is so important to me. A rock ballad on creativity sends my seminar participants on an inner search for their own creative powers. And the role that technology can play in this, I bring closer with a classic Rock'n Roll.

Now learners certainly prefer different styles of music. Every now and then, even someone is basically not able to do much with music. But in my experience, a song to a learning material is always inspiring. In my guest lecture "Leadership and Entrepreneurship", I asked students of business

administration whether they wanted to hear my music lecture in rock tango or rap. They decided on both, but they wanted to hear the rap first. They were in their second year of study, and the aim of the seminar was to teach them the basics and significance of innovation processes and link them to the demands of international marketing. With music this was almost effortless.

How I go about it

I present the song by either singing it myself or playing it as an audio file. Then I ask the seminar participants to remember messages from the song that move them. I then ask the listeners to tell me these messages, which I write on a whiteboard. The messages are about, for example, taking a new path, assessing and enduring a risk, facilitating the overcoming of boundaries and welding the team together for this.

Participants will then have the opportunity to study the soundtrack in detail, including individual verses. They will be given the lyrics. And at the repeated presentation many of them already sing along. In small groups, the participants experiment by musically varying verses, choruses or bridges, and even writing new lyrics. And they deepen the content of the material using the seminar materials. They assign definitions to the messages (e.g. product, strategy and business model) and work out the requirements for a manager. And again and again we bring the contents of the song to life as anchor points.

Each song is the musical guiding principle for the important themes. Important keywords appear in the lyrics: for example, it is about daring, teamwork, clear goals and market orientation. By exchanging their own thoughts and feelings while listening, the participants can deepen and internalize these concepts. Anyone who still has the song in their head or listens to it again later will also recall this knowledge. In this way, learning becomes sustainable and functions as an action orientation.

For self-study, tutorials in DVD format are available with a soundtrack CD, a video explaining the procedure (similar to the seminar) and a booklet on the learning content. Aspects of content that may not have been recognized through the music appear in the accompanying booklet and can be added to.

I use my concept in my work with pupils and students on the subject of "shaping the future" as well as with specialists and managers in further education and also in the context of general adult education, for example at adult education centres. The method makes it possible to work on different topics, including difficult or controversial learning content such as resilience, intercultural competence and integration.

Good feedback

To not only talk about innovations, but also to sing about them is an approach that can inspire. I often hear this in the feedback from the industry. "The creative combination of intellect and emotion in his presentations is particularly well received", says Albert Schenk, the owner of the successful company OSMA Aufzüge, for example. Hildegard Tröger, head of Health Training at the internal BMW Academy, is also convinced of learning with music. And the audience I work with there is made up of professionals. You can't fool them.

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