



## LET'S SWING, MANAGER!

### Business administration students deepen their basic knowledge with music

By Hans-Jürgen Boßmeyer

In my experience, music can be used successfully in change work with people. I have developed a concept for this that I call "coaching, teaching and learning with music". Music can be a great motivator. It opens our senses, appeals to us and reinforces the texts it sets to music. It appeals to cognition and emotion together. That is also my aim as a trainer. With my method, I clearly differentiate 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 description of the learning material to be conveyed.

I worked for several years as an innovation manager in industry and am now a coach and lecturer in this field. The training courses I run in companies and universities help my participants to find innovative solutions for the projects and tasks facing them. Sometimes it's also about taking a look into the future and finding a task for yourself there. After all, the students I work with, for example, still have most of their lives 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, the focus often goes beyond pure innovation and technology management to include topics such as resilience, intercultural competence and integration.

## 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 a realization, perhaps even to an insight?

To achieve this, important content that should be recognized and understood must be directly in the lyrics, which is already clear from the title. The song "Fascination Innovation" conveys a positive attitude towards the central theme from the very first line and reinforces it musically as a swing through repetitions in the powerfully upbeat refrain: "Fascination Innovation, he who does not dare has already lost..."

Music has always meant a lot to me as a means of expressing my feelings. At some point, I began to perform my laudatory speech musically at a festive event. And it was very well received. I'm having that experience again now, when I use the power of music in coaching and teaching management topics. I got my friend and musician Nicolai F. Böhlefeld (guitar, bass, piano, synthesizers and arrangement) to work with me. I myself contribute lyrics, composition and vocals. And I always find it amazing how dry managerial German (or English) can be turned into catchy songs.

The swing rhythm in the song "Fascination Innovation", for example, conveys exactly the spirit of optimism that I am looking for in an actually unwieldy term. A rock ballad about creativity sends my seminar participants on an inner search for their own creative powers. And I use a classic rock'n roll to explain the role that technology can play in this.

Now, learners certainly prefer different styles of music. Every now and then, someone has little interest in music. But in my experience, they are always enthusiastic about a song that accompanies a subject. In my guest lecture "Leadership and Entrepreneurship", I asked business administration students whether they wanted to hear my music lecture in rock tango or rap. They opted for both, but they wanted to hear the rap first. They were in their second year, and the aim of the seminar was to teach them the basics and importance of innovation processes and link them to the requirements of international marketing. Music made this almost effortless.

## How I proceed

I present the song by either singing it myself or playing it as an audio file. Then I ask the seminar participants to memorize messages from the song that move them. I then ask the listeners to share these messages with me, which I write on a whiteboard. The messages are, for example, about taking a new path, assessing a risk and also enduring it in order to make it easier to overcome boundaries and to weld the team together.

The participants then have the opportunity to study the soundtrack in detail, including individual verses. They are given the lyrics. And during the repeated presentation, many of them already sing along. In small groups, the participants experiment by musically varying verses, choruses or bridges, including new lyrics. And they deepen the content of the material using the seminar documents. They assign definitions to the messages (such as product, strategy and business model) and work out the requirements for a manager. And time and again, we use content from the song as anchor points.

Each song is the musical leitmotif for the important topics. Essential keywords appear in the song lyrics: for example, it is about risk, teamwork, clear goals and market orientation. Participants can deepen and internalize these concepts by sharing their own thoughts and feelings while listening to the song. Anyone who still has the song in their head or hears it again later can recall this knowledge. In this way, learning becomes sustainable and functions as an orientation for action.

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

I use my concept in my work with pupils and students on the topic 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 centers. 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**

Not only talking about innovations, but also singing about them is an approach that can inspire. I often hear this in feedback from the industry. "The creative combination of intellect and emotion in his presentations is particularly well received," says Albert Schenk, owner of the successful company OSMA Aufzüge. Hildegard Tröger, Head of Health Training at the internal BMW Academy, is also convinced by learning with music. And the audience I work with there is made up of professionals. They can't be fooled.



Dr. Hans-Jürgen Boßmeyer, singing coach and trainer from Munich, provides freelance support for specialists and managers in the field of shaping the future through innovation. [www.hjb-technologies.com](http://www.hjb-technologies.com)