

SERVICE RELIES ON PERSONALITIES

INTERVIEW WITH OTTO KAJETAN WEIXLER, CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT
AT BILFINGER HSG FACILITY MANAGEMENT GMBH
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For more than 25 years Bilfinger HSG Facility Management GmbH has been providing services for the entire lifecycle of real estate. Which quality characteristics do services "made in Germany" have and where does a company's service culture begin?

An interview with Otto Kajetan Weixler, Chairman of the Executive Management at Bilfinger HSG Facility Management GmbH.

Germany – a service desert. Is this statement still true?

No, it has changed quite a bit in recent years, for example in the FM industry. FM services were viewed disparagingly for many years, and they've developed into one of the few growth industries in Germany.

The FM industry has become substantially more professional in the last few years, and it has generated cost optimization potentials of more than 30 percent on average for its clients.

The industry offers very good development potential to a large number of employees from different professional groups and in the process it is becoming an export hit.

"Made in Germany" service quality characteristics like reliability, schedule-adherence and organizational skill, coupled with a wealth of ideas, are much in demand abroad.



Otto Kajetan Weixler, Chairman of the Executive Management at Bilfinger HSG Facility Management GmbH.

What do you think accounts for a company's service and leadership culture?

My guiding ideas for nearly 20 years have been that client interest equals self-interest, and "management by example" – these ideas are just as valid today as they have ever been. A company's service culture begins with an internal client relationship.

Each company's corporate departments need to know that they're there to support the operating units and to provide them with improved services, and not vice-versa. Because that's where our earnings are generated.

The service culture relies on the company having an entrepreneurial culture. We don't have a factory where we make things. Instead we serve our clients locally in many, many properties. In order to do that, we need many small

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entrepreneurs in the form of individual employees, each with their own special area of responsibility. The bosses on all levels play an important role here. Management by example is identification with the company; it is a willingness to help and dedication. It is to be a living example of what you expect from your employees. To be a boss doesn't mean having authority by virtue of your office, but rather having authority by virtue of setting an example. In our company we don't need unmanageable levels of hierarchy or glossy booklets with content that is well formulated but meaningless. Corporate values have to be practiced, or else no one will take them seriously.

What demands to you place on the employees?

We need well-trained employees, both in terms of the level of education and the level of experience. We need committed and responsible employees, not underlings and yes-men. Service relies on personalities – they are a company's calling card. This also includes an open and honest company culture. Our employees have to know the needs of our clients, have good listening skills, look with open eyes at the properties entrusted to them, and provide additional value with creative solutions.

Not the mickey mouse method of handling orders.

We need trouble-shooters who love solving problems for clients. More clients than ever before are willing to pay good money for that kind of service.

Can a strong service culture make jobs more secure?

Yes, and not only make jobs more secure, but even create new jobs. Every employee must know that the clients are going to make a new decision every two to three years about the job he's doing and whether or not to continue

commissioning his company. Operational experience they've had with the employees and management services they've received to improve cost optimization play decisive roles in this regard. That's why it's important to develop sustainable, lifecycle-oriented and energy-efficient approaches, and to always keep the client's benefit in mind. That means everyone is responsible on his own level for making sure that we inspire the clients with innovative services and products and obtain the consistent loyalty of our clients.

Does the organization promote the provision of good services?

We have, of course, created the necessary conditions, with an organizational alignment toward units that are easily understandable, and thus manageable. The company has to be "tangible" for both management and the employees. It should be possible for changes to be initiated through individual effort.

Our clients expect the process security and cost security of consolidated companies, and the flexibility, the adaptability and innovation of mid-sized companies. What they want is a company with an entrepreneurial spirit. That's why we've introduced an innovative participatory-management model. Everyone who contributes to a sustainable shareholder value should be rewarded for their entrepreneurial approach. But they must also stand accountable with their own money for negative developments. This gives us reason to expect lasting improvements in the sense of responsibility and cost-awareness, as well as identification with the company.

Mr. Weixler, thank you for the conversation.

