"Shortage of skilled labour? Doesn't exist with us!"

How Sedotec forges an attractive corporate culture and the role STRUCTOGRAM® plays in this process



How can you make the impossible possible? That was the task facing Sedo- tec a few years ago. The actual business model - the contract manufacturing of control cabinets in Germany - was no longer seen as economically feasible and the "corporate structures" that had been taken over made a reorientation difficult.

But instead of relocating production abroad, Sedotec chose a different path and successfully completed its development from "contract manufacturer" to "system provider" of a modular enclosure system with lean management thinking and STRUCTOGRAM®.

Find out how Dirk Seiler, Rüdiger Baumann & the entire Sedotec team managed to successfully shape this transformation process - and how STRUCTO- GRAM® has helped to form a performance-orientated corporate culture that attracts strong employees.

"The market is ready for us"

6 December 2023 is a public holiday for Sedotec in Ladenburg: the developer and manufacturer of a modular control cabinet system has completed the last contract manufacturing for ABB. A fundamental and radical transformation has been completed for the medium-sized company.

The separation from the Group, whose predecessor companies were established in the 19th century, has been completed. The former corporate division has arrived in the 21st century. A new company that Dirk Seiler, as managing partner, has set up in a new spirit together with his advisors, the members of the management and ultimately the entire team. The company is confidently entering the market for low-voltage energy distribution. Se- dotec is a pioneer for climate neutrality. "The market is ready for us," says Dirk Sei- ler.

System manufacturer for the energy transition

Sedotec develops and builds modular control cabinet systems for low voltage, which are configured according to individual customer requirements, like a complex piece of system furniture. The customers are medium-sized companies like Sedotec. They determine all the parameters and - just like when buying a kitchen - they can choose which appliance manufacturer they buy the technical components from. The control cabinets, on the other hand, are invisible elements in the low-voltage network. They play a key role in the conversion of our energy supply from the previous system of centrally designed large-scale technical plants, in which power plants distribute electricity to consumers in a cascade from top to bottom, to an increasingly decentralised energy supply from renewable sources in the future. A large number of producers and consumers are connected to each other in the grid, which can also change their roles as feeders and consumers.

Freedom to take responsibility

Since the 19th century, the old system has been epitomised by a company like ABB and its predecessors. Steffen Vree, industrial engineer and Head of Product Management at Sedotec, started at ABB in 1997, "and I experienced the decline when the business with large power plants and large-scale chemicals began to collapse."



Dirk Seiler

In 2004, Dirk Seiler - a graduate engineer and industrial engineer, expert on the new economy and its failures, management consultant and competitive athlete - took over the switch cabinet production on the ABB site in La- denburg near Heidelberg. At the time, the company was turning over 10 million euros thanks to contract manufacturing by the previous owner and was able to increase this turnover further. But at the same time, "ABB squeezed us like a lemon," Dirk Seiler recalls. He believed in the change from a contract manufacturer to the developer of a new, modular system that focussed on the freedom of the individual. The freedom to decide in favour of a certain technology, in favour of performance, in favour of the joy of shared success and, above all, in favour of personal responsibility in the workplace.

entire value creation process.

Sedotec wants to expand its strong position

When Sedotec started to invest in the development of a switchgear system in 2006, Steffen Vree felt that this was a sign of cluelessness: "It was crazy at first, but then there was no turning back. For a long time, the old thinking prevailed in the company that contract manufacturing for ABB was the core business. Let the new boss pursue his idea of a modular system, then he won't interfere with our real work. But the colleagues who thought this way were lulled into a false sense of security. Today, with Vamocon, the modular system, we have a success that has earned us a reputation," says Steffen Vree. Today, Sedotec is the number two in switchgear construction in the low-voltage sector after Siemens. And Dirk Seiler is determined to expand this position. To realise this, Sedotec also opened one of the most modern lean-benchmark assembly facilities for switchgear cabinets in Mittweida in 2013.

Steffen Vree is Head of Product Management at Sedotec. For him, the department is "the brain" of the company.



According to him, the transition from contract manufacturer to system supplier places great demands on Sedotec, "because we develop electrical systems in a wide range of variants and in all their complexity. For example, the systems must be able to withstand non-typical operational loads such as a short circuit. We bear product responsibility. This is much more than just screwing sheet metal together according to a predetermined plan."

Steffen Vree first came into contact with Structogram in 2016 when he was trained by Ralf China following preparation by Rüdiger Baumann. He says: "The analysis confirmed who I am. It explained a few things to me and made it easier to work with others. I now know that people with a green dominance need a conversation starter phase, which I don't actually need, and I also sometimes say: don't always ask how I am, but say what you want. I distribute the tasks in the team differently and acceptance among the team has increased. Yes, I can also push, but that's not enough."

The "North Star" in the company

For Rüdiger Baumann, Head of Human Resources and member of the Executive Board, Dirk Seiler epitomises the path to Nordstern through the pillars of "vision and philosophy" like no other. Rüdiger Baumann has already worked in various companies and in Dirk Seiler, he says, he has found "an entrepreneur who wants to make a difference and who, with a hundred employees, is more successful in convincing the market than many a corporation". Rüdiger Baumann joined Sedotec in the mid-2010s. At that time, Sedotec had reached its sales peak with ABB and contract manufacturing was noticeably changing from a supposedly unconditional source of revenue to a profit destroyer.



Rüdiger Baumann

The pressure to transform grew.

Dirk Seiler speaks of "pain therapy". But as a middle distance athlete, he pushes himself to the limit and beyond. First comes the pain, then the success.

STRUCTOGRAM® enables cultural change

Dirk Seiler, who seeks advice and support because he knows that no one can do everything, converted the company to lean management with the help of his lean consultant. "But lean management," he says, "is more than competitiveness, cleanliness and order in the company. Because people work in the company, and I have to pick them up in order to achieve success with them. I have to reduce the pain of transformation for everyone. It's a question of culture and that's how Rüdiger Baumann and I came together. Unboss management is part of our culture. The boss is a supporter. He is a coach who encourages the creativity of each individual so that everyone can unleash their energy and creativity. Rüdiger Baumann, in turn, brought Structogram with him. "Structogram is our most important tool for reaching people in the company with cultural change." At the beginning, admits Dirk Seiler, "we were very sceptical. We asked ourselves: What is it? Doesn't it just cost money?"

Waldemar Pinnecker is a wholesale and retail salesman and subsequently obtained a Bachelor of Arts in economics.



He wants to achieve something. He was a trainee at Krupp, branch manager of a steel trading company in Stuttgart and purchasing manager at an automotive supplier. In spring 2022, he joined Sedotec as Head of Purchasing.

What attracted him to Sedotec was the company's impressive development. Waldemar Pinnecker asked himself: "Where does Sedotec want to go in the transformation from fossil fuels to renewable energies? Where are the prospects for me in this dynamically growing company?"

Waldemar Pinnecker was familiar with personality analyses from the Thyssen Group, but the Structogram analysis was new to him. Rüdiger Baumann familiarised him with biostructural analysis during his first few weeks at the company. Waldemar Pinnecker finds it "very interesting how you deal with people after the biostructural analysis without the interlocutor feeling attacked.

I am a manager and want to steer people in the right direction with the right approach. We are currently introducing a new ERP system. That's a change for everyone. I can allay the fears of the green-dominated employees through dialogue, give the red-dominated employees the perspective of success and give the blue-dominated employees more security through factual information. The basic prerequisite for this is, of course, that the employees want the change in the company and in their own behaviour in the first place. Otherwise I'd be like Don Quixote tilting at windmills."

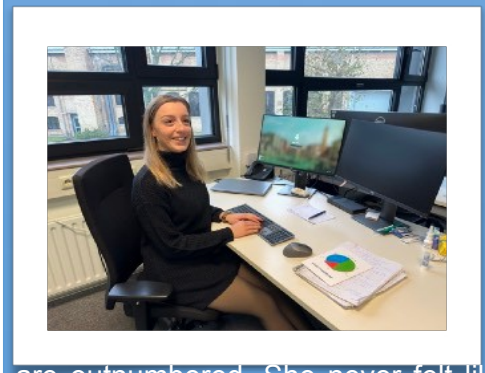
"People want to work here"

Rüdiger Baumann has convinced the doubters. "Mr Seiler's courage is paying off. The culture is what makes Sedotec special and people want to work here," says Rüdiger Baumann. When he came to Sedotec, he found a "classic industrial company". He met people who didn't just enjoy their work and who often didn't understand each other. One complained that the other had left him out in the cold.

For Rüdiger Baumann, who was trained as a Structogram trainer by Ralf China, Structogram Master Trainer and experienced management consultant, nothing was more obvious than bringing people closer to their own self-knowledge: "Structogram is the right tool to help people recognise their own biostructure in a simple way, so that they understand their own natural way of being themselves, but also understand the natural imprint of others. If I know myself, I know how I come across to others. Then I can use my strengths sensibly and contain my weaknesses. Then I know how I should approach and interact with others."

In this way, Structogram enables better cooperation within the company and with customers through personality development, more effective communication and solution-orientation. The idea behind it is: corporate development through the personal development of employees.

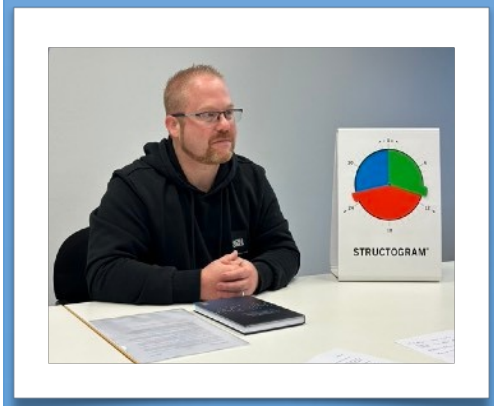
Vanessa Weigt first trained as a nursery school teacher and then decided to retrain as an industrial clerk. She chose Sedotec for her internship as part of her retraining programme because she didn't want to work for a "giant company", but for a medium-sized business.



Her unsolicited application was successful and the internship was followed by a permanent position. With her roughly equal strengths in the blue and green components, she has a strength in the introduction of the new ERP system. She has familiarised herself deeply with the software. She appreciates the collegiality and the atmosphere in the company. The fact that women are outnumbered in a technically orientated company is not a disadvantage. Everyone is open-minded and has welcomed her well. After all, she comes from a profession in which women in the are outnumbered. She never felt like an intern at Sedotec, but was immediately involved in relevant projects such as the ERP system changeover.

Vanessa Weigt was not familiar with Structogram and she had not expected the connections in human interaction that working with Structogram would make her aware of:
"You now know that you shouldn't take certain behaviour of others personally, such as the flare-up of colleagues with a large red component or that other colleagues don't say 'good morning' because they are engrossed in a task. I'm familiar with this with my big blue colour." She can now also deal with people better in her private life. However, there is one thing the biostructural analysis should not allow: "You shouldn't rest on your laurels. Your personal nature must not be an excuse to maintain your own behaviour without reflection. You have to name the conflicts with others and then work on them."

Alexander Stumpf has learnt for his professional life thanks to Structogram. From now on, he wants to "motivate, inspire and motivate my colleagues in the service centre with my energetic personality".



He is a trained electrician and worked for many years for the US Army as a civilian employee throughout Europe - until an injury limited his mobility. He moved to Sedotec in mid-2023, although he was not familiar with the company until then. But HR Manager Rüdiger Baumann contacted Alexander Stumpf soon after receiving his application and everything fell into place.

"I feel comfortable here," says Alexander Stumpf, "because I am seen as a person. The teamwork is very good. Teamwork is great across all departments. Colleagues are there for you straight away if you need anything."

Structogram, says Alexander Stumpf, helped him to recognise his red dominance in his biostructure. This gave him "a clear view of my dominant personality. It helped me to understand that my preferences for leadership and decision-making can serve as a strength in a team. By realising this, I was able to communicate more consciously with my team colleagues and respond better to their needs. Previously, I tended to make decisions on my own. After using the Structogram, I realised that this could lead to resentment and misunderstandings. Now I consciously work on harmonising my dominant nature with the needs of my team colleagues. This has led to more open communication and increased team dynamics.

The challenge is to recognise the fine line between leadership and dominance. The Structogram has helped me to understand this better. I am also working on better recognising the opinions and contributions of others. It is important to appreciate and utilise the diversity of personalities in the team.

My advice would be to use the Structogram as a tool for self-reflection. For me, this means: Understand your dominant personality as a strength, but also be prepared to respond to the needs of others. Use the knowledge of how different personality types work together to enhance team performance. Structogram has helped me to work more effectively while creating a respectful and co-operative team environment for myself and my colleagues.

Assess yourself and others better

Rüdiger Baumann prepared the employees for this approach and the planned use of the analysis tool and Ralf China began working with the managers as an external partner. Rüdiger Baumann then familiarised the other management levels and finally the entire team with the biostructural analysis and the Structogram training system.

The use of biostructural analysis and Structogram brought the success Rüdiger Baumann expected: people can better assess themselves and others and interact with each other in a more understanding way. "You can better assess why the other person is talking or why not," says Rüdiger Baumann, describing the effect of the analysis. Some people - for example - first want to build trust with the other person using friendly words. However, the other person may want to get straight to the point without the usual empty phrases. Others demanded clarity through

Facts with a view to the future. Third parties, on the other hand, wanted to act immediately and set off without asking about the willingness of others to act or clarifying the path to the future before setting off.

Managers as coaches

Rüdiger Baumann reports that thanks to Structogram, there is more communication between the team members in everyday life at Sedotec. A photo of each team member is stored on the intranet with a little information about the person and the result of the biostructural analysis. Thanks to Structogram, people promote their ideas within the company and explain to others what they are doing. They listened more and asked questions. The project manager asked the others: "How can I help?" A better understanding of oneself and others creates the conditions for managers to become coaches and for the concept of lean management to be practised at all.

Kevin Lehn is a maintenance fitter. He joined Sedotec in summer 2023 as a team leader in the folding centre.

He opted for "a medium-sized company that is looking for progress. I wanted to join an employer where it was fun to work. The customer focus is radical, Sedotec's mission statement is inspiring. You are not a number. I am Kevin Lehn here and I was happy to take the management position that came with the move to Sedotec.

Kevin Lehn was looking forward to the biostructural analysis because he likes learning about himself.



He previously thought he was "balanced", but the questions he asked himself and answered in the analysis showed that he is 50 per cent "red", and he admits that he is one of the impatient ones. When he senses that a task is imminent, tomorrow is always too late for him to complete it. Now he takes the time to deal carefully with those who need more empathy and to give more information to those who want to plan the way forward, even though a red-dominee - like him - doesn't really care about the path.

Kevin Lehn likes to look at the sharepoint on the Sedotec intranet, where he can find out more about his colleagues in Ladenburg and at the Mittweida site. This is because the biographical structure of all employees, right up to the managing partner, is stored there.

"We must not neglect continuous employee development"

All newcomers to the Sedotec team are prepared for constructive collaboration in the first few weeks with Structogram. And they don't just receive training. "We give our people technical training at least once a year. Measured against this, we must not neglect the pillar of our employee development," says Rüdiger Baumann: "After all, it is the employees who provide 600 suggestions for improvement every year and who will successfully establish our innovative, modular switchgear system on the market and thus double our turnover in just a few years." Other tools are also used to show appreciation for everyone in the team.

Rüdiger Baumann speaks of a "whole bouquet of flowers", ranging from a health allowance, an insurance benefit to arrange an appointment with a specialist within 48 hours, a childcare allowance, a company pension scheme, educational leave, birthday presents and fruit at work. Rüdiger Baumann does not see a shortage of skilled labour: "There are 83 million people in Germany. But we have too many companies that are stuck in the past and unattractive. At Sedotec, we are successful because we find the best employees for the right position and strengthen people's strengths."

Laura Dengler is a technical product designer and has also qualified as a technical specialist . She came 2019 via a service provider, a temporary employment agency, to Sedotec and was taken on permanently by the system supplier in 2020.



She appreciates the security of a permanent position. Above all, however, it was not difficult for her to join Sedotec. "I felt comfortable here at work and in the team right from the start. Being taken on as a permanent employee gave me a positive feeling: we like her. It suits us."

According to Laura Dengler, who works in product development, the tasks and the product also suit her: "You can tell that the company and the product are evolving. The product fits in with the times. It is a future-proof product. We fit into the era of climate neutrality, where flexibility is required. Yes, I would like to stay here. I have found a team in which I can continue to develop."

When Laura Dengler was introduced to biostructural analysis, she was initially sceptical, as she had already completed a "more psychological personality analysis" in the world of work, "and sometimes I don't want to know exactly". But working with Structogram in the group was "a lot of fun. And everything was right and fitted." Although the biostructural analysis does not make the actual work any easier, talking to other people, especially those from other departments, makes it easier to approach them. "Of course, sometimes someone has a bad day and is quick-tempered, even if they are a little red, but analysing all of us in the company has helped us to better assess ourselves and others. That doesn't mean that I put myself and my opinion at the back of the queue. I am a very positive person and enter into discussions, but I try to avoid arguments in the sense of a personal rather than factual conflict."

"We believe in Germany as a business location"



However, Dirk Seiler is careful to avoid any possible misunderstandings: "We are not a fun factory that only produces fun, but still a company that has to generate a result. I am an employer, not a fun animator." However, the managing partner of Sedotec is convinced that lean management has helped the company to survive.

In order to successfully implement lean management, Structogram is the foundation of the necessary, continuous employee development towards a culture that generates success. Dirk Seiler is convinced: "We believe in Germany as a location and in its people. We have found answers to not having to take our production to Turkey or China. We are smart enough to make good profits in Germany."

Sedotec was honoured as TOP EMPLOYER IN THE MITTELSTAND* in 2024 - for the fifth time in a row! Sedotec says THANK YOU to everyone who gave them a top rating on kununu and to FOCUS-Business for the evaluation - and Sedotec is working hard to continue to be one of the best employers in the German SME sector!

* More than 900,000 German companies and their approximately 4 million employee reviews on kununu are analysed for this purpose. In addition to company size and employee evaluation content and number, the criteria taken into account include the recommendation rate in particular. The companies that are most popular with employees are published annually by FOCUS-Business, categorised by industry, on the basis of best lists.

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