

Initial Situation

The loss of transport contracts has led to a change in corporate philosophy of DB Regio, region southeast : centralisation of administration and management and a changed mindset of management and staff. The organisation has to become more flexible and focused on competition for further transport contracts plus being aware of regulations of current transport contracts causing contractual penalties. New processes, new culture, new structure – they can be excellent, but the success is always depending on how to implement these changes. Apart from the usual training or dialogue oriented presentation there must be a better way to really convince the employees, and in addition make them support the transformation. As the boss is the most important success factor for each change process, it is inevitable to enable the management in fulfilling this multiplier role. The solution is a Dialogue Game ! The innovative idea of combining games, hidden object drawing and workshop-methods, which addresses emotion, includes the fun of playing and winning and the transportation of serious information.

Course of Action

The first step to develop a Dialogue Game is to define the most important aims and key messages that need to be conveyed. We used interviews and a workshop to extract them from the top management. According to the aims we generated a suitable game mechanism for tendering transport contracts and all the changes of structure, process and culture. Several playful tasks, quiz questions and incidents were derived in the areas : strategy, culture, structure, processes as well as decision making in economical and rail operational fields. These tasks had to be very close to the occupational routines of the employees and obviously had to cover the key messages. In parallel the changes, typical situations and symbols had to be drawn, being the game board. Several auditions with management and project team were held to adjust the Dialogue Game. The whole management was trained as game masters and in leadership culture.

Success Factor

The top management support is essential for the success, they have to be convinced of this method and act as role model. The enthusiasm of the employees was strongly connected with the recognition of the drawing and the contents. Playing the Dialogue Game was part of the trainings and thus every employee experienced a representative of the management as a game master, cascading from top management down to group leaders. This also ensured the commitment of every management level. A good mixture of having time to discuss, learning and having fun by playing increased the success.

Result

Even with little means it is possible to use the innovative method of a gameful learning. Addressing emotions by using competition and the desire to win helps to change point of views and profoundly understand market mechanisms or new ideas. With the Dialogue Game the managers were acting as multipliers of change being in dialogue with their staff. And the employees came to a better understanding of the changes in their company.