



VerA initiative – Senior Experts support trainees

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Introducing VerA

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Many young people face problems during vocational training. These may be difficulties of a professional nature, conflicts within the company or concerns within their own personal lives.

If several issues occur at the same time, there is the danger of training dropouts.

VerA tackles problems early

The project is targeted at all trainees who feel that they need support. VerA aims to avoid training dropouts and improve the training process by intervening quickly to help young people help themselves.

The idea behind the project

VerA provides volunteer Senior Experts to offer regular 1-to-1 assistance to young people. These training mentors bring a wealth of work and life experience to the table and are able to provide the necessary guidance. They act as confidants working together with the trainees to identify solutions and possible ways forward.

VerA – operating right across Germany

The VerA team is based at the Senior Experten Service (SES) in Bonn. It directs a pool of training mentors with the help of around 70 local regional coordinators. VerA is able to call upon the services of around 1,700 specially trained Senior Experts.

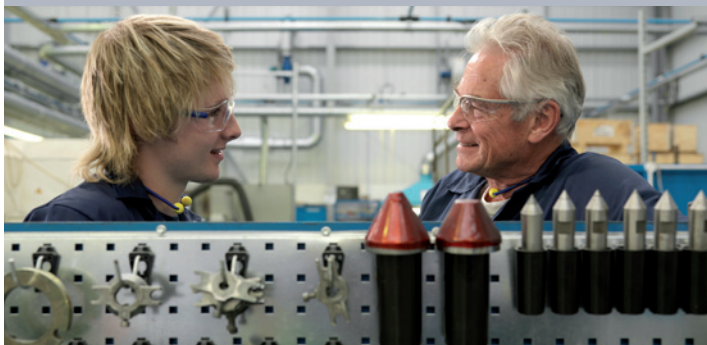


Win-win situation – VerA links generations

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Many training contracts in Germany are prematurely dissolved. Between 20 and 25 percent of young people fail to complete their training. Even if many are later able to return to the vocational education and training system, the move from school to the world of work is often anything but smooth. Although there are numerous projects offering support, such measures frequently only provide assistance until an individual has found a training place.

VerA goes one step further by ensuring that a precisely tailored provision is in place during the period of training itself. The voluntary training mentors enjoy working with young people and passing on their life and work experience in such a useful way. For their part, the trainees benefit from the professional and personal skills the Senior Experts are able to provide.



VerA – always ready to listen

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Every trainee requiring support can benefit from VerA. The range of services is wide and addresses the individual situations in which young people typically find themselves.

Trainees can contact VerA if

- ☐ they have problems with the theoretical content of training
- ☐ they are suffering from examination nerves
- ☐ they wish to improve their knowledge of German
- ☐ they lack motivation
- ☐ they are struggling with their career choice
- ☐ they are experiencing conflict within the company
- ☐ they have personal concerns

“We trust each other.
Now I feel able to
address my personal
problems.”

Oliver, 18

“I never would have thought
that the support would help
me so much. But I have already
become more confident.
My training mentor really
believes in me.”

Daniel, 19

*"VerA has helped me
to pass my examinations
and complete my training
successfully.
You can do it too!"*

Julia, 19

*"I was a little bit
nervous to begin with.
My training mentor is old
enough to be my grandfather.
But everything is going really
well. I feel that he totally
understands me."*

Sara, 18

*"The atmosphere
with my boss was really
terrible. Now I have
learned to stay cool
and deal with situations
in the right way."*

Annika, 20

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*"Because things were going
so badly, I even met my training
mentor twice a week
to start with. I'm now getting on
much better and only contact her
when the odd bad situation occurs."*

Robin, 21

*"My training mentor is fantastic.
She is on the ball technically
and can explain things
really well."*

Florian, 17

“My training mentor
helped me to cope
with my job and child
at the same time.”



Teamwork based on trust



Trainees and Senior Experts form a strong **training tandem**.

Support is provided in the following way:

- Young people contacting VerA are usually allocated a training mentor near where they live within two weeks.
- The trainee and the Senior Expert work together to agree targets and plan the support process.
- They meet on a regular basis, right up until the end of training if required.
- All experts are volunteers and support is provided individually and free of charge.
- Cooperation takes place on a voluntary basis.
- The company providing training is only notified of the support arrangements if the trainee agrees.



Experience counts



VerA training mentors

- ... are retired women and men with experience
- ... are familiar with company processes
- ... have the necessary specialist and training content knowledge
- ... are highly motivated and enthusiastic about their task
- ... can empathise with the problems and worries of young people
- ... take the time that is needed

Training mentors take part in a two-day course in order to prepare for their role. The volunteer Senior Experts receive a small, monthly tax-free payment to cover their expenses. All Senior Experts are insured for accident and liability through the Senior Experten Service (SES).

Background

VerA was initiated at the end of 2008 by the Senior Experten Service (SES), a leading German volunteer organisation for retired specialists and management staff. Alongside its involvement in international development work, SES is now also supporting more and more young people in Germany. VerA is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and forms part of the “Educational Chains” initiative. This brings together existing federal government and federal state vocational orientation and school-to-work transition programmes in order to ensure that more young people successfully complete their training.

➔ www.bmbf.de/en/index.php

➔ www.bildungsketten.de

➔ www.ses-bonn.de

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