

TOOL 2.1. GUIDELINES FOR THE HOSTING SME

These short guidelines are addressed to the hosting SME and it include:

- a. Overall checklist for preparing the WBL start
- b. Suggestions for the first meetings with the learner.

a. Overall checklist for preparing the WBL start

Before the WBL
Are all managers and employees informed of the learner's starting day?
Is it defined who will be the responsible tutor for the learner? Is he/she available on the first day of the WBL?
Is the learner working place, cupboard, documents etc. already prepared? (professional clothing, name tag, computer password, ...)
Are the program and procedures for the first day already planned?
Make sure the learner passed the obligatory instructions on the prevention of risks at workplace or that he/she will do it when joining the company.
Arrange with the learner a motivation letter/e-mail from him/her and/or a skype meeting before the his/her arrival [see the following point b. <i>Suggestions for the first meetings</i>].
On the first day of the WBL
<i>Welcoming the learner</i>
Take the time to receive the learner. Keep in mind that he / she will probably be nervous.
Arrange a first bilateral conversation to break the ice [see the following point b. <i>Suggestions for the first meetings</i>].

Company tour / showing premises

Make a tour so that the learner gets a first impression of the training company.

Introduction meeting

- Introducing the team: present all relevant employees to the learner. Make sure that he/she knows whom his/her contact persons are.
- Introduction to the WBL: present the procedure of the training and the main points of the company's internal regulations (house rules, breaks, lunch etc.).
- Give the learner everything he/she needs to start the WBL in the company (work clothes, passwords, etc.).

First activities

Show the learner his / her workplace.

Involve the learner in first interesting, but also workable tasks.

It is particularly important to assign one task that are to be carried out on the first day of the WBL. This task will give the learner the feeling to be engaged and have accomplished something.

Debrief discussion and outlook

At the end of the first day, review the day. Answer questions. Provide an overview on what the learner is expected to be working on in the coming days. Ensure that the learner leaves your company with a positive feeling.

b. Suggestions for the first meetings

The main goal of this section is to provide tips to promote the initial direct communication between the hosting SME and the learner.

By this time both SME and learners know their profiles that contain important information regarding the parties but a face-to-face contact is still missing. The below suggested interactions in the one hand facilitate to break the ice, but more than this, can foster mutual awareness and trust.

We can consider four possibilities:

- *Motivation letter*
- *Skype meeting*
- *Photo report*
- *Personal meeting.*
- *Motivation letter*

Asking learners to write a motivation letter/e-mail before their arrival is a useful way to get them to sit and arrange their thoughts. It proves helpful to them, to concretize their goals and aspirations, to facilitate analytical thinking, questioning, on the other hand it brings the learner closer to the hosting SME.

Recommendations:

- It is possible to ask a free general motivation letter/e-mail, as well as to ask more specific questions, e.g.: *What are the aspects of our country are you more interested in? What motivates you in this project? If a song could represent you/your expectations regarding the WBL project, which song would you choose? At the end of the WBL project, what would make you feel successful and happy? What are your strength points that you can valorise in this WBL experience with us? (1-3 examples would be great)*
- The learner put energy into writing the motivation letter; therefore, it is just fair that the receiver react to it. The answer can be a short email, a phone call or a skype call (to say thanks, to answer possible questions, to give a first welcome).

- *Photo report / PowerPoint presentation*

The photo report is a possible alternative to the motivation letter. It allows a more informal approach and a creative way to present oneself. It can be used both by the learners and the company, and it can be used as a good “icebreaker” to talk about during the first meeting (skype or face-to-face):

- ✓ the choice of pictures should be relevant
- ✓ it should have a storyboard: starting point, major topics, end
- ✓ it can be enriched by short comments, contents about the photos
- ✓ it shouldn't be longer than 5-7 slides / 5-7 minutes,
- ✓ the covered topics can vary:
 - for the learner e.g.: city of residence, hobbies, family, school, motivations, cool things to know about him/her, etc.
 - for the host SMEs e.g.: city, company and its success moments, colleagues, good things to know about the local social life /culture/history.

- *Skype meeting*

After having received the motivation letter or the photo/ppt presentation and before the arrival of the learner, a skype meeting can be organized. It is important to remind:

- ✓ test the smooth functioning, the camera and the sound settings before realizing the meeting; setting the camera and the image in a pleasant way
- ✓ scheduling a due time and hour, which is convenient for both parties
- ✓ preparing for the meeting with a short presentation
- ✓ having a short list of questions
- ✓ avoiding long monologues, having patience till the other finishes what he/she wants to say and show active listening
- ✓ asking to ask questions and giving feedback

- *Personal meeting*

Before to arrange it should be better to go over one of the above steps (e.g. motivation letter or skype meeting).

You can start the icebreaking with a playful, informal interview.

What to ask? Anything, that has to do with the person, doesn't embarrass him/her too much, and serves as a starting point to get to know each other. Below you find a list of possible basic questions. Choose a reasonable number of questions, 6 – 8, the ones you like most.

E.g.:

- *What are your hobbies? What do you like in it? What is the biggest challenge in it?*
- *What would like to know better of our country/culture?*
- *What do you like the most of your studies?*
- *What motivates you in this project?*
- *At the end of the WBL project, what would make you feel successful and happy?*
- *Is there something in which our tutor (or our team) could support you particularly? (practical issues, personal issues, study program matters, etc.)*