

BEN'S WORLD

Let's get down to brass tacks

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BY BEN RUND

Everybody has a lot on their plates in the last quarter. Which is why I will not be beating around the bush at the end of the year, but getting down to brass tacks, as those without southern German dialects commonly say. And non-southern German for us southerners begins north of Frankfurt. If this offends you because you are one of these people, then I apologise profusely. You are missing out. Sitting in my heavily-accented Swabian glass house, I probably shouldn't be throwing stones. Which is why I am writing here and not producing a podcast. A podcast? Dear Produktkulturmagazin, wouldn't that be an idea for quickly capturing content and packaging it for easy consumption?

But back to language for the time being. Whenever I say my English is better than my German, the initial reaction of laughter is quickly followed by the question of whether it is as good as that of politician Günther Oettinger. I grin, simultaneously concealing my fury, and admit that I prefer to record my podcast in English rather than in German. Dear reader, just be happy that I am writing to you here and not speaking to you in my Swabian dialect.

The fourth quarter is the most important one of the year for software companies, often delivering in excess of 40 per cent of annual sales. Sometimes, you could be forgiven for thinking it's a matter of life and death. Yes, often it's about your job, your career, your family, your home, your ego. Today however, it is all about what really counts – which I would like to explain to you using three examples. I don't claim to have invented all this, but it helps me, and maybe you as well, just as a refresher.

First example: What makes me happy now? Know the kind of person I'm talking about? I call them blubberers. Blubberers are always boo-hooing. In the vernacular: 'blubbing'. Actually, it's more of a lamenting. Why does my neighbour have a new Mercedes again? Blubberers are always keen on asking why they don't have this or are incapable of doing that – despite the fact that there are countless reasons to be in good spirits and content. My tip for keeping things positive in difficult situations is to think of at least three, or even better five, things that cheer you up. You can do this en route to work in the morning. These things can be completely banal in nature. You are on your way to see your dentist or going to an interview and are somehow nervous. There are lots of things that bring you joy. Be it the weather, your children's laughter, your football team winning – even a note on the fridge door or the rear-view mirror as a reminder.

The second example: Grrrr... I hate that guy. Hate? That's a really strong word. But I am certain that you have said this at some point in your life or have at least thought it. We're referring to the neighbour who is constantly threatening to take us to court, the boss who always criticises but never praises, and so on, and

so forth. It doesn't really need to be about hate in difficult situations with people who quickly become aggressive or loud or who are just extremely tough, savvy negotiating partners. I am absolutely certain you can immediately think of somebody towards whom you have negative feelings or who makes you feel uncomfortable before meeting them. And this person will sense this as well. Your brain and hence behaviour will therefore be preconditioned. The result: pre-programming. On the positive side: you can change this. How? My advice: here, I pursue the same idea as in example one. Think of at least three things that you like about the person in question. Even simple things can help. Great socks, sleek tie, awesome shades, honest, direct, slim, sporty, successful when it comes to topic X. You will almost certainly think of something. Preferably just beforehand, as the mood, the stance and the result will therefore be different. What you imagine will happen will actually happen. Just like in the case of penalty shootouts; when you are certain that you will net the ball, you will actually do so.

My final example is a little anecdote, summarising something that really impressed me recently. Attending a workshop, I noticed a young developer. Inconspicuously dressed and confirming countless prejudices. But he stuck out from the very first discussion. Question after question. And then more questions. It transpired that the programmer had never before dealt with the topic and had only been with the company for a month. But I would never have guessed this. Afraid of nobody: not of old people, young people, internal employees, external staff, bosses and non-bosses. Just getting down to it. Without holding back. Ask questions. He who asks questions, leads. And with this in mind: think big, like the fuel consumption of a container ship. Think big. Where is the willingness? Read 'Die Welt' and put your glasses away.

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