



Press Release

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From judgement to dialogue – OTTO aims to improve its corporate feedback culture

The online retailer OTTO is working to boost transparency and will carry out assessments of the working atmosphere as well as the performance of its employees and managers both digitally and in personal meetings.

It couldn't be easier – with just a few keystrokes, the new digital tool 'Feedback in Dialogue' lets OTTO employees assess themselves and their own performance, while at the same time their supervisors fill out the same digital form with their assessment of their employees. Both parties then meet personally to discuss where their assessments match and differ. What's more, from now on the direct reports' assessment of their supervisors will work in the same way, but with the boss only able to see the anonymised statements of all his or her team-members. Furthermore, supervisors will receive feedback from their own direct superiors on their performance, and will be able to add their own self-assessment to this. In the open discussion that follows, which can be facilitated by specially trained HR staff if requested, all parties discuss criticisms and available solutions. Further modules for specific needs, for instance project assessment, qualifications and targets, are planned to be added over the coming months – all selectable with just a click.

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Supervisory Board: Dr Michael Otto (Chairman)

Overall, this fresh approach will integrate employees even further than before in the feedback and assessment process. Up to now, this type of system-based advance self-assessment was not possible:

- the aim is to make the assessment process more transparent
- with more open, peer-based dialogue
- promoting regular exchanges of views
- faster and simpler
- and can be carried out at any time on the employee's request.

Feedback discussions were previously held on a fixed date just once a year at OTTO, were inflexible –and often too one-sided.

“Feedback in Dialogue is an integral part of our Leadership and Cooperation initiative, which is supporting our drive to change the way we work together and interact – and an assessment system is naturally a decisive element within this. We're moving away from judgement and towards dialogue. For the individual employee, this means we're moving away from a 'traditional assessment' situation and towards an approach based on much more frequent meetings that focus primarily more on an open exchange of views than on formal assessment by the supervisor”, explains Katy Roewer, Member of the OTTO Management Board, Service and Human Resources. “More than ever before, supervisors are required to be both talent managers and coaches for their employees – this also includes giving regular, uncomplicated feedback and opening up individual development prospects for them”, continues Röwer.

Beyond this, OTTO carries out an annual employee survey on 'Leadership and Cooperation'; this year's result saw a significant improvement on the 2015 baseline, the year in which OTTO launched this strategic initiative. All employees are invited to take part anonymously and to submit an assessment of their direct supervisor as well as their team's collaboration. The results are then made available to everyone in the company.

The background: the overriding goal of the 'Leadership and Cooperation' initiative was and remains to provide OTTO with modern working methods and to structure the company flexibly to meet the changing requirements of the market.

In Hamburg around 4,300 employees work for the single company OTTO. The online retailer now generates over 90 per cent of its revenues online.

Many activities of the OTTO HR Area are already digitalised, for instance with a digital HR portal including reports, digital workflows, clock-in/clock-out, holiday overview, remuneration calculation, pensions, plus new mainly Internet-based collaboration and communication methods with blogs, an instant messenger and collaboration platforms. Thanks to these innovations OTTO is a more attractive employer than ever. Employees demand tools like these and want to be able to view their personal data and OTTO-internal projects whenever they want – and the company is responding to their wishes.

Through this approach OTTO has established a very open culture, with a high level of interaction, co-determination, feedback and transparency.

For further information please visit: www.otto.de/unternehmen/en.

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