

Just a chat – with a member of staff

ROBERT LEENTJENS – Holland

What do you like most about your job?

I like working with people, and I like the challenge of finding the right combination of lessons and services which match a student's needs.

What do you do in your free time?

Most of my free time is spent with my family. I have a 6-year-old son and a daughter who is nearly 3 years old, so my wife and I are pretty busy.

Do you have a saying or motto which you like?

I don't really have one which I prefer above all others, but if I had to choose one, I'd pick: Tomorrow is another day.

What makes you happy?

The simple things in life: a caring family, close friends, kind colleagues and happy students.

What was a high point for you in 2011?

The change-over to our new system: it was very tiring, because we had to explain it to all of our existing students as well as to new or potential students; but it was satisfying to have our own truly modern system to show.

A reference for English Center Basel

At the end of 2010 and in the context of my search for a new job, I realised that the fact that I was neither aware of my language skills in English, nor in possession of a diploma to prove my skills, wasn't really helpful for finding a job in an environment where language skills are strongly required.

Because of this, I decided to look for a language school located in Basel, in order to prepare for one of the internationally known English exams. As I was completely unable to evaluate my level, I wasn't sure at this time whether I should prepare for the First Certificate in English (FCE) or the Certificate of Advanced English (CAE).

I spent one week doing three grading tests at three different language schools. The result was quite confusing: the three schools indicated between 40 and 60 lessons to pass the advanced CAE exam, which was a lot more than I expected. Two of the schools did not offer an oral exam, while the third school tested my level with a German-speaking employee with a very strong accent and a level of English below mine.

The final school I contacted was the English Center Basel. I did my (written) test and got an appointment to also take an oral test. They were the only school which gave me the impression of really caring about offering an adapted learning program - enough to pass the exam, but not too much to waste my money.

I had 16 private lessons, during which we repeated a lot of grammar, I did many reading, listening and writing parts of former exams, which we analysed at school and I gained enough confidence from a super teacher to successfully pass the CAE after having finished my 16 lessons.

Thank you very much again for encouraging me; you did a really good job!

Heike Willkomm

Happiness

STUDYING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE WILL MAKE YOU HAPPIER – GUARANTEED!

by Susan Hobbs – Scotland

What does 'happiness' mean? Well, it can mean different things to different people and understanding what makes you happy is one of the keys to success on the road to happiness, according to 'Action for Happiness', an organisation committed to promoting the importance of happiness as an essential ingredient for life.

Action for Happiness believes that despite many of us being much wealthier, we're no happier than we were five decades ago. At the same time, there has been an increase in anxiety and depression, especially in young people. So as part of their campaign to get people to focus on happiness or 'inner joy', they have produced a guide called "10 Keys to Happier Living" with the acronym "GREAT DREAM". This looks at both external and internal factors, not just our personal attitude to life but also how we interact with the outside world.

"GREAT DREAM":

Giving	Direction (goals)
Relating	Resilience (ability to cope)
Exercising	Emotion (being positive)
Appreciating	Acceptance
Trying out new things	Meaning (purpose)

Find out more on their website (www.actionforhappiness.org).

In the meantime, here are my 'five-a-day' suggestions to increase and maintain your sense of happiness or well-being:

- 1) Prioritise friendships
- 2) Be physically active
- 3) Develop a curiosity about the world around you
- 4) Continue your education throughout life (are English language students at ECB happier?)
- 5) Do voluntary work.

"Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions" – Dalai Lama



THE 'MAKING-OFF' THE NEW TRANSPORT NETWORK CAMPAIGN

Behind the scenes at a TNW photo shoot

by Claudia Järmann – Switzerland

The transport network (*Tarifverbund Nordwestschweiz*) launched a new advertising campaign in October to promote public transport in the area of Basel. As a marketing specialist who works for PostBus (*PostAuto Schweiz AG*), I was entrusted with the production of this campaign and will offer you an insight into the work involved.

It's quite a challenge to persuade motorists to transfer to public transport, if not impossible. We conducted a survey to find out why customers use buses, trams or trains and why other people don't. It revealed that committed motorists would keep to their cars at all times and hardly ever use public transport. Trying to reach them would prove to be a complete waste of time and money. On the other hand, there are the so-called "indecisive customers" who would use either public or private transport depending on the situation. For this reason, our target audience is people who use public transport only occasionally and hence could ride more often. The survey also showed the main benefit of travelling by bus, tram or train, namely the possibility to use time for things you like doing because you don't need to concentrate on the traffic. This time benefit is the basic concept of our communication for the following three years under the motto "more time to myself".

The four eye-catching posters illustrate all the advantages of public transport by conjuring up dream worlds around different characters and useful activities such as reading, listening to music,

flirting or playing computer games. I was behind the scenes at the photo shoot which was quite a tricky one. I'll give you an example of why it was so:

One subject is a business man who listens to classical music over his iPhone while a whole orchestra is playing in the background. Each person had to be photographed individually, but before we could start shooting the pictures everyone had to be positioned in precisely the right spot. Initially, the computer screen showed the picture of the interior of an empty tram which was shot beforehand and the photograph that was taken in the studio appeared within an instant on the screen too and could be laid over the shot of the interior of the tram. Then, the models were positioned in perspective - centimeter by centimeter - until everybody fitted in perfectly. Only when each person's spot was marked on the floor could the real photo shoot finally begin.

Once the photo shoot had been completed, it was the job of the graphic designer not only to put the models into the interior of the tram but also to add all the other elements like a parquet floor, curtains, candelabras and lots of details.

The posters are only one measure among many others such as advertisements, radio commercials and advertising on the vehicles. Although I won't reveal everything yet, I will tell you that if you're among the lucky ones, we will surprise you with a gift during the following months.

An exhibition to remember



QUEEN ELIZABETH II WAS IN THE REGION

by Guido Kuhn – Switzerland

The *Grün 80* was a garden exhibition which took place between mid-April and October 1980. The area was between St.Jakob and Neuwelt in Münchenstein.

There was a shuttle service by bus and tram, and a steam-powered train went between the Basel SBB station and the *Auf dem Wolf* stop near St.Jakob, which was the main entrance of the exhibition. At the entrance, there were a lot of pavilions and tents, where one could buy everything for one's house and garden.

Every day, there were small and big events with Swiss singers, cabaret and other performers in the tent. People from every canton in Switzerland visited the exhibition.

Our speciality products and our traditional customs were presented there for one full week. There were a lot of TV broadcasts. A dinosaur was an attraction as well as a "look-out" tower.

At the *Brüglingerhof*, there was a botanical garden and herb garden. Near a second entrance, beside a restaurant, there was a hobby allotment garden.

A highlight was a wonderful flower exhibition, which took place three times over two weeks, by Swiss professional gardeners in the greenhouse at *Brüglingen*.

The best highlight was on 1 May 1980. We had a Queen in the region: Queen Elizabeth II and her consort, Philip, from Great Britain visited the horticultural show. They came in a high-track railway train with their host, the Swiss Federal President, Kurt Furgler and his wife.

At the *Merian villa*, the Queen and the President planted a "common beech".

Afterwards, the state visitors visited a flower exhibition in *Brüglingen*. At a second stop over, they walked over the bridges of a few ponds.

A great many garden visitors called out to the Queen, the Federal President and the other state visitors.

Today, the recreation park near Basel is still there for everyone to enjoy.

Just a chat – with a former student

MATTHIAS SCHNEIDER – Switzerland

You're doing a Ph.D. on suicide. Why?

In the Psychiatrische Universitätspoliklinik, *Universitäre Psychiatrische Kliniken*, they were seeking a Ph.D. student working in statistics and interested in suicide. A friend of mine told me about it: it would be an opportunity to work with him and it would be paid. So, I went to the professor but learned that there was no payment because the budget had gone. I thought about it and then I decided to do it, because it would be a way to get a Ph.D. They had the data, but it needed to be analyzed. I would have to produce three articles. After reading about it a little, I became even more engaged, because it was exploring an area which is often considered taboo.

There is a misunderstanding in the scientific community about suicide: the Western common view is that people who commit suicide already suffer from depression or substance abuse, or have some sort of social or financial problem.

But there can be other mechanisms at work. For example, a government in the Middle East gave money to the families of someone who committed suicide, but this had had the result that someone in the family sacrificed himself or herself so that the family could get the payment.

In Switzerland, immigrants try to commit suicide more often than the Swiss. Nearly 1000 people have attempted suicide in Basel in the last few years. In order to find out what the story behind this figure is, data was collected and nearly one hundred in-depth interviews were carried out. The situations and life crises of the subjects, such as the loss of a family member or financial problems, could be determined as incentives to suicide.

Doing this public health work inspires me. It also brings me into a new community. It's like a hobby. I'd like to finish the work in two years.

What drives you to do what you do in life?

I'm curious. That's the reason why I do so many things. Also, autonomy is important to me. I want to do it by myself. I don't want to ask other people to tell me what to do. I have initiative; I have goals, but I sometimes don't pursue them very effectively. When I was a child, I knew I wanted to be a doctor, but my circumstances didn't lead me that way. After doing my Matura, I finished up in psychology.

You are re-launching your consultancy company. How important is your website to its operations?

It is a crucial element, because this site gives further information to visitors. It's not really for people searching the web. After I've met prospects, they are able to get more detailed information on the service (www.hrb-symbiont.ch), but even more it's a place for information exchange. For example, after a session, I save information to a file which only the client has access to, so he can serve himself. It's also a repository of tools, like the Limbic Personality Test, which he can access.

What's the Limbic Personality Test?

The unique element of this test is that it enables the examination of the unconscious emotional decisions of people. It uncovers what happens in the deepest part of the brain, the Limbic, which is very fast and which is driven by genes, instructions by parents, and experience. The close interconnections in the Limbic can know in an instant what decision to take. It is the predominant factor in all emotional processes and the rest of the cognitive processes are influenced by it.

What are the benefits of this test?

Knowing how people make decisions, you can understand people's social behaviour. The results of the test show how people react with other people, for instance with customers, or in various settings, such as a sales meeting. If a situation is not optimal, people suffer and it kills resources and causes stress. With the test, we can describe an ideal situation for that person, and the client can make changes. For example, a sales team, knowing their customers well, don't take calls if they know a certain customer is calling, because they don't relate well to that person. The customer might have a 'controller' personality, who needs reassurance, whereas most sales people have a 'dominant' personality, so the two don't fit. But, if you get a sales person with a 'controller' personality to work with that customer, then they will get on fine together.

In addition to this test, we also have tools to help define who is a good salesman and who has the right qualities for leadership roles. With this information, we can advise clients about how to change the situation to improve the effectiveness of the people concerned.

Are your services aimed at big international companies?

All sizes of organisations can benefit from these tools and our consultancy services. If you want to learn more, go to our website: <https://www.limbic-personality.com>

The monthly Speaking Practice Apéro

WHAT IS IT AND WHO IS IT FOR?

The Speaking Practice Apéro is an informal two-hour event which takes place at the school every month. Students have a chance to meet other students and to practise speaking English in an informal, sociable context. A teacher is on hand to help students meet many different speaking partners and to give advice.

A warm welcome awaits not only current students but also former ones. Furthermore, all students are welcome to bring along their family and friends, too.

Let us know how many are coming so that enough light refreshments (low-alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, crisps, etc.) are available. Please sign up at reception.