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Managing the double burden with a lot of discipline and a strong will

Having completed two part-time continuing education courses, which always required a great deal of discipline and a strong will, I'm now reaping the rewards as Head Print Finishing Center and Product Manager Saddle Stitching.

I was very relieved when I managed to submit my master's thesis on the future Muller Martini showroom concept in the fall of 2019. Finally, no more schoolbooks on the table that needed to be read, and time for me and my hobbies again at the weekend. After two part-time continuing education courses, I'm now glad that I can focus fully on my job.

After I graduated as an HF Systems Technology Technician five years ago, I finally started studying Business Engineer Management in 2017. The course is offered at the [University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland](#) in Windisch. It takes four semesters including the master's thesis. I emphasize "finally" because I was then able to study what I really enjoy.

Becoming deeply absorbed in the smallest technical detail, as required in my technician training, was never my strength. I was not so interested in in-depth technical calculations and even at that time, I was already more drawn to the subjects of marketing and management. After my apprenticeship as an electrician, training as a technician was more of a necessary next step for me to be admitted to university.

In Windisch, I got exactly what I was looking for. I was particularly impressed by the topic of process management. There was a lot of theory, of course, but I still also remember well some of the group work we did during the course. At that time, we were allowed to analyze all the process steps of an experienced employee in an internationally active company to see how to optimize his day-to-day work processes. The management initially assumed that he was not working efficiently enough. After analyzing the processes, however, it turned out that he was receiving the production material he required too late or not at all, and was therefore wasting a lot of time on its procurement. So it was down to the logistics and not the employee. Once the logistics processes had been adapted to our requirements, he was much more efficient without having to change anything in his main activity – a great result for the employee and the company.

My second passion during my studies was business management. I applied a lot directly in my professional day-to-day work and tried it out, so to speak. For me, the great advantage of part-time continuing education is what you learn in theory is put directly into practice and applied.

In my situation, I thought specifically about: How can I successfully lead my highly qualified team? How can I support my employees so that they can perform their tasks well? What's more, at 29 years of age, I'm still very young in this management position. Getting employees on board who had already been working successfully at Muller Martini for decades was a challenge. I learned that sometimes it takes a compromise to implement ideas or changes. I'm more the type that views, analyzes and completes the task chop-chop. I had to learn that my employees sometimes have different approaches to going about tasks, but that they are no less successful.

At the University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Windisch, I very much appreciated the personal exchange with lecturers, some of whom are successful themselves and have remarkable careers in business. Tapping into this vast wealth of experience as a young person is extremely valuable. The professional as well as private life-related advice, in addition to the good teaching material, resulted in a valuable overall package for me.

Professionally, my training path opened the door to an exciting management position in an international company. I think, I now have a better understanding of how things interact, try to keep an eye on the big picture and consider possible impacts in every decision.

I started my job at Muller Martini in 2018, when I had already completed the first two semesters at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts. The position as Head Print Finishing Center aroused my interest from the very beginning. Having the opportunity to make a difference right from the start and play a crucial role in the success of the entire sales process sounded exactly like the right challenge for me. I therefore accepted the new job and took a year off from my studies. This allowed me to familiarize myself well with the new material and the machines before I started the final spurt in my studies.

I'm often asked how I stemmed the double burden. It took a lot of discipline and a strong will. At the beginning, I didn't experience a big change. The only change for me was that the weekend didn't start until Saturday afternoon because I had to work on Friday and I was at the university on Saturday. From semester to semester, however, the requirements increased and with them the necessary commitment in addition to the class hours. Sooner or later, the remaining free time for exam preparation or assignments drains your reserves.

The worst period was probably the last semester, when I was writing my master's thesis

for Muller Martini, in which I developed a new showroom concept. For a while, I was at the company almost every weekend. At the beginning of 2019, I had also accepted a new position as product manager. That added to the existing strain. The personal pressure has also increased steadily; after all, I invested a lot of time and money and wanted to get a good degree. This had a great effect on my work/life balance, with family and friends suffering accordingly.

Would I do it again? Absolutely, despite all the work and the strain! Right after my apprenticeship as an electrician, I realized that this profession – as they say – wouldn't fulfill me in the long run. I always got very good support from Muller Martini during my apprenticeship, so the good foundation here really opened the right door for me.

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