

A fair chance

De Harde Leerschool

In the upcoming years, the producing and logistics industry will be in high demand for skilled workers. On the other hand, a large pool of individuals risks being overlooked as they do not get a fair chance on the labour market. Embedded Coaching & Consultancy is working together with De Harde Leerschool to give those people a leg up and help companies in the North Sea Port area to solve their labour challenges.



All photos courtesy of De Harde Leerschool.

Ed Oskam, Managing Director and Trainer of De Harde Leerschool (l) and Maryella Grootjans, Owner of Embedded Coaching & Consultancy (r).

Embedded Coaching & Consultancy (ECC) coaches, supports, and advises senior managers and management teams. ECC is an expert in crisis management, trauma care, change management, and situational awareness. “As an adviser,” comments ECC’s owner Maryella Grootjans, “I talk to the management of many companies in the port area about lots of topics, ranging from how to help employees that have experienced traumatic situations such as accidents at the workplace, to how to help a company with its recruitment challenges. I have a background in the Dutch Army, and I know Ed Oskam from the Korps Commandotroepen (‘Special Forces’). Today, Ed is involved in De Harde Leerschool. Working together, we create a healthy symbiosis between soft and hard skills based on our mutual experience and expertise.”

Reintegration

De Harde Leerschool originates from the UK School of Hard Knocks. It is a programme that prepares participants who, for various reasons, are dealing with a distance to the labour market for reintegrating in work or education. De Harde Leerschool actually has its base in rugby, but today also collaborates with the Korps Commandotroepen. “With De Harde Leerschool,” General Manager and Trainer Ed Oskam explains, “a company’s employment issues can be dealt with in two ways. Employees can participate in a De Harde Leerschool training in order to raise their resilience and overcome traumas, and people that joined our training for reintegration purposes can be employed by the companies. De Harde Leerschool uses methods in which participants learn to analyse and understand their own behaviour. They are confronted with questions such as: What is dissatisfying to you? What would you like to change? What are your feelings? The trainers act as intense conversationalists, meanwhile sticking to the points of confronting participants and finding their talents, raising consciousness, self-responsibility, and authenticity. Our core values are Respect, Collaboration, Pleasure, Discipline, Passion, Integrity, and Solidarity. Many of these core values also fit the Korps Commanotroepen, which is why they enthusiastically became one of our partners. One of the first projects with a group of youngsters recently took place with their valuable help at their training facilities. The group enjoyed an eight-week training with one week in bivouac.”

Rolling up sleeves

Ms Grootjans continues, “Last year we presented De Harde Leerschool project at a meeting in the North Sea Port area and of those present, several were enthusiastic and showed an interest, including Sagro Decom, Damen Shipyards, and Verbrugge International. We are also looking abroad and are currently investigating the options to contribute to cross border



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employment. Companies always need motivated workers in the port area on both sides of the border. These workers do not necessarily have to be highly educated and are not afraid to roll up their sleeves. A growing number of young people today risk getting on the wrong track and are even facing the justice system. Together with De Harde Leerschool, these individuals are offered a second chance at our ports. The usual reintegration routes are often hindered by red tape and with De Harde Leerschool, we can swiftly act on requests for help. Hence in the Zeeland project, we closely collaborate with local government and the detention centre in Middelburg. By offering De Harde Leerschool training, we can help people stay on the right track and hereby contribute to avoiding port criminality.” For the companies and participants of the project, it is good to know that the involvement of the people from ECC and De Harde Leerschool does not end upon completing a training.

“With our project, we pull out all stops and ask a lot from the participants”, Mr Oskam elaborates. “And they can expect our support and respect in return. We offer them 24/7 support, also when required afterwards, and we help them to obtain all kinds of useful certificates such as VCA and Medical First Aid. We see a low percentage of recidivism among those that join the project.”

A positive effect

As a basis, De Harde Leerschool depends on financial support from others. The Province of Zeeland already helps with a Human Capital Agenda subsidy and with the package offered – recruiting by reintegrating together with training employees – the foundation hopes to attract as many companies from North Sea Port as possible to join. “Zeeland is known for its dedicated and motivated workforce and for everyone that joins our project,” Ms Grootjans states, “including the industry, government, and individuals, De Harde Leerschool will have a positive effect that further underlines this hard-working image. When everything goes according to plan, our first training will start next July, which will hopefully be the start of many more courses to follow.”

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