



Lena | Season 1, Episode 3

Lena in lockdown

Lena started the year 2020 calmly and confidently. Her team had a good order book at the turn of the year. That was somehow reassuring. In particular, her regular customers were clearly on a growth path. Her business unit had prepared for this and was already able to successfully support its customers in 2019. The customer meetings and incoming orders in January and February were also promising. It was good to know that in the new organisation into business units, the technical order processing with the cross-functional teams from welding technology, QA, work planing, capacity planning and scheduling were now in the office right next door. Queries during the preparation of enquiries were much quicker and less complicated. Priorities for order processing could be coordinated more easily. And it wasn't just Lena who had to settle into her new role as a manager; other employees also needed time to get used to the new team structures. Week by week, the team or teams grew together in a better way. But then came a surprise for everyone. Lena loved surprises,

especially on her wedding day. But this one was different! As recently as January, if she was honest, Lena had smiled pityingly at "the Chinese" and the outbreak of the virus. Now the issue suddenly concerned Germany, indeed her personally. The situation not only came as a surprise, it was also novel, as neither Lena nor anyone else around her had ever experienced anything like it. That was unsettling. Fortunately, Lena had nothing to do with the pandemic staff, emergency plans, etc. But as a manager, she kept a close eye on the sickness rate, not only in her team. The first 14 days after the start of the March lockdown, the sickness rate shot up to unprecedented heights. Lena thought that this was a reflection of the widespread uncertainty. She found other explanations difficult to believe. She could not imagine that colleagues were taking advantage of this situation. Afterwards, the sickness rate fell to one of the lowest levels in years. Isn't that awesome? Lena couldn't really explain it. She just noticed how grateful her colleagues were that they were allowed to



Stand-up meeting in small batch production: For successful cooperation it is important to meet physically at regular intervals

come to work and socialise. Putting your feet up at home is nice, but not for long!

Gratitude

Lena and her husband were also newly filled with gratitude for being able to live in the countryside. It was so easy to relax in the green space, to cycle, jog or walk. The very idea of being locked up in a flat in a big city during a hard lockdown made Lena feel anxious. And Lena noticed this new appreciation for rural life among her work colleagues too, not only because the infection rate compared to a big city was like driving a car on a country road compared to a ride on the motorway. Accordingly, there were hardly any Covid-19 cases in the relatively large BUTTING family. Lena was grateful that the vast majority of colleagues adhered to the hygiene rules and were very considerate of each other. Nevertheless, she noticed that some staff members were almost panic-stricken about infection, even in her team. But was that really surprising? Was there ever a programme on the TV or the radio that wasn't about Covid-19? At least that's how it seemed to Lena. And it didn't look any different in the newspaper. And was this news reassuring? No. Of course, the situation could not be portrayed any better than it was. But Lena missed the facts,

credible statistics and meaningful key figures being handled professionally, the way she knew it from work. An additional problem was certainly that very little reliable knowledge was available about the virus, infection, mutation and immunity. That was the nature of such surprises. Lena led several discussions on this topic in her team, explained researched facts, promoted prudence and appealed for mutual understanding.

More flexibility

But Lena could also see a positive side to the whole situation. She practised consciously thinking about positive aspects of something and consciously noticing them. Many Germans too had discovered their country anew in spring and summer – holidays in Germany can also be nice. At BUTTING, there was suddenly a much more flexible approach to working hours. There were no longer core working hours where attendance was compulsory. Lena thought that was cool. Besides, it has really been necessary. When Max wasn't going to school, either because it was closed altogether or the classes were split up, Lena and her husband were able to divide their working hours so that one of them was almost always at home. The reduction of break times also helped, as the attendance time in the company was reduced. Lena never thought



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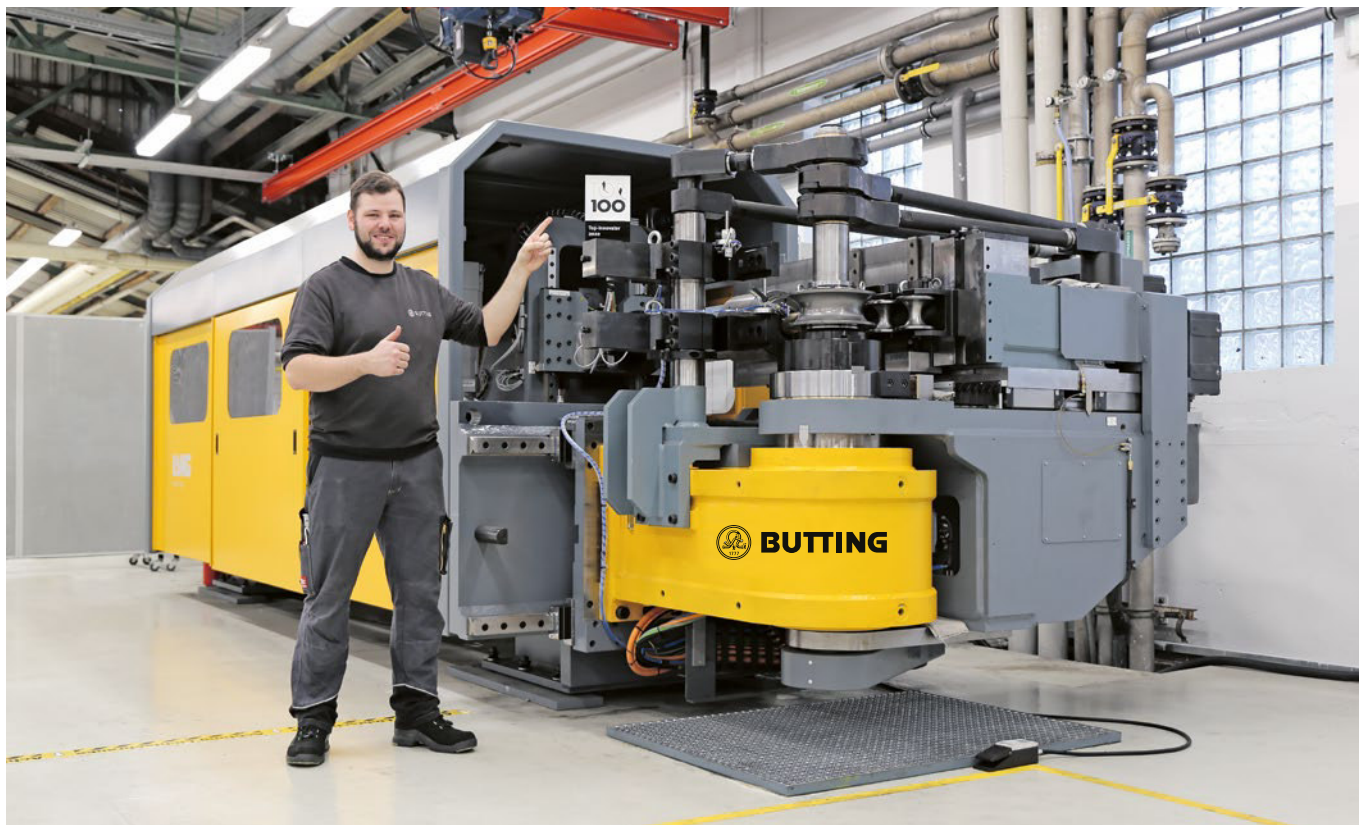
that her son would ever be sad not to be allowed to go to school. That would have been the last thing Lena could have imagined. But as they say, in a crisis you really get to know someone. This was indeed also true of their own children. Lena also found it positive that mobile working at home was now an option. Some teams, including Lena's, worked alternately at home, so only half the team was present in the office. For Lena, there have always been tasks that she could do just as well from home. Of course, it had a lot to do with trust – both in the honesty of the employee and also in his or her ability to set limits and call it a day. Unfortunately, BUTTING's data line had not been sufficient for large-scale deployment during the first lockdown. In the meantime, however, as a manager Lena still saw the other side of the coin. For a team or the cooperation with other colleagues, it was good to get together physically on a regular basis and exchange ideas. Lena found this important for successful work and personal relationships. But of course you could do a lot of things by video conference. Lena and her team members now took this approach with their customers and suppliers. It was a real blessing to be able to reduce contacts and still be able to see each other. It makes a difference whether you're on the phone or you can look the other person in the eyes. It made an even bigger difference to meet someone, to be in the same room with them and to be able to perceive their entire body language. Nuances could be better understood and there became room for personal interactions. That was somehow difficult via video.

Learning tolerance anew

Lena was an outgoing person. Was that negative all of a sudden? If anything was bothering Lena, it was the limited contacts, both private and professional. She also loved to give someone a hug. In the past, everyone used to go from one department to another much more often, greeting colleagues with a handshake or dropping in on "their" job in production. Today that would be unwelcome for many colleagues. You may still be a nice colleague, but you are also an infection risk. Awesome, right? And for the hardliners, you can only be a nice colleague if you share their view on how to deal with the pandemic. Regardless of whether they think the measures are just right, not yet consistent enough or inappropriate – if you don't agree with them, they put you in a box. Goodbye, nice colleague! Pity. What was that about getting to know each other? This crisis would be an opportunity to learn tolerance anew. Tolerance in the classical sense, that I tolerate a different opinion and continue to respect the other person.

Respecting human dignity

Lena was concerned about the treatment of old and dying people. She knew that Covid-19 mortality was highest here. Nevertheless, she was of the opinion that you should not act strictly according to regulations, but should look at the individual case and trust those responsible on the ground to have room for manoeuvre in their decisions. Lena's aunt was



Going forward with confidence: New bending machine for Lena's business unit

severely ill with dementia and in a nursing home. When Lena's uncle visited her, he was not allowed to touch her once and was only allowed to talk to her sitting at the table through a plexiglass window. The Basic Law states that "human dignity is inviolable". Was that still a given? When Lena's grandfather was dying in hospital, he was only allowed to be visited by one person a day and then only for half an hour. Lena always felt sad when she thought about it.

Lena herself had no problems with the lockdown. She and her husband had job security and worked for a family-friendly company. Currently, Lena was happy that she only had one child and was not a single parent. How did the parents who had three or even four children cope when crèches, kindergartens and schools were closed for so long? Even the children's playgrounds were closed for a while. The children were definitely the losers of these Covid-19 protective measures. The social consequences worried Lena. When Lena thought about her neighbour, she had doubts whether the measures were in proportion to the danger to the population. He was self-employed and the owner of a restaurant. Although he had a very large dining area and an exemplary hygiene concept, he was not allowed to have guests. He had already dismissed his "450 euro" workers

(part-time staff). He himself doubted whether he would survive the year 2021 economically. Many tradespeople felt the same way. The government's aid measures and the reality were two different things.

Life is still beautiful

But Lena was not going to be discouraged. Life was still beautiful! She just had to be careful not to miss it. BUTTING has been able to work full time since the beginning of the pandemic. The suppliers had all persevered and reliably supplied BUTTING. The major investment projects had all been implemented. Lena found it very encouraging how management acted in this situation and went forward with confidence.

And Lena conveyed this spirit in her team. Even the management training sessions had taken place throughout the year. At least in business life there was something like continuity, even if planning for the new business year was a big challenge – because most of Lena's customers felt the same way as she did.

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