

Stratus EMEA Newsletter contributions

The Happiness Bug

Introducing Humphrey Ngundue, Technical Support, South Africa

When Dave Ward, EMEA customer care director and Dick Sharod, South African country manager, needed to recruit a new technical support specialist in South Africa they chose to do first round interviews by phone. A wise move given that the bulk of this person's new job would be providing phone-based support to customers with problems. Little did they know they were about to unleash the happiness bug though...

Dave picks up the story:

"Humphrey's CV was impressive. He had gone out of his way to educate himself, implying self-motivation. He held an IT support role in local government yet his skills were under-utilised, and he clearly had experience dealing with disappointed customers.

"The minute we got him on the phone we knew there was more to him, something quite special. His voice and mannerisms were very calming. You found yourself smiling ... and not because he was joking..."

To cut to the quick, first impressions were right. Humphrey sailed through the second interview and got the job.

"We made the right choice," continues Dick. "Humphrey is a natural diplomat. His personable, unassuming, calm manner shines through in all situations. He talks slowly and calmly and people's moods respond accordingly. We even joke that he can send a smile down the phone. In fact, in the office we call him 'Happy' – Humphrey 'Happy' Ngundue.

His 'happy' gene influences his behaviour in many other ways too. He is not a man who procrastinates or adheres to job titles. If a job needs doing, he just gets on and does it. In fact, when interviewed about what he did everyday in his technical support job in a recent internal video he simply smiled and replied:

“I’m concerned with customer satisfaction”. Note customer satisfaction. Not technical support...

It is not just his in-country colleagues and customers that have been touched by the happiness bug though – and it is infectious. After recently attending an internal training course in Europe, Dick got a call from the course tutor:

“About Humphrey. What a happy guy. He was great. Not only did he complete the course with ease and ahead of everyone else. He then went on to help the French delegates” (French is Humphrey’s first language – he is from Cameroon).

Happiness. It’s worth spreading.

The Rock

Celebrating Brigitte Hueck

Finance, admin, sales support and corporate glue, Germany

Brigitte Hueck, our finance and admin lynch pin in Germany, is one of our longest serving members of staff and 'The Country Rock', according to Paul Thomalla. With us since 1986, she has been through many changes, both personal and professional, and it is her attitude towards change that we wish to salute this month. Oh, that and her glue-like qualities ...

Stratus has been through many transitions over the years and Brigitte has seen most of them. It is perhaps lucky for then that one of her main qualities, according to colleagues, is her ability to embrace change.

“Brigitte took up a lot of extra responsibility when finance was centralised and Gerhardt left the organisation. It wasn't just the financial accounting she took care of though. It was, if truth be known, the team. And she did this, and still does it, with a smile,” advises Ian Whitehead, EMEA finance director.

“Brigitte is a great people person as well as a gifted administrator. In fact she has many hats and is able to interchange them at will: admin; finance; sales support; personnel – the list goes on.”

It is this positive attitude that makes Brigitte special. Brigitte, it seems, thrives on change and reaches out to help others adapt too. In fact, she is the glue that holds the office and the team together, according to Ian.

“Glue?’ She is more than that. She is the hidden country manager,” according to Manfred Luttkus.

“Brigitte is smart. She has been here for a long time and has seen everything at least twice. She is very intuitive and understands people. Brigitte quietly gets on with her jobs, changing her hats, as Ian says, at will, all the time observing what is going on around her. She knows the a, b, c of admin’, the 1, 2, 3 of our supply chain, the ins and outs of the office and all the grey shades in between!”

“Perhaps best of all is that she knows whose button to push and when to push it when something, almost anything, needs to happen. She could teach all of us a thing or two about how to be smart,” concluded Manfred.

Paul Thomalla agrees: “Brigitte has faced many professional and personal challenges. She just quietly works out what to do for the best and gets on with it, helping those around her do so too. She is Stratus’s country rock in Germany. The woman is just awesome.”
