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**How does the vocational education and training (VET) system work in
Germany and why is vocational training so successful there?**

German VET is the combination of theoretical VET in school and practical training in the workplace. Up to 80% of this training takes place in companies with experienced, certified trainers. This type of training is successful because many companies are able to generate the best skilled workers needed for their particular production processes—workers who are not only productive, but also competitive and innovative.

**What type of businesses can benefit the most from vocational training?
Why?**

Any type of company in terms of industry sector, size, and production process can benefit from vocational training. It is very important to mention that companies in Germany are strongly supported by the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, or the so-called IHKs, to conduct this training properly. The chambers are training and certifying in-company trainers, consulting these companies to train the best-fitting professionals with the proper equipment, monitoring the training, as well as organizing the final assessment of the training. By doing so, they are the ones that actually ensure the quality of the in-company training throughout the entire process. In fact, IHKs consider VET first and foremost to be a key part of their focus, which is business promotion.

**What are the challenges that businesses face when establishing the
German style of dual vocational training abroad, such as in the U.S.?**

Companies need to be convinced of that special type of VET. They need to understand and appreciate that this is a long-term investment in human resource development of skilled workers. They have to develop capacities for in-company training, such as previously mentioned. And if they do this well, they will gain a high return on investment (ROI).

Another important challenge is ensuring that there is a support structure in place to take care of what the chambers do in Germany. This needs to be set up from scratch as there is usually nothing like it almost anywhere else in the world.

What kind of information and guidance do the AHKs and DIHK have to offer to American companies interested in implementing Germany's vocational training system?

The AHKs are the operative structure that is busy these days trying to find ways to build up capacities—such as personnel, know-how, and financial resources—in order to offer the same type of services that the IHKs are providing. And they have been doing very well over the past years as the demand for the so-called German dual VET has risen remarkably.

The DIHK is the German structure behind the AHKs that provides them with know-how, contacts, and quality standards that have to be met. That way the DIHK is doing its part to assure the quality of AHK services in the business field of VET.

German companies like Siemens and Volkswagen are already carrying out vocational training abroad. What can American companies learn from their approaches?

U.S. companies can learn from these businesses that dual German VET can also be conducted, i.e. adapted, in the U.S., although the conditions are quite different. They can learn from them why they invest, how much they invest, and what they expect from these investments, especially with regards to ROI.

Simply speaking, there is an established business model behind it and at the same time, VET is understood and dealt with in a highly strategic manner.

Lastly, I would like to kindly invite American companies to take a closer look at vocational training. Implementing this is easily possible as many German and U.S. (!) companies have already gotten involved—or invested—in this kind of training. The AHKs have significant experience helping companies implement VET. So please do not hesitate to contact us.