

# Speakers Corner: "Emotional factors are usually neglected"

## Marion Klimmer on high performance training

In most professions today, it is no longer enough to deliver a "normal everyday performance". Instead, the increasing pressure of competition means that individuals and teams are repeatedly required to give their best: difficult dismissal interviews, criticism and performance appraisal interviews, presentations, examination situations and sales situations in which it is important, for example, to present oneself as well as possible to a potential customer. In all these situations, the aim is to emerge victorious from a battle for resources (money, manpower, reputation, market share, orders). It is a battle in which there is usually no "second chance" and the current performance decides the future. Within minutes, sometimes even seconds, the course is set - towards success or failure, joy or sorrow. Such situations are psychologically highly stressful, they induce social fears and thus endanger the necessary "emotional balance".

Many people feel their self-worth is threatened in a high-performance situation and experience insecurity, ranging from mild stage fright to extreme stress. However, this is not taken into account when preparing for such performances.

The importance of rhetoric is all too often ignored in high-performance situations. Individuals who want to prepare themselves as well as possible for high-performance situations of their own accord, as well as companies that want to prepare their employees for such "critical moments", usually rely on rhetoric, communication, sales and presentation training that provides one thing above all: perfect technical and methodical preparation for the high-performance situation. Sure, this is important. But it is not sufficient.

The emotional balance and stability of the participants should be an integral part of *any* measure preparing them for high performance - be it through training or coaching. By the way, even those who would not describe themselves as particularly anxious and actually quite stress-resistant can benefit from this. In a high-performance situation, even such people can sometimes come into emotional contact with unprocessed memories ("sore points") from the past or from their learning/teaching history and thus - unexpectedly and suddenly - be affected by stress and performance blockades and the associated negative bodily sensations (palpitations, sweating, etc.). The similarity of an experience

with an experience at the time that has not been sufficiently processed in the brain can still trigger stress reactions many years later that the person affected feels are completely inappropriate and surprising.

In particular, fear of exams or appearances is often based on such unprocessed and partly unconscious stress memories or blockages. It is enough that in an exam situation the voice of an examiner unconsciously reminds one of a frightening person from the past to make the exam candidate react to the current examiner with intense insecurity - seemingly "for no reason".

Against this background, the insecurity is much stronger and more detrimental than would be justified by the normal tension in the examination situation. And above all: it is completely independent of how well the candidate is prepared in terms of content and subject matter. Therefore: If the emotional balance is not taken into account in the preparation for high performance, the candidate is not prepared for high performance in the best possible way.

The example of the leading international auditing and tax consulting firm shows that it can be done differently.



Are emotional factors really often neglected in training? Join the discussion at [www.managerSeminare.de/SpeakersCorner](http://www.managerSeminare.de/SpeakersCorner).



**Marion Klimmer** is the owner of Klimmer Coaching & Training in Hamburg and works as a communication and leadership trainer as well as a business and high-performance coach. Among other things, she uses the NLP and WingWave® coaching techniques. Contact: [www.KlimmerCuT.de](http://www.KlimmerCuT.de)

Ernst & Young GmbH. Ernst & Young GmbH is currently the first large consulting firm in northern Germany to conduct a pilot project aimed at preparing employees mentally for a high-performance situation, or more precisely: for their tax consultant and auditor exams. Normally, employees of large consulting firms are given twelve to twenty weeks off for their exam preparation, which is mostly technical.

The failure rates for exams are extremely high throughout Germany and across companies: they amount to 45 to 60 per cent annually. This is not only a very stressful situation for those affected, possibly leading to a career setback, but also for the companies: Repeat audits require a great deal of organisational effort - e.g. considerable extra work for the employees who remain in the client projects. What is even more serious is that repeat auditors cannot generate any turnover for their company during their time off.

In the "Exam Coaching Programme" project at Ernst & Young, the purely technical preparations are therefore supplemented by a bundle of modular measures that are intended to help candidates improve their emotion management as well as their learning strategies: In "tandem" between internal subject specialists and

external high-performance trainer, the exam candidates are made fit through "kick-off workshops" at the beginning of the exemption phase. Prior to the oral examination, a

"Reality training" for exam simulation. At the heart of the exam candidates' coaching are supervisions and individual coaching sessions in which, among other things, stress-related blockages are to be uncovered and dissolved with specific methods (e.g. with the Wing-wave® technique). Potentially stressful factors are also prophylactically tested and dissolved.

In this way, exam candidates can remain in emotional balance before and during the high-performance situation.

The result so far: pass rates have increased significantly: In 2008, 57 percent of Ernst & Young coaching candidates passed the auditors' exam, and in 2009 as many as 80 percent, compared to the national average of only 47 percent in 2008 and 58 percent in 2009.

*Marion Klimmer C*