

**Transcript DigiPodcast Episode 3:
Reverse Mentoring – a new way of reflecting and learning
Moderator Thomas Holzner, Guest Matthias Weidinger**

Intro: The DigiPodcast – Digital trends in Supply Chain Management

Thomas Holzner

Hello and welcome to our DigiPodcast. I am Thomas Holzner from Siemens SCM DigiNetwork with the DigiPodcast. A Podcast on digital innovative topics from procurement in the future. Digitalization is becoming increasingly important for every company. At Siemens in particular, digitalization is a fundamental element for success. But how is digitalization practiced at Siemens Supply Chain Management, what do we focus on? The aspect of digital transformation and innovation is particularly close to our hearts. In our podcast we highlight different aspects and share best practices with various digital experts and listen to their stories. Today I have Matthias Weidinger as my guest. Matthias is our HR business partner for Siemens Supply Chain Management and one of the biggest supporters and drivers of reverse mentoring. A system that turns old ways of thinking on the head, we can almost say. But what it means, I think Matthias is the right guy to explain us. So, hi Matthias, nice to have you here. Was my introduction of reverse mentoring right?

Matthias Weidinger

Hello Thomas, thanks for having me and yes- pretty much. There was maybe something I would like to change: reverse mentoring is not a system, it's more like a philosophy, but we will get back to that later.

Thomas Holzner

So then let's go into detail. So, what's reverse mentoring? What's the difference to a normal conventional mentoring?

Matthias Weidinger

So, I guess we all know regular mentoring, where a more senior manager - hopefully most of the time a manager - is guiding a more younger colleague out of the own organization normally through his or her career development, and there is nothing wrong with it. Reverse mentoring simply adds another dimension because it's about learning from each other. So, reverse mentoring came up, when we talked about learning organization and when social media got even more important, also in a business perspective. The idea behind this brings two people together from two different generations and as a lot of us know, because we do have our reverse mentors at home, who takes care of all the technical stuff at home and teaches us how to deal with it, that is pretty much the same. A more younger colleague could enable the more senior manager to set up LinkedIn profiles, to really get into postings, to emphasize the need of social media also in business terms. While a more senior manager learns from that reverse mentor. And in another direction, once they have a certain level of trust it changes. So I can tell you from my own experience: I had a reverse mentor myself and sometimes she said: 'I know, Matthias, we want to work on your social media profile

today, but I'm in a management role since for four months now and I am figuring out it's not very easy for people. They are demanding and how did you do it when you were a younger manager?' So, we really reached the topic of reverse mentoring after, let's say, three weeks.

Thomas Holzner

Very comprehensive. So, I hope that the outside world now got the difference to normal mentoring, this means somehow young and old is switched. But why are we doing this, or why is our company pushing this and what's in for the guys who are participating?

Matthias Weidinger

So, for myself I have to say, I have the situation in the team, that I really had to lead across generations and since I belong to the more typical, classical Siemens leadership generation, I really had to learn how to adapt my leadership-style to the people in my team and the reverse mentor helped me. She helped me – she was a little bit neutral from another organization - to really reflect my own leadership behavior and correct it. So, it was possible for me to get into a dialogue with her for certain information or certain message I wanted to send out to my team and we were kind of working beforehand on how to shape that message that it really touches all people in my team.

Thomas Holzner

Okay, this means a different perspective, supported by the younger generation, that helps you and your team if, I can rephrase it that way?

Matthias Weidinger

Absolutely, that's one facete. So, it's about learning from each other to really be open, as a more senior manager, to the needs and the expectations of a more younger generation. That is something which I would describe as diversity of leadership or adaptable leadership as well in our terms, so that you are really flexible to enter new ways of leading a new generation in your team, as one example.

Thomas Holzner

Okay, hopefully I got it. And this fits from my point of view somehow into the growth mindset as one of the strategic priorities of Siemens. Can you, as the specialist, a little bit explain, how this is now from the whole setup: reverse mentoring and growth mindset?

Matthias Weidinger

It very well fits together. So, growth mindset is about being open and learn, for example as one element, learn out of your own behaviors or maybe also failures. So, if you were not very successful in the way you were leading in the past, today a reverse mentor could give you more insight in what you could do differently and it's actually a safe environment before you phrase that message to your own team. So it's about getting a reflection as a leader, working with that reflection and really adapt your own behavior.

Thomas Holzner

Sounds like a challenge for some of the old-style leaders. Have you here some experiences in the meantime?

Matthias Weidinger

The funny thing is, that most of the more senior management level also have experience with reverse mentors at home, as I said. It's about, they know from their kids, that they can learn from their kids. The barrier, the entry barrier, we figured out, is actually pretty low. They are really fascinated by this element of reverse mentoring. In supply chain management, we already have a reverse mentor base, which we can provide, and they are pretty open to it.

Thomas Holzner

Sounds great, so on top of the private reverse mentors, we are offering at Siemens professional reverse mentors for our, I would say, old-school leadership team?

Matthias Weidinger

I wouldn't say old-school leadership team, because every old-school has something good as well, a lot of the experience. I would say for our traditional leadership level, yes, of course. And these are colleagues, female and male colleagues out of the entire organization, also international, who have already had reverse mentor relationships. So, they know what they are talking about.

Thomas Holzner

So, I think for the outside world, my point of view quite clear. It's not an easy topic, but Matthias explained us, how a reverse mentoring approach fits and supports in the overall strategic priority of our company growth mindset. Thanks for that, but Matthias, now coming to the most important question: Who is Matthias?

Matthias Weidinger

Who is Matthias? So, I guess, I am someone who is absolutely passionate about people. That's the reason why I finally ended up in the business partner role, which I am very much enjoying, because it's all about the people, it's all about transformation and this is what I actually like. If you meet me in private, you will probably have a high chance to meet me somewhere outside, on a mountain, on a bike, wherever. I love being outside, instead of being trapped in my home-office since one year and I am absolutely passionate about rhythm.

Thomas Holzner

As I am coming from the Oberpfalz, could you please explain the word rhythm?

Matthias Weidinger

The word rhythm to me is kind of a release for my energy. So I am playing the bass drum in a samba bateria. You know samba baterias probably from, for example, union strikes or union protest marches, where some of those baterias normally leads the entire group. So, there is a high chance that you see me on a cover title of a newspaper

leading a union demonstration with my samba drum, which is kind of an interesting situation, which I have as an HR guy.

Thomas Holzner

I think that's a nice closing word, because that is not reverse mentoring, but reverse participation and it fits to the topic. That was not planned, but I think it is great. So, Matthias, thanks a lot for your insights and also to be quite open regarding what you're doing when you are not at work. I hope you on the outside, you also enjoyed it and to all our listeners, if you have questions about this topic, about growth mindset, please contact us and otherwise we are looking forward to entertaining you with the next episode of the Siemens Supply Chain Management DigiPodcast as soon as possible. Yours, Thomas Holzner.

Outro: The DigiPodcast – Digital trends in Supply Chain Management