

Your Handout

Dear Participants,

This is your handout for our workshop.

It was great, that you could join me!

In this Handout you will find all the slides from – for reference, marking, or printing.

At the very end, you will also find further links and QR codes and my contact details.

I wish you the all the best for your future career!

Yours Bastian

A hand holding a brown suitcase filled with various items representing German culture and travel. Inside the suitcase, there is a soccer ball, a feather, a small German flag, a bicycle wheel, a model of a castle, a model of the Brandenburg Gate, a model of a traditional German house, a bouquet of flowers, a small globe, and a small German flag. The background is a blue sky with white clouds.

Working and Workplace Culture in Germany

What You Need to Know

We will start at 2:20 PM

BERUFS
OPTIMIERER

AUTHENTISCH. ERFOLGREICH. SEIN.

Bastian Hughes

- Career Coach and Trainer
- Previously worked as a Recruiter / HR professional
- Host of the career podcast “Berufsoptimierer”
- Systemic Coach
- Diploma in Business Administration
- Office Administrator

Three Passions

- People and their stories
- Outdoor sports
- Photography

About Berufsoptimierer

Our Vision:

To create a world where people can develop professionally and succeed in what they enjoy most with the effect that it will also improve their personal life significantly. Do what makes you happy in order to succeed on all levels.

Our Mission:

Transparency.

How?

Podcast



Application check



Online Training



Coaching



What was your
biggest surprise
or 'culture shock
moment' in
Germany”



**What are you hoping
to gain from today's
webinar?**

Common challenges when entering the job market




Language
barrier



Lack of
practical
experience



Little or no
professional
network



Limited
knowledge of
application
standards



Visa issues
and
bureaucratic
uncertainties



Mismatch
between
qualifications and
available job
opportunities



Meet Tsovinar

From international student to SAP Champion

- Originally from Armenia – came to Germany to study Media Informatics at RWTH Aachen
- Faced challenges: new culture, new language, no network
- First job search was tough – wrong assumptions, many rejections
- Landed her role at SAP in 2014 and became a recognized community leader

*“When I first arrived in Germany, I had no idea how to present myself to a company.
“You have to be visible. Doors open for those who dare to knock.”*



Plan your career in Germany and prepare effectively for entering the job market.

3. Positioning

4. Visibility

2. Culture

1. Arrival

2. Culture

What this is about:

Understand what is considered professional in Germany.

How expectations around communication, feedback and behavior may differ from what you're used to.



“In my first job I was the only international and the only woman. I often felt I was doing something wrong – but it was just a culture gap.”

Tsovinar



Solo Task

5 Minutes



Your country



Think of something that is characteristic of how people in your country interact with each other.

Group Exercise

10 Minutes

Discuss in pairs:

Now let's do the same for Germany.

What do you think is considered typically German in the workplace or university?



Core elements of German workplace culture

Punctuality

professionalism and respect

Except for the Deutsche Bahn ;-)

Structure over spontaneity

Ideas need planning

Direct communication

Not rude, just efficient

Emotional self-control

Even in conflict

Hierarchy matters

Even in “flat” companies

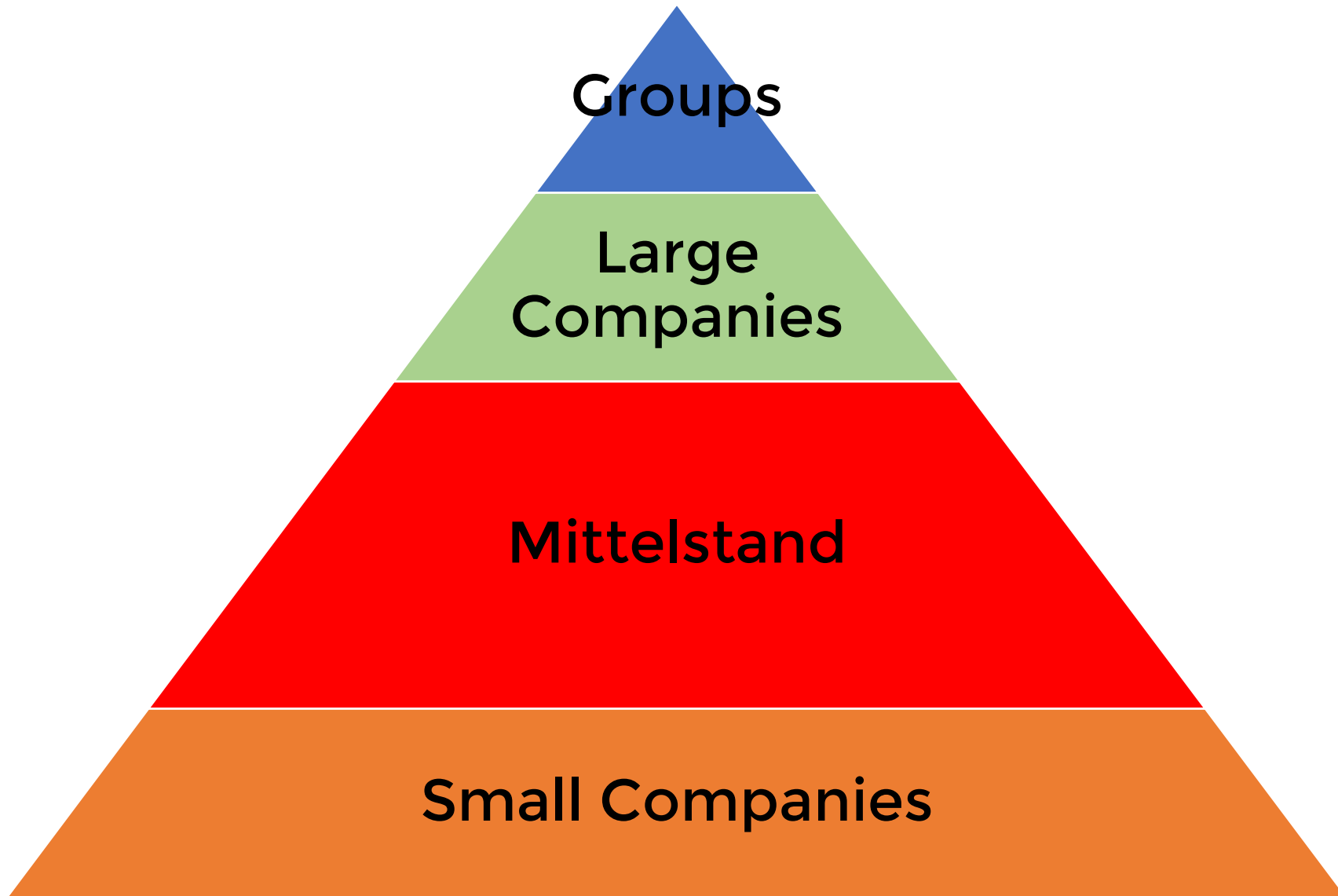
Meetings: follow agenda

decisions = consensus (but slow)

3. Positioning

What this is about:

Learn how the German job market is structured and what types of employers exist – so you can target your applications more effectively.



German Job Market Structure

Company Size	Examples	Share of All Companies	Share of Employees	Share of Revenue	Potential
DAX & Global Corporates	Volkswagen, Siemens, Deutsche Telekom, SAP	< 0.1 %	Top 10 employers: 150,000–680,000 employees each	Approx. 70–80% of total revenue	Very high – international teams, English-speaking roles, formal recruiting
Large Companies(> 1000 employees)	e.g. Lufthansa Technik, Deutsche Bahn, regional market leaders	~0.5 %	Around 1/3 of all employees	Large share of remaining revenue	High – structured HR, regional opportunities, professional processes
SMEs (Small & Medium Enterprises)	Family businesses, "Hidden Champions" in engineering or manufacturing	~99.3 %	~53 % of all employees (38+ million people)	~28 % of total revenue (€2.8T of €10T)	Very high – easier access via networking, less formal but more personal recruiting
Public Sector / NGOs	Universities, municipal offices, non-profits	a few %	varies	varies	Medium to high – clear paths, structured entry, language requirements



“I started applying to small companies because I thought they would be easier to get into – but they didn’t have the infrastructure for international people.

Bigger companies were actually more open – I just didn’t know that at the beginning.”

Tsovinar

Career & Recruiting in Different Company Types

Company Type	Recruiting Style	Career Development	Language	Application Tips
Global Players (e.g. SAP, Siemens)	Structured, online platforms, long and fixed processes, talent pools	Clear paths, often with trainee/intern programs	English often possible	Strong CV, formal tone, tailored cover letter
Large National Companies (e.g. Deutsche Bahn)	Structured, mix of online + regional fairs	Many internal mobility options	Usually German required	Standard CV formats, reference to company values
SMEs / Mittelstand (Hidden Champions)	Personal, fast, high chances via networks	Quick access to responsibility, often informal	German usually expected	Direct approach, use alumni or regional links
Public Sector / NGOs	Formalized, fixed deadlines, online portals	Stable, rule-based progression	German usually mandatory	Follow job posting rules strictly, include all documents



Many people only apply to what's visible – the well-known global companies.

But the best opportunities are often hidden below the surface – at less visible, smaller employers.

4. Visibility

What this is about:

Discover how to make your strengths visible – through smart networking, personal positioning and understanding the power of referrals in Germany.

Why does visibility matter?



Did you know?

Only 17% of international MINT students build direct employer contact during studies

60% say language barriers made their job search harder

68% lack practical experience in Germany

Sources: ingenieur.de, SVR study on the integration of international graduates in the German labor market (svr-migration.de)

How to strengthen your visibility & impact

Lack of contacts

Use alumni, events, and university support

No German work experience

Get internships, student jobs, volunteering

Language barrier

Show willingness to learn, start improving

No idea how to apply

Use Career Services, practice, ask for help

Feeling “too different”

Turn it into a unique selling point





“Networking was the one thing that helped me succeed – in every aspect. I contacted alumni on LinkedIn and just asked: Can I ask you 3 questions?” That’s how I got my interview at SAP – not because of a job ad, but through a connection.”

You don’t need to be loud – but you need to be clear.”

Tsovinar

Group Exercise

10 Minutes

Discuss in groups:

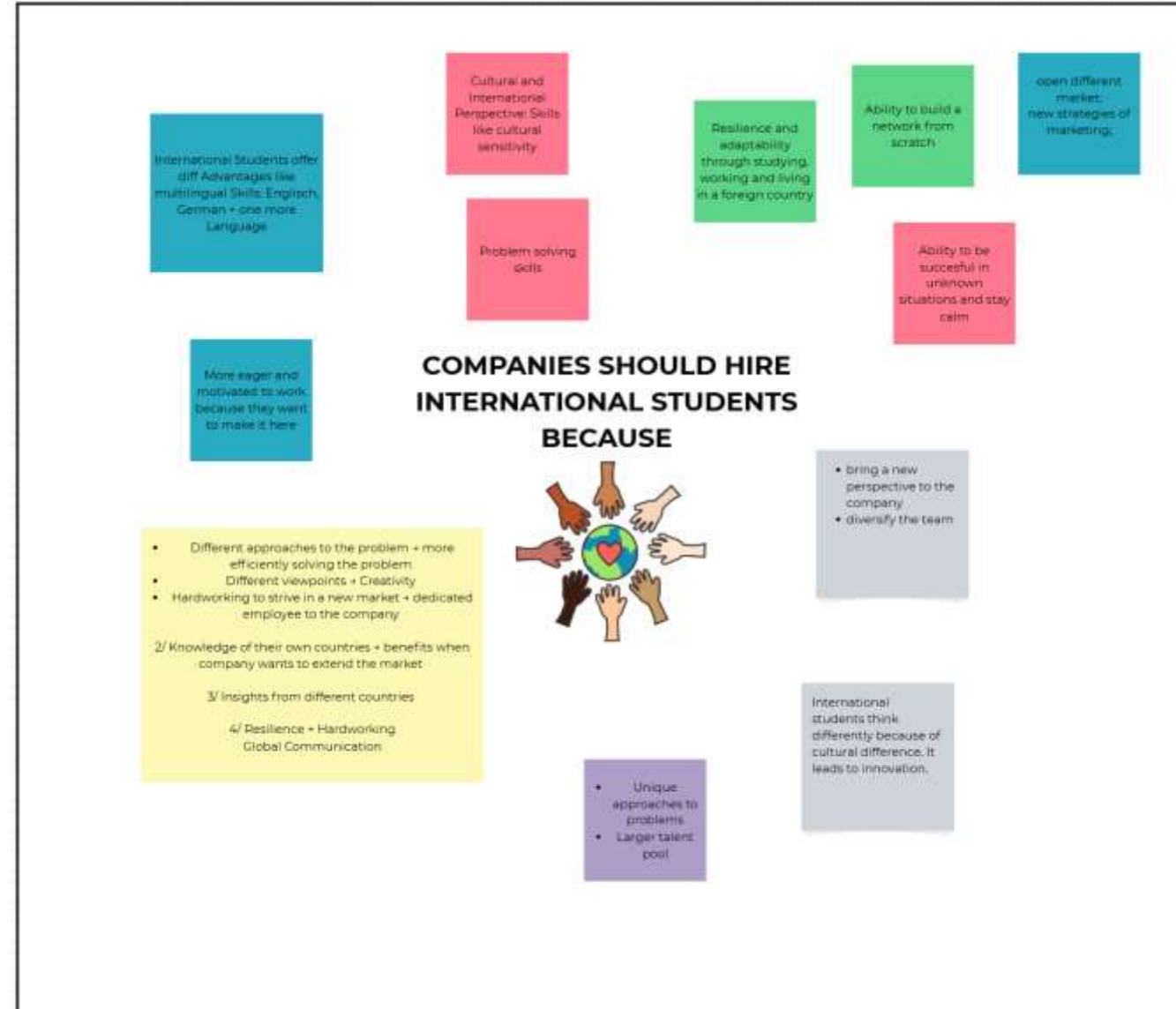
What makes you valuable – from an employer's view?

Imagine you are part of the Recruitment Team of a German company. You want to convince your team to hire more international students. What arguments would you use?

What do international students bring to the table?

- What do international students know or do that locals might not?
- What skills or perspectives are especially helpful for companies today?
- What personal qualities are needed to study successfully in a foreign country?







“I’m still learning every day – but I now know how to use my background as a strength.”

International students don’t need to adapt completely – they need to connect authentically.”

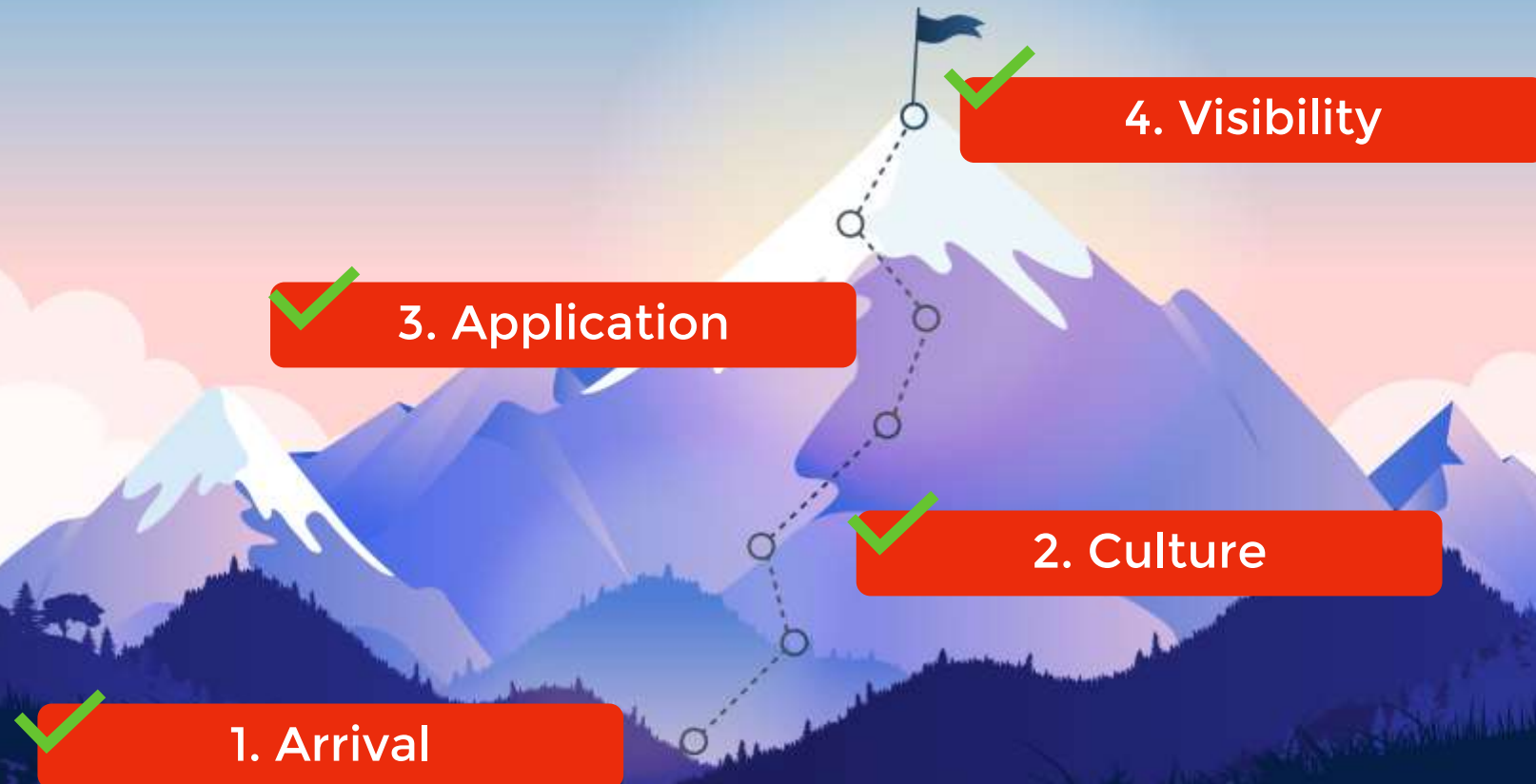
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Tools and Channels for Visibility

Channel / Tool	Why it works	Tip
LinkedIn	Professional visibility, job search, alumni	Use filters to find alumni or target companies
XING (in Germany)	Especially relevant in DACH region and SME	Build a basic profile in German
Career Services	Events, fairs, connections to recruiters	Use every contact point at your university
Referral Strategy	Boosts trust and speeds up process	Ask alumni from your home country living in Germany
Volunteering / Events	Creates presence, shows initiative	Helps you build soft-entry relationships

Germany has a referral culture (Vitamin B) – that doesn't exist in every country, but it's real here.

Plan your career in Germany and prepare effectively for entering the job market.



- 1. How are you?
(Scale 1-10)**
- 2. Your biggest take
away today**

Thank you!

Let's stay in touch

You have a question? Please contact me at any time!



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Scan this QR Code if you want to listen to this episode:

Title: **Working in Germany - focus on this (#280)**

