



# DCW FOCUSES ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

**F**or more than 50 years, DCW, the social development company of the municipality of Enschede, has been offering employment opportunities to people with a distance to the labour market. The more than 450 employees work for national and international customers in various fields including packaging, assembly, textiles, greenery, technology and innovation, creative products, logistics and, since recently also catering and woodworking. This provides a wide range of tasks that match the abilities and talents of each individual.

'We consider what people like and what they aspire to do,' explains director Femke Koster. 'Our employees are very diverse, spanning different ages, educational background and abilities. For example, we have employees with physical limitations, such as blindness

or limited dexterity, as well as those with mental disabilities, including forms of autism or acquired brain injuries. Sometimes, employees discover new talents simply by trying different tasks. Because if you never try something else, you don't know if you're good at it.'

## From Minecraft to Cobots

A good example is the Technology and Innovation department, where individuals, most of whom had no prior experience in programming or technical drawing, found their footing. Despite lack of formal training, their proficiency in games like Minecraft and Candy Crush led them to explore new skills. By nurturing their interest and providing opportunities to learn, these employees experienced incredible personal growth.

They turned to online tutorials to learn how to work with technical drawing programs and are now designing tools for their colleagues, which they then manufacture using a 3D printer. Last year, they even printed and assembled parts for their own Cobot (one-armed robot) using the 3D printer. And to think that these were young people who often dropped out of school... It's so nice to see that development!'

## Lots of development opportunities

'At DCW, we believe that there's suitable work for everyone, and we focus on identifying and utilising these opportunities. We provide tailored work and support them in their personal development. To facilitate this, DCW offers a comprehensive range of options, including courses to enhance digital skills, which are invaluable for tasks such as applying for a DigiD or managing finances online. We also offer training in assertiveness, financial fit, retirement planning, teamwork, Dutch language proficiency, quitting smoking and healthy lifestyle choices. Additionally, we provide mandatory training for specific jobs, such as forklift operation, reach truck operation, EPT, VCA (Safety, Health and Environment checklist for contractors) certification,



◀ Femke Koster with the cobot built at DCW.



◀ 'Making bitterballen' workshop with top chef Emiel Kwekkeboom.

## Our own Bitterballen

One of the latest developments at DCW is the establishment of a catering department. Employees from various departments expressed interest in catering work. At the beginning of 2024, they participated in a workshop 'making bitterballen' led by top chef Emiel Kwekkeboom from restaurant Joann in Enschede. During the workshop, they learned to prepare two types of bitterballen: one made with beef and one with oyster mushrooms grown by DCW using coffee grounds. 'We recently presented these special bitterballen at a council meeting in Enschede. It was a special experience for the employees, which only made them more enthusiastic. And that's a good thing, because there are already a lot of orders for these bitterballen.'

## Seen and appreciated

The enthusiasm and dedication of the employees, alongside the quality of their work, have not gone unnoticed by our customers. 'We regularly receive new orders and compliments, which is deeply rewarding for our employees to hear, knowing that their work is recognised and valued. We take great pride in this acknowledgment.' ■

forestry maintenance and crop protection. As we introduce new types of work, we continuously update training offerings to accommodate these changes.'

## Aligning with employee aspirations

'We prioritise personal growth by conducting annual dialogue with all employees to understand their aspirations and development goals, as we believe it is important. For example, several employees of the textile department indicated that they would like to improve their sewing skills, such as mastering techniques like inserting a zipper or altering garments. In collaboration with ROC van Twente, we organised textile courses for both beginners and advanced students. These courses were such a success that we organise follow-up sessions. Furthermore, we established a sewing club, where employees can repair or even design their own clothing after working hours. It's great to see how proud they are of the result and how impressed other people are.'

## Continuous development

Not only the employees evolve, but so does DCW itself. 'We are a learning organisation, constantly assessing market needs and identifying opportunities that align with our employees. Collaborating with local schools and entrepreneurs, we have developed learning pathways particularly in fields such as cleaning and catering. For example, DCW employees undergo training to become cleaners at Vue cinemas, presenting a win-win solution. This initiative addresses Vue's need for cleaning staff while providing our employees an opportunity to discover new talents.' A godsend for employee Jeffrey, for example, who diligently cleans at Vue in the mornings and then dedicates his afternoons to work at DCW. 'When I go to the movies with friends, I'm proud of how clean it is. I really take credit for my work.'

