

Starting the career in virtual times in the Credit, Surety & Political Risk division at Hannover Re

The first few months in your new position in the company may be among the most memorable ones of your career, but imagine they take place in a time of working from home and you are not able to meet your new colleagues in person. Could you imagine beginning your first days like this?

This is what happened when Johanna and Merle started working in the Credit, Surety and Political Risk team at Hannover Re last summer. Johanna had already been working at Hannover Re but in a different department, while Merle started a Trainee program in late 2020 and thus, has never experienced the “Hannover Re world” before Covid-19.

But what it is like to start a new job in a new team, not only in the midst of a global pandemic, but also in a period of major changes in the working world in general?

Many studies, experience reports and personal statements have shown that among the things that first come to mind, when people think about what they miss in times of working from home, is the in-person contact to and exchange with their colleagues.

Trust us, this is not getting any easier when you have never actually met your colleagues in person and your idea of them is limited to cutouts on a screen.

Johanna and Merle found themselves really lucky because their department was already quite experienced when it comes to flexible adaptations and digital communications from a time before Covid-19.

The two new colleagues were not only well equipped in terms of technical devices but benefited

from a partnering scheme already in place. You would ask what is the partnering scheme? It is a tandem method in which the experienced team members take turns spending one week with the newcomers. This approach has a couple of advantages. On the one hand, it is a good tool for knowledge transfer as every week Johanna and Merle have a different person of reference who works in specific fields of the department and thus over time, the two new co-workers can get an understanding of a broad range of subjects. On the other hand, it is much easier for the new members to get to know the colleagues and to ask all questions that might come up in one-on-one calls than in larger group calls. It is also an opportunity to learn how to deal with one of the main challenges of working from home: time management. Being partnered with one colleague each week allows Johanna and Merle to get insights into ways of time management and work prioritisation from their fellow colleagues.

Nonetheless, both Johanna and Merle were really happy to finally meet the entire team in person at the annual team retreat in September!

Starting to work in a new team during Covid-19 also created numerous opportunities for the two colleagues. Working from home really encouraged them to learn as independently as possible, taught them a great deal of resilience and most importantly, gave them the possibility to meet the clients and partners (virtually) at a very early stage!

It was a great chance to take part in several virtual meetings with our clients and partners, getting to know them and learning from experienced people from across the industry.

There are clearly aspects of the new ways of working that Johanna and Merle would like to take with them for the future: working flexibly, prioritisation, time management and taking that extra bit of time to virtually catch up with the teammates and colleagues from all over the world.

Still, they are very excited to get to know “the real world” soon, to meet everyone in the office again and to get to know them off the screen.