



## Olaf B. Tietz

**Company:** E.R.P. Eastern Relationship Projectconsult & Real Estate GmbH

**Job Title:** Managing Partner

**Year of Foundation:** 1994

**HQ:** Berlin

**Main Business:** Consulting and Research Services

**Number of Employees:** 20

### Among the broad scope of services E.R.P. offers is communication design. How do you approach communication at the workplace?

Successful communication between people is impeded for numerous reasons – one of them being that communication is made too complicated or even obscure. Our mission is to simplify matters and draw a clear picture of the situation.

Communication design is about visualising solutions: we work with relatable concepts to draw up a roadmap that becomes the solution in itself. We put a red light here, a sign there, and place the individual people along the way – so everyone can imagine their position and their part on the greater map. We design solution scenarios with the team and in the process, they are already on their way to better communication. Unlike in the arts or graphic design, the images we draw up are multidimensional and multifarious. In the process, with the input of everyone's personal colours, we might even discover new perspectives and colour combinations that weren't even considered before!

### So do we have to imagine you sitting with office staff and board members of a company drawing pictures and colouring in lines?

Figuratively, yes. Communication design is a joint effort – especially in a big corporation, it has to involve everyone across the ranks, from janitor to CEO. The goal of successful communication design is the creation of a true team – and the basis for communication design is the team. It's about literally pulling people away from their cubicles, computer screens and compartments in which they think on a daily basis – picking them up where communication conflicts might arise, and bringing them to one table. We call in a meeting, set everything else aside for a while, pull out cards and pencils and start playing with concepts and images. Because it's a playful process it's intuitive: inside, we already know where the challenges lie and how we envision a solution. It really can be that simple sometimes; it just has to be done.

### How do you successfully implement communication design in a large corporate setting, in which countless subdivisions and defined hierarchies can hinder straightforward communication?

For a large client, we organised an internal fair. We specified subject areas, to which project teams were invited to set up information booths. This allowed employees to see what other divisions and departments were up to, explore common connections and gain a new curiosity for their own work. The goal was to abolish the habitual static structure and inspire an exchange that otherwise might have never taken place simply because people didn't know about each other. At the same time, employees perceived themselves not as only working for this or that department but the greater vision and values their company represented.

This also benefited daily operations: maybe an employee discovered that their skills could contribute to another department, or was able to transfer strategies that had proven successful in one section to their own. The fair proved so much more effective than some speaker clicking his way through a Power Point presentation. Once you bring movement into established ways, you create new dynamics that in turn promote a new sense of identification with the corporation – and in consequence more fun on the job. And that is what any communication should come down to: a sense that you are not left alone and part of a greater whole – and personal satisfaction in your contribution to it.

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