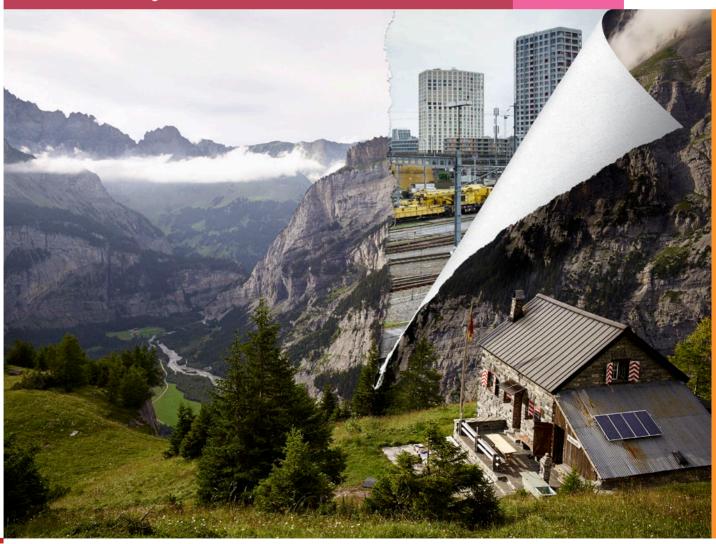


The magazine for decision makers

Diversity



Switzerland – a panoply of languages, cultures and landscapes.

Urs Honegger CEO PwC Switzerland



In this issue of ceo Magazine you'll discover how multifaceted the concept of diversity actually is – because in the business world, diversity has many dimensions indeed: multicultural and mixed-gender teams, varying views and experiences, vast arrays of products and services, worldwide locations ... and the list goes on. But the common denominator here is the fact that those variables offer your company a decisive competitive advantage and boost your innovation potential, provided you can deploy the wealth contained in that treasure chest cleverly and circumspectly.

"Diversity represents a clear com-

petitive advantage for a company.

greater than the sum of its parts."

Because here, too, the whole is

Switzerland, itself, is a good example of successful diversity. Here, numerous languages and cultures as well as differing social and commercial mindsets collide in a fruitful way. This colourfulness has made Switzerland domestically strong and globally unique.

As a decision-maker and bearer of ultimate responsibility, you need to project the diversity of your own organisation in order to reap the economic benefits. In an otherwise individualised society, those who lead in a similarly structured manner are in a position to remain flexible and fleetfooted. For that reason, a number of companies have anchored Diversity Management not just at the executive suite level, but also within HR. In doing so, they're leveraging the variegation of their staff and engendering mutual esteem.

And precisely that is what we, too, are doing at PwC. For our employees and clients, we're creating added value by fostering diversity and grooming a culture that embraces different talents and approaches. We underscore the uniqueness of each and every individual as representing a success factor for our firm as a whole. How this energy translates into competitive advantages is something you'll learn as you wend your way through the following pages.

Experts with different backgrounds explain in this issue what diversity means to them and how they make the best use of its positive impulses. You'll find answers by a representative of the Jacobs dynasty, whose charitable foundation is committed to innovation and diversity. You'll also read the opinion of a professor who not only lectures on diversity but also lives and breathes it. A representative of the optics industry discusses how he used innovations to conquer the markets. From a photographer, you'll learn more about visual diversity. And to round things out, several successful company founders explain how their organisations benefit from diversity.

We wish you enjoyable reading that is just as diverse as it is stimulating.



Urs Honegger



Situated in the heart of Europe, Switzerland's central location has made the country a patchwork of various cultures and languages. Within a relatively confined space, one nevertheless finds a remarkably diverse landscape. The Jura, the midlands and the Alps constitute the three main regions of our country. The cover photo for this, the latest issue of ceo Magazine captures the colours to be found on Switzerland's palette – from the Balmhornhütte in the Bernese Alps to a view of Zurich West. The different kinds of paper used in this publication also enable you to gain a first impression of what "diversity" is all about.



Because different is better

Joanne Burgener

Partner and Diversity Leader PwC Switzerland ch.linkedin.com/in/ioanneburgener

Charles Donkor

Partner Human Capital Consulting PwC Switzerland ch.linkedin.com/in/charlesdonkor





We want to create value for our people and our clients by promoting diversity, a culture of inclusion and a healthy work/life balance. 1,064 women and 1,589 men from over 60 nations work at PwC Switzerland.

What are the challenges involved in creating this "value"?

Joanne Burgener: Creating value for clients, our people and communities depends on building and maintaining strong relation ships between people. Our challenge in promoting diversity is to enable our people to really deal with differences, be aware and manage successfully their unconscious biases. With that, non-dominant perspectives – ideas and views that are usually suppressed because they don't fit with "how we do things" can be voiced and create innovation and value.

What does that mean for our clients and how do we support them?

Charles Donkor: Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is an increasingly important topic for our clients, with often a main focus on Gender Diversity. Research has shown that the higher the proportion of women in a team, the more likely it is that they will

exhibit collective intelligence (and so achieve its goals). Given the increasing pressure (especially in the EU) to introduce a gender quota at the board level, companies are preparing themselves for a higher number of female directors. We support our clients by drawing up a comprehensive inclusion strategy. While the main focus is on gender, we also incorporate other diversity aspects such as age, sexual orientation and (physical) disabilities.

Clients expect us to bring diverse teams to the table. How do we go about that?

Joanne Burgener: After listening to the needs of the client, we put together a team that best fits the client's needs. Often, such a team is comprised of different nationalities, languages and gender. As Charles mentioned, mixed-gender teams are more successful, have easier access to the client and a better team spirit – under the premise that each team member is able to manage diversity successfully.

And how will the work environment change in the years ahead?

Charles Donkor: Clients as well as PwC Switzerland will need to offer much more flexible work conditions. We made substantial progress in that respect (home office policy, etc.), but companies will have to do more in the future to attract the best talents regardless of where they come from. They need to develop an open culture and cultivate leaders who are able to manage diverse teams. It's the only way to be successful in the com-

PwC Switzerland fosters diversity with the following

Flexible working models such as an-

A women mentoring programme, which is a career development

with an annual event, regional networks and an event for

Childcare support which includes facilities, emergency nannies, a PwC holiday camp and a programme for becoming mothers.

Internal workshops and trainings on Diversity & Inclusion

PwC is a founding member of Advance, a network to empower Women in Swiss Business

pwc.ch/diversity advance-women.ch



nual working time, teleworking or part-time to balance the different

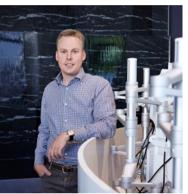
programme targeted at female key

A Swiss PwC Women Network female clients.

special agreements with day care



04 Prof. Dr. Georg von Krogh The Professor for Strategic Management and Innovation at the ETH Zurich doesn't just preach diversity, he also lives it.



24 Jan Schoch Leonteq CEO and founder unveils his recipe for success.



08 Johannes Reck

company.

The GetYourGuide CEO uses

cooking workshops to foster

cultural understanding at his

30 Olivier Chuard Many times detours lead to one's goal, as the CEO and founder of Passengerty has learned.



The General Manager of SAC describes the multifaceted activities of the Swiss Alpine Club.



34 Dr. Joh. Christian Jacobs The Chairman of the Board of Trustees talks about the commitment and success stories of the Jacobs Foundation.



20 **Dr. Manuel Aschwanden**

Optotune explains the unique

aspects of the optics business.

The CEO and founder of

40 Dieter Meier The virtuoso talks about the power of idiocy.



44 Rudolf Hug Prestige and status symbols are not the source of happiness, as this world traveller, photographer, entrepreneur and tinkerer knows.



50 Alexander Mazzara Open-mindedness is a question of attitude and the given person. The CEO and founder of Joiz is convinced of that.



54 Thomas Bergen The CEO and founder of getAbstract on curious ideas and overseas adventures.

12 The diversity of Switzerland

61 PwC in Switzerland **Impressum**

2 **ceo ceo** 3

Build snow fences together

Diversity in a workforce is good, says management guru *Georg von Krogh*. Integrating that diversity into the organisation is even better.

Text: Eric Johnson **Images:** Markus Bertschi

A case study in diversity – Georg von Krogh

Ever seen an old-fashioned steamer trunk, full of stickers from various destinations? Georg von Krogh's (51) CV looks similar, with stations of Oslo, Trondheim, Milan and Zurich featuring prominently, supplemented by temporary posts in America, Asia and Europe. Moving around early was a conscious decision for the Scandi-native. His home country Norway, he observes, "is a place where people tend either to stay put or to explore the globe". Obviously, he chose the latter. Now in Switzerland for 18 years, he first taught at the University of St Gallen, and has since been appointed Professor of Strategic Management and Innovation at Zurich's Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich).

In nature, monocultures can be extremely vulnerable. Think of the infamous Irish potato blight of the 1840s, or the boll-weevil infestation of American cotton during the 20th century.

So, too, can monoculture organisations be vulnerable. Lack of diversity, contends Georg von Krogh, Professor of Strategic Management and Innovation at Zurich's Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich), leads to myopia – a dangerous short-sightedness. Management can walk right off the side of a cliff, or straight into the clutches of competitors and predators.

But avoiding the pitfalls of corporate monoculture, warns the well-travelled Norwegian (see box), requires more than simply hiring people of many different kinds. "Of course diversity can be positive", he notes. "The deeper question is: What do you do with it?"

His answer: that diversity of people must be melded together into a multi-functional team. Diversity needs to be baked in, so to speak. When that happens, the result is both resilience, i.e. the ability to handle adversity, and innovative strength – what von Krogh calls the central key to success.

Assemble the pieces

How does a company do that? Although von Krogh's lengthy publication list is packed with concepts such as 'competence configuration', 'knowledge eco-systems' and even 'Zipf's Law', his answer is more practical than theoretical. The professor points to four principles proven at companies large and small, as well as in his own burgeoning research group. They are backed up by countless business-school case studies, yet they ring so familiar to anybody who has ever been a loyal member of a successful organisation – be it a sport or a service club, a bank, a scout troop or a multi-national company.

First is to show a "deep-seated respect" for all colleagues, all of the time. No put-downs, no silly jokes, instead an attitude of – dare we say it – kindness to others. This needs to happen in the office or factory, of course, but can be reinforced in the non-working environment. Social or physical outings, so easily denigrated as 'corporate jollies', can actually be invaluable contributions to team-building.

Second is to lend a helping hand. For example, alpine villages have a rich history of working together to prevent damage from avalanches. "They build snow fences together", von Krogh points out, adding that this spirit of one-for-all, all-for one can infuse any organisation. A critical element in most cases is that people practice empathy, the art of seeing life as someone else does – to walk a mile in his or her shoes.



4 ceo 5



The third element of integrating diversity, says von Krogh, is one as common to ETH Zurich as it is to a similar institution in Cambridge where he is a Research Fellow at the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge: keep busy on common projects. "Find reasons to work with others, and just get on with it", he urges. Waiting around to find something to do leads to boredom, boredom leads to complaining, and before you can say 'Zipf's Law Mechanism' you're headed down a slippery slope of negativity.

The final part of the prescription is a classic: teams must talk out their differences, as early as possible. Yes, this can take time, but its benefits outweigh the investment. Moreover, while companies should study victories in order to replicate them, they also ought to learn from defeats, their own and those of others. "Too many managers want to learn only from success", von Krogh cautions, "they should aim to learn just as much from failure."

Cut the cake

When those pieces come together, when diversity is integrated into an organisation, then it is at its strongest, both defensively and offensively.

That organisation can be larger than a single company. As examples, von Krogh points to some of the 'industrial clusters' that have taken root in the Canton of Zurich, not just the obvious one of finance, but also those such as information-communications technology (ICT), life sciences, nanotech and aerospace.

The key to attracting – and more importantly, retaining – these clusters is to reach a critical mass of diversity.

The entire process, what von Krogh calls 'private-collective collaboration', on one hand generates this resilience, and on the other hand motivates innovation.

A prime example of the latter is a company headquartered 25 km down the lake from his ETH Zurich office. In the book Enabling Knowledge Creation 1, von Krogh and his coauthors describe (pp 32-44) how hearing-aid pioneer Phonak grew from a two-man show into a global innovator by capitalising on diversity and integration. Again and again, the company has focused on breaking down barriers and building up connections across its staff. Although the book was published in 2000, von Krogh says he is still "very inspired" by Phonak.

So much so, that he thinks Phonak sets a prime example for the region and for the country in general. One of the few things Switzerland's business climate could use more of, in his opinion, are young, highgrowth firms. They act like magnets to talent, to investors (especially venture capitalists), not to mention suppliers. Creating a few more young stars in our industrial clusters, he says, will be just the right recipe for avoiding monoculture and achieving long-term success.

A case study in diversity – ETH Zurich

The Professor of Strategic Management and Innovation at Zurich's ETH practices as well as preaches diversity. Its core team of 12–15 people sound like a roll call for the World Cup or the United Nations, and it is just as multi-disciplined. The group's aim is "to contribute significantly to the management practice and research at a wold-class level." And it does: typically it is ranked among the world's top research groups in its field.

smi.ethz.ch

"Too many managers want to learn only from success, they should aim to learn just as much from failure."

¹ «Enabling Knowledge Creation», Georg von Krogh, Kazuo Ichijo, Ikujiro Nonaka, Oxford University Press, 2000; p. 32–44.



Globetrotters' glee

At GetYourGuide, the employees occasionally conduct cooking workshops to showcase delicacies from their country of origin. By encouraging activities like that, Johannes Reck – CEO of this booking portal for sightseeing tours – wants to foster cultural understanding amongst his people. He's convinced that it pays when you get closer to your customers and continually adapt to the world's panoply of cultures.

Text: Editor ceo Magazine Images: Markus Bertschi

Johannes Reck (29) earned his master's degree in biochemistry from the ETH Zurich in 2009. Already a year earlier, he founded together with his university colleagues Tao Tao, Martin Sieber, Pascal Mathis and Tobias Rein the start-up company GetYourGuide, which he has headed ever since then as its CEO. He previously gained business experience at the location-based information service LocalUncle and The Boston Consulting Group.

Laughing is part of your corporate culture - why?

I want a workplace environment where employees are not just functioning like small cogs in a monotonously running machine. We want to have fun together; feel like a family. At GetYour-Guide, our employees hail from the broadest array of nations. And by definition, that means there are vast cultural differences. A common denominator here, though, is the friendly, almost next-of-kin way they interact with each other. That's the defining element of our corporate culture.

You underscore the broad diversity within your company. Why don't you include "diversity" in the core values of **GetYourGuide?**

Diversity is frequently just a catchword that large companies hew in stone in their strategy nd thereby express a simple ept in a complicated way. o, could have adopted dis a core value, but then ployees would not have ue as to what we precisewith that.

What's your understanding How do you manage that of this concept?

For me, diversity means that company employees from all over the world and with completely different cultures can actually work together in harmony. But at the same time, diversity also means having a wide range of products and services that the company can offer in the marketplace. And ultimately, it also shows up in the form of a broad, heterogeneous customer base.

How does this diversity gain expression at **GetYourGuide?**

As to our customers, each day several hundred thousand people from every corner of the world surf through our website. And that demand is met by a huge supply of products. We offer those people close to 25,000 travel options at more than 2,400 destinations across the globe. What's more, our employees have a collective command of roughly 30 languages and come from more than 20 countries. At GetYourGuide, diversity is allpervasive – be it on the product side or in terms of our selling efforts and worldwide customer base.

broad diversity?

We actively encourage our employees to bring their culture into our company. One way we do this is by conducting regular courses that address various cultures and the destinations where they prevail. The sessions are moderated by our people from those countries. In the cooking workshops, for example, I've come to know and enjoy culinary delicacies from the farthest reaches of the world.

Why is diversity especially important for your company?

We're in the travel business, an industry that lives by its diversity. People who go on a journey seek the unusual. By the same token, our company is itself very diverse not just when you consider our employees and wide array of products and offerings, but also when it comes to our values. Our services are sought throughout the world. And in the age of the Internet, globalisation is perceptible each and every day. There's hardly a single company anymore that can focus on just one local market with a homoge neous customer structure. The cultures are becoming more and more heterogeneous, as are the customers themselves.

GetYourGuide is an online

booking portal for tours, side trips and sightseeing in more than 2,400 destinations throughout the world. Right from home, the eager globetrotter can use the portal to organise and book activities, buy entry passes, and thereby avoid long waiting lines. This start-up company was founded in 2008 and went online one year later. GetYour-Guide is the offspring of a student project at the ETH in Zurich. In the meantime, the company employs close to 100 employees in Zurich, Berlin and Las Vegas. With roughly 25,000 activities in its portfolio of offerings, GetYourGuide has grown to become a global market leader. The company was founded by its current CEO, Johannes Reck, and four other comrades-in-arms.

getyourguide.com

And this heterogeneity is reflected in your company's offerings?

Indeed. It all starts with the way we address our customers. The GetYourGuide service centre offers assistance in six different languages – apart from German and English, advice is available as well in French, Spanish, Italian and Dutch. Our website content is also readable in those languages. With this multilingualism, we've been able to individualise our services. But that adaptability also applies to the way we fine-tune our offerings to satisfy the wishes of GetYourGuide customers. For instance, we sell activities for travellers who are curious about their religious roots – from a tour of the Vatican to a Jewish "Kabbala Tour".

Are you, yourself, a good role model for the diversity at your company?

Well, only to a certain extent. But in any case, I've been shaped by various cultural influences in the German-speaking region of Europe: my mother is an Austrian, my father is from northern Germany, and I've lived in Switzerland for the past seven years. Moreover, as a sixteen-year-old, I stayed in the States for a year and then attended a French school. So there's a little bit of diversity that I already experienced at a young age. But I automatically gained lots more in later years by simply travelling. And GetYourGuide is headed by a very international management team.

Meaning?

My business partner, Tao Tao, is Chinese and grew up in Beijing. Our Sales Manager, Rasmus London as an entrepreneur and comes originally from Denmark. We're indeed quite a mixed bag.

How do you deal with stereotypes?

We're a very young, easy-going company and still relatively small with our workforce of close to 100 employees. The question of stereotypes is hardly an issue at GetYourGuide. A person who is culturally biased simply doesn't fit here, so we have no need to take corrective action against prejudices.

But in your contact with local service providers. stereotypes can obviously play a role - or am I wrong here?

Working closely with the local organisers is certainly one of our strengths. For each city and each country where we're active, GetYourGuide has a sales manager who speaks the native language and can meet minds with the providers. In doing so, we try to embrace the local culture and values and build a common basis for doing business. Our relationships with those people are strong and personal. Right from the start, we were committed to doing that and today it obviously represents one of our competitive advantages.

Can you offer a few examples?

A good one is our "Historical Whore Tour" in Hamburg, where travellers are guided through the St. Pauli red light district. The operators of this tour actually didn't want any web-based marketing of their "product". But my Hanseatic background most likely played a role in our ability to convince the tour operator to give us a try. And there are a lot of examples like that. We're able to convince the providers that we

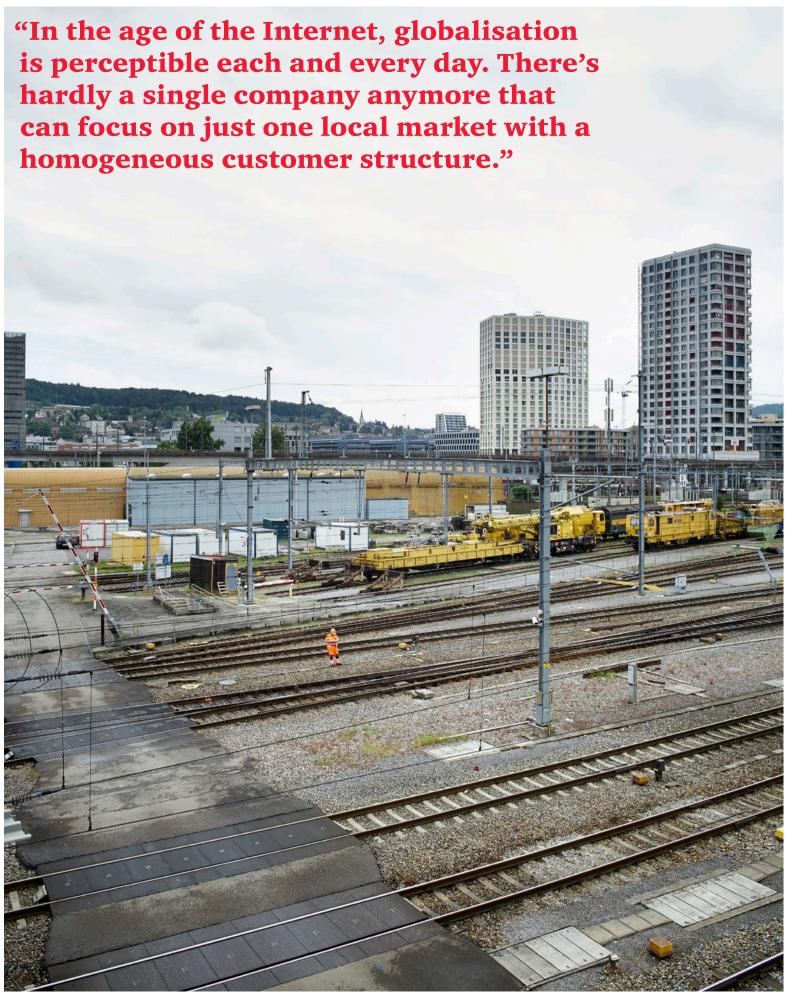
Wolff, spent the past five years in share their culture and that they can rely on us. This differentiates us from our competitors, especially those operating out of the USA [laughs].

Meaning they don't put their heads around the local culture?

At least those in America – they prefer to send their own people to the regions they want to cultivate. After all, people of the same origin are easier to manage from upstairs because they share the same culture. We on the other hand are of the opinion that it pays off to foster direct ties with the providers and continuously adapt to their culture. That way, we can always offer the best opportunities for our customers. It functions very well for us, even though the management dimension is significantly more complex.

So how do you actually go about managing this patchwork family? Which hurdles do you need to overcome?

Communication within the company is a hurdle in the truest sense of the word. If for instance the need arises to communicate the layoff of 10 percent of the workforce in an Anglo-Saxon region, then those employees who haven't been dismissed are pleased - because they still have a job. In the German-speaking region, the same communiqué would evoke a totally different reaction. Here, the employees would be rattled and sense that their own job is in jeopardy. It's the difference between a "glass is half full" and "glass is half empty" mindset. So from a communication standpoint, there are major challenges when you have a variety of cultures on board.

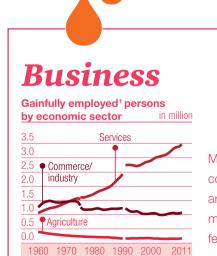


The diversity of Switzerland

Which languages are spoken and how frequently? Which educational paths are chosen? What does the political landscape look like? How networked are we? Ten charts depict the diversity of Switzerland.



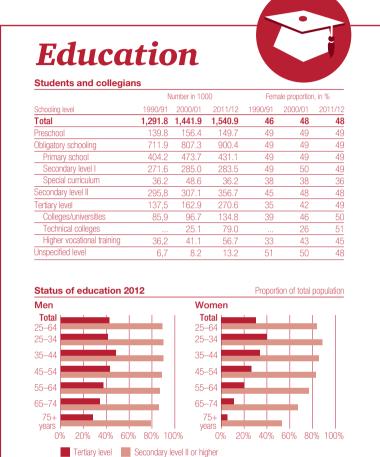
Water reserves Sources Quantity of water % of total reserves Groundwater 150 billion m³ 44% Natural lakes (Swiss share) 130 billion m³ 38% Glaciers 57 billion m³ 17% Reservoirs; flowing waters 4 billion m³ 1 % Total 340 billion m³ 100%

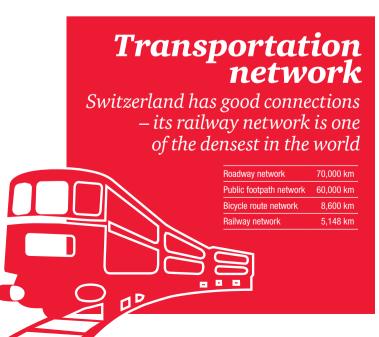


1 As of 1975 and then again in 1991, revised

method for calculating

More than 99% of all companies in Switzerland are SMEs, i.e. small and medium-sized enterprises with fewer than 250 employees.





Politics National Council 2011: manda



Other: 2 EVP, 2 Lega 1 MCR, 1 CSPOW SVP 15 GPS FDP 10 GPS FDP 10 GPS FDP 11 SP FDP 11 SP 12 GPS FDP 11 SP FDP 11 SP

	Strength of party in %	Mandates	Women	Men	Percentage of women
SVP	26.6	54	6	48	11.1
SP	18.7	30	21	21	45.7
FDP	15.1	46	7	23	23.
CVP	12.3	28	9	19	32.
GPS	8.4	15	6	9	40.
BDP	5.4	9	2	7	22.
GLP	5.4	12	4	8	33.
Other ¹	5.4	3	2	1	66.
Small right-wing parties ²	2.7	3	1	2	33.

1 EVP (2 mandates, 2 women), CSP, PdA, Sol., splinter groups (CSP-OW 1 mandate) 2 SD, EDU, Lega (2 mandates, 1 woman), MCR (1 mandate)

Gender equality



Key figures on gender equa	ality				
Female proportion in % (latest availa	ble status 2010–2013)				
Education					
59.6	Educational qualification: obligatory schooling ¹				
43.8	Highest completed level of education: college/university ¹				
36.2	University lecturers ²				
40.7	Lecturers at technical colleges ²				
Occupation					
28.8	Full-time employees (90% +)				
78.1	Part-time employees (< 90%)				
33.4	In executive or supervisory function ³				
64.4	Monthly net salary ≤ 3000 CHF (total: 2.3%) ⁴				
15.4	Monthly net salary > 8000 CHF (total: 19.5%) 4				
Presence in politics					
42.9	National Council				
29.0	Federal Council				
19.6	Council of States				
22.4	Cantonal executive body				
24.7	Cantonal parliament				
0% 50% 10	0%				
25- to 64-year-old population Professors, other lecturers, assistant and scientific staff	Employees Full-time workers, private and public sector (federal government)				

Main languages 2012 in % German 64.9 French 22.6 Italian 8.3 English 4.6 Portuguese 3.4 Albanian 2.6 Serbian 2.5 Spanish 2.2 Turkish languages 1.2 Rhaeto-Romanic 0.5 Other languages 5.1

Weather



Measurement station	Median air temperature		Annual amount of precipitation		Annual sunshine duration	
	°C	Var. in °C	mm	Index	Hours	Index
Lugano (273 m d.s.l.)	13.2	1.6	1412	91	2180	108
Sion (482)	11.0	1.8	615	103	2212	111
Basel-Binningen (316)	10.9	1.3	1048	135	1721	108
Geneva-Cointrin (420)	10.9		970	102	1938	114
Neuchâtel (485)	10.6	1.2	1124	119	1888	122
Zurich Fluntern (556)	9.7		1292	119	1779	120
Bernee-Zollikofen (553)	9.2		1128	110	1915	117
St. Gallen (776)	8.6		1549	124	1690	127
Davos (1594)	3.9	1.2	1233	123	1771	105

Biodiversity – endangered indigenous species Status: 1994–2013, depending on genus Mammals (87) Breeding birds (199) Reptiles (19) Amphibians (20) Fish and cyclostomes (73) Molluscs (270) Insects (2540) Ferns and flowering plants (2592) Mosses (1093) Lichens (786) Large fungi (4959) 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100% Missing or extinct Potentially endangered Insufficient available data

"Statistical Data on Switzerland 2014", Federal Statistical Office, Neuchâtel, February 2014.

"Diversity means togetherness, not just being next to one another."

Environmental protection and world-class sport, rescue operations and mountain-hut recipes: the Swiss Alpine Club's (SAC) range of activities are proof positive of broad diversity. Its General Manager, *Jerun Vils*, views diversity as an enrichment – and as a duty.

Text: Madeleine Stäubli-Roduner **Images:** Markus Bertschi

Mr Vils, you're General Manager of the Swiss Alpine Club and have a wide variety of activities that you need to attend to. How do you define "diversity"?

Good question. The SAC is an unusual organisation and broadly based. With close to 150,000 members spread across 111 Sections and four language regions, we're like a mini-Switzerland. Not only are we represented in Zurich and Geneva – where our largest Sections operate – but also in the remotest mountain valleys. With us, worlds come together, also thematically: because we deal just as much with permafrost as we do with book publishing. When it comes to the topic of "Alps", the diversity dimension is already a given, even though what first comes to mind for outsiders are visions of our mountain huts.

But you work with quite a number of partners ...

Exactly. We collaborate with the Federal Bureau of Sport and Gymnastics, publish as I mentioned a booklet with popular mountain hut recipes, and are engaged in partnerships with the likes of Migros, Salewa and Axpo. We also work closely with Zurich's central library in the prepublication of the Club's 150-year history. Also, we're directly involved in the Bern Alpine Museum and cooperate with Alpine Rescue, which is head-quartered at Zurich Airport's Rega Center.

All of those activities revolve around the theme of "Nature in the Alps". Which special issues does the SAC address in terms of the environment?

Here, our motto is "Protect nature and enjoy the region!" After all, the Alps are only interesting if they remain intact and at the same time are actually used.

Does this diverse range of themes also have its disadvantages?

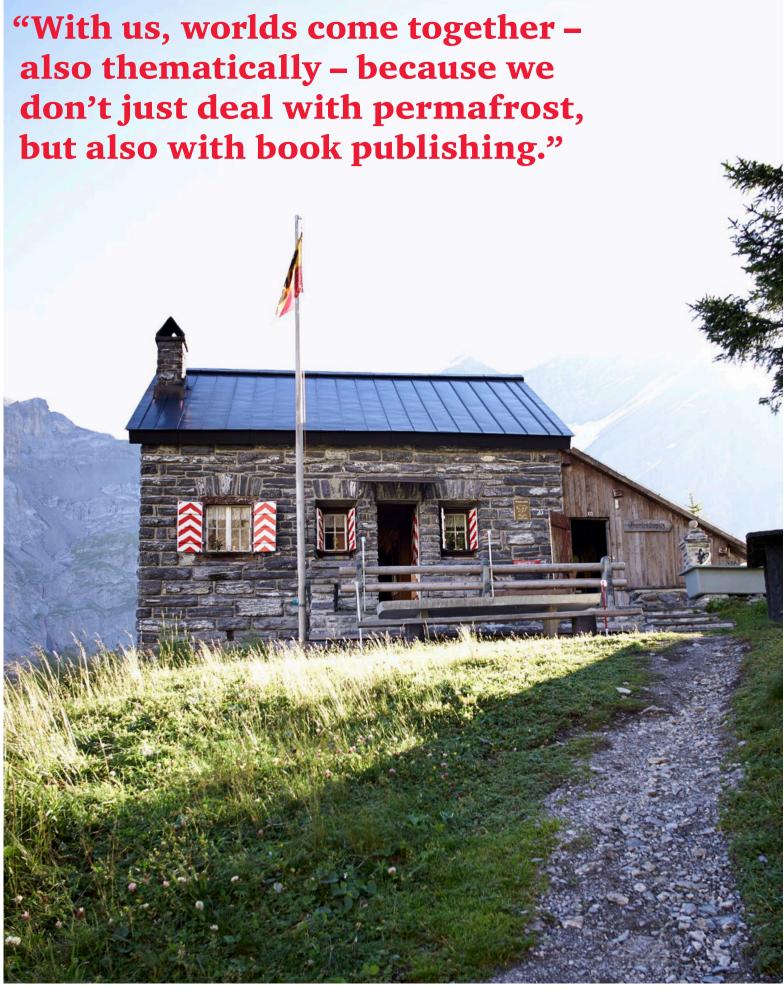
Yes. Diversity can also pose a threat if you get bogged down in the details. For that, our office in Berne is staffed with professionals from many fields: marketing specialists, journalists, tourism experts, mountain guides, bookkeepers and top athletes. In the SAC Mountain Hut division alone, specialists devote their efforts to topics such as geology, power generation and wastewater – quite a wide spectrum.

Jerun Vils has his roots in Vals but grew up in the city of Berne. After completing his basic business education, he moved at the age of 20 to Grisons where he continued his studies in the fields of tourism, marketing and corporate management. For 15 years, he held the post of Tourism Director Bernese Oberland while giving skiing lessons on the side. 45 years of age, Jerun Vils currently lives in Kandersteg BE and, together with his 12-year-old son, goes on long ski tours, hikes and mountain climbing expeditions.



14 *ceo*





As a result, the SAC has an unusually large patchwork family of professionals. To what extent do you play a role model for them?

For me, part of being a role model is the ability to listen, gather and digest opinions, and not stubbornly insist on one's own position. But at the same time, the staff must be able to rely on me; they need to know that the Board of Directors stands behind them and behind our decisions. In that our Sections are very autonomous, the management work is more complex than at an SME: we advise the Sections, explain our positions and seek solutions together.

That sounds harmonious. Do you sometimes also run up against stereotypical attitudes and, if so, how do you foster open-mindedness?

We always shake hands. A year ago our new Chairwoman, Françoise Jaquet from Freiburg, took office and set in motion a new management style. Since then, we've communicated more noticeably to the outside world. We want to approach partners proactively, and have done so recently with regard to the controversial heli-skiing topic. We have good platforms for encouraging compromise on hot-button issues like that. What's so compelling about SAC is that, because of its sheer size, you can hardly bypass it.

In your opinion, which attitude helps to prevent your getting worn down by all of these diverse tasks?

For me, the glass is always half full, not half empty: We want to focus on cultivating strengths, not weeding out weaknesses. Mountaineering is trendy these days - we've got a great product that we can fully stand behind. All of today's hectic has led to a widespread move back to the regional and local things in life. Why? Alpine experiences are impressive – and in certain ways they're actually similar to the characteristics of everyday business life: sweating along on the same path creates a bond; trusting your partner is crucial. It's really a matter of properly assessing the risks, coming to grips with the given circumstances, optimising your equipment and trekking ahead together.

The parallels are clear: the daily leadership challenges for entrepreneurs have become complex indeed. How do you go about dealing with those challenges?

In terms of employees, I need to be clear and straightforward. As to the overall Club, I'm always aware of the fact that I'm the General Manager, not a Director. In other words, all of the processes take time and require tremendous commitment. And that's where I perceive diversity as being a valuable job enrichment. At the SAC, employees can flourish personally and, thanks to our interesting tasks, it's easy for us to motivate those people.

Motivation one way or another: doesn't that wide range of tasks once in a while simply mean too much work?

We have something like 8,000 volunteers in the Club, so the work burden is shared on many shoulders. But what in fact does challenge us greatly is the bureaucracy dimension – for instance, the ever-increasing requirements for SAC hostelries in terms of fire prevention, wastewater, etc.

To what extent does the SAC's entrepreneurial diversity represent a competitive advantage these days?

Our goal is to promote mountaineering and enable people to enjoy the true alpine experience. We also want to ensure the proper relevant education as well as foster understanding of the Mother Nature and environmental dimensions of mountaineering. Thanks to our size and broad anchorage, we're networked like few other Swiss institutions. There's hardly any federal government office that we don't actively deal with. And the spirit of the times certainly plays into our hands: the skiers of yesterday are the alpinists of today. But perhaps most importantly, the mountain world is not just reserved for youths. In world-class sports, an athlete is put out to pasture at the age of 30; when it comes to mountaineering, you see many older people on your path. The diversity is also broad in terms of purchasing power, as can be seen in the growing outdoor segments. That was different at the time the SAC was founded by a group of elite men: back then, mountaineering was a privilege of the upper class. Today, the alpine world is open for everyone.

The Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) was founded by 35 people in 1863 as the third European club of its kind to follow the English example. By the end of that year, the SAC already had seven Sections with a collective membership of 358 mountain enthusiasts. Since then it has been a driving force in the development of the Alpine region and mountaineering. The Club maintains 152 mountain hostelries, offers training courses in mountaineering, organises the Swiss national teams for sport climbing and ski touring races, as well as publishes tour guides for skiers, trekkers and climbers. The actual governing body of the Club is its honorary central board of directors, which is chaired by Françoise Jaquet and supported by ten expert committees. Its operative management under Jerun

Vils is headquartered in the city of Berne and has a staff of close to

sac-cas.ch

50 individuals.

So that means the SAC also stands for diversity with regard to the sexes ...

Yes, today women as well as men are committed enthusiasts.

And what do the mountains stand for today in your opinion?

The way Swiss Tourism sees it, the Alps should become more "feminine". Unlike decades ago, they're not just there mainly for extreme mountain climbing expeditions or heroic adventure, but instead also for pleasurable experiences, meditation and relaxation. I like that attitude about altitude because it shows the diverse ways the mountains have an impact on us as human beings and how deeply they can impress us.

A Swiss lens conquers the world

Diversity is a valuable competitive advantage – so says *Manuel Aschwanden*, CEO of the high-tech company Optotune. With a multicultural crew, new ideas and unconventional approaches, he enlivens the innovative spirit at his optics start-up.

Text: Editor ceo Magazine **Images:** Markus Bertschi

Dr. Manuel Aschwanden is

the founder, owner and CEO of Optotune. He built up the company together with David Niederer and Mark Blum. Aschwanden earned a Master of Electrotechnology degree as well as a doctorate in nanotechnology from the ETH in Zurich. Today 33 years old, he gained practical experience at several major companies. But he always wanted to develop something on his own; with Optotune, he realised that dream. Aschwanden is married and the father of one child.



Mr Aschwanden, how would you define diversity?

Diversity takes many forms. The first time I ever focused on the concept was in biology class – we were introduced to biodiversity. But the term actually applies to a wide array of life experiences and activities. For me, it's mainly applicable to our employees and customers.

Is the word "diversity" overused? What does it bring to your high-tech company?

Overused? Not by any stretch of the imagination. Diversity represents added value at our company. Optotune's flagship product is a polymer-based, adaptive lens that enables its focal length to be infinitely adjusted or, as it were, electrically "tuned" within milliseconds. Highly complex technologies are in play here. And for hat reason, we employ people with various educational backgrounds, although most of them are engineers. But not only spelists work at Optotune; we also have many experienced generalists. They come from all corners of the world and at times

view things from a different angle. New opinions and mindsets, combined with a rather unconventional management style, pay off for us over the long run.

How do you make sure that you actually can hire people with the desired characteristics?

Apart from having specialised knowledge, our people must also be able to think practically. They should be team players and have a "can-do" attitude. The way I see it, there are two character types of human being: those who prove that something doesn't function, and those who prove that there's always a solution. We need employees from the latter group – because what each and every one of them contributes has a direct influence on our success.

What separates your company from the rest?

We want to solve the day-to-day problems of our customers and create products that can do more than those of our competitors – things that involve fewer components and are less costly.





That sounds ambitious.

Large customers come to us because they hope to get their problem solved. That's the greatest compliment for us. We develop new components and make them available to our customers so they can develop and launch new high-tech devices of their own.

Can you give me an example?

We're now taking aim at the smartphone industry. We've developed a mobile phone lens which, for the first time ever, enables zooming. This novelty is so refined that we can start production already in the very near future. Precisely when the first smartphones with a zoom function hit the market is something I obviously can't divulge to you [chuckles].

In Dietikon, you head up a team of something like 40 individuals. Your company is currently growing at a triple-digit pace. How important is the Swiss optics market for you?

Presently, we manufacture 100 per cent of our products in Dietikon. That's okay for high-margin markets. But we plan to outsource the production of certain items. To that end, we've found a partner in Slovakia. 95 per cent of our revenues are generated abroad: our major markets are the USA, Germany, France and Italy. China is becoming increasingly important, and of course Japan is the centre of the universe in terms of optics. But the Japanese buy home-grown products and are very hesitant when it comes to foreign innovations.

Will Optotune revolutionise the optics market?

[Laughs] Of course! But all joking aside: optics is a huge playing field with many players. Around the world, eight other companies produce lenses similar to ours. Thanks to our innovativeness, we've managed to become the global Number 1 in our segment. For example, a number of companies have been able to develop pioneering ophthalmic devices thanks to our lenses.

So the consumer – in this instance, the eye patient – benefits indirectly from Optotune?

Correct. But our customers also produce other medical devices such as dental cameras. Not to mention that our lenses are built into barcode scanners. The end user doesn't know that there's "Optotune inside". But that doesn't really matter.

In 2009, you were awarded the ZKB Pioneer Prize; one year later, kudos at the Swiss Technology Awards; and this year you won the Swiss Economic Award in the "High-tech/Biotech" category. Your inventiveness can hardly be stopped. How do you foster that innovation?

By founding the company, I fulfilled a dream. We've learned a lot since then. Marching in place doesn't exist with us. We benefit the most from having direct contact with our customers: in other words, getting off your chair and talking to customers. We want to understand their concerns, what they need and how the markets are shaping up. That input sparks ideas in me as well as my employees. There's no room for innovation when you're sitting in a quiet room.

"I'm thrilled most of all when someone tells me they found their dream job with us."

Do you sometimes develop things for naught?

Yes, that can happen. With each novelty, I first question whether it will actually afford something for our customers. We need to know if there's a market for a specific idea – or perhaps if we can create one. Without a market, even the best innovation is a flop.

As the big boss, what can you contribute to a good working environment?

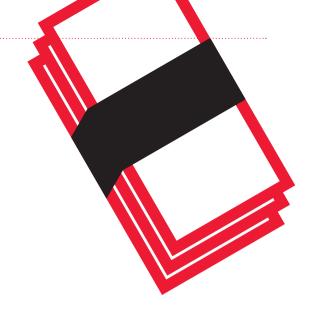
Essentially, I take a positive view of things. I'm responsible for ensuring that our people collaborate. That's not always an easy task because any group consists of various personalities. We foster open dialogue, and I cringe at the mere thought of elbowing, infighting or backbiting – because only together can we make headway. Also, I want to create exciting jobs. But I'm thrilled most of all when someone tells me they found their dream job with us.

Optotune was founded in 2008 in Dübendorf ZH and today is world leader in the field of flexible optical components. The company has two product lines: focus-tuneable lenses and laser-speckle reducers. A tuneable optical system can focus or zoom without having to change lenses. Optotune's products are used for instance in new cinema projectors, devices for opticians as well as industrial camera systems. And coming soon will be mobile phones with a zoom function. Speckle reducers elimi nate local interferences in laser systems and significantly lower the speckles. The company's revenues are growing at a triple-digit rate. In the next several years, its workforce should increase from 40 to presumably "several hundred employees". In 2014, Optotune received the Swiss Economic Award for being the most innovative company in the "High-tech/Biotech" category.

optotune.com

A Henry Ford of Finance

Automating the cottage industry of structured products is Leonteq's bright idea. *Jan Schoch's* formula requires uniformity in business process, yet at the same time a diversity of people.



Text: Eric Johnson **Images:** Markus Bertschi

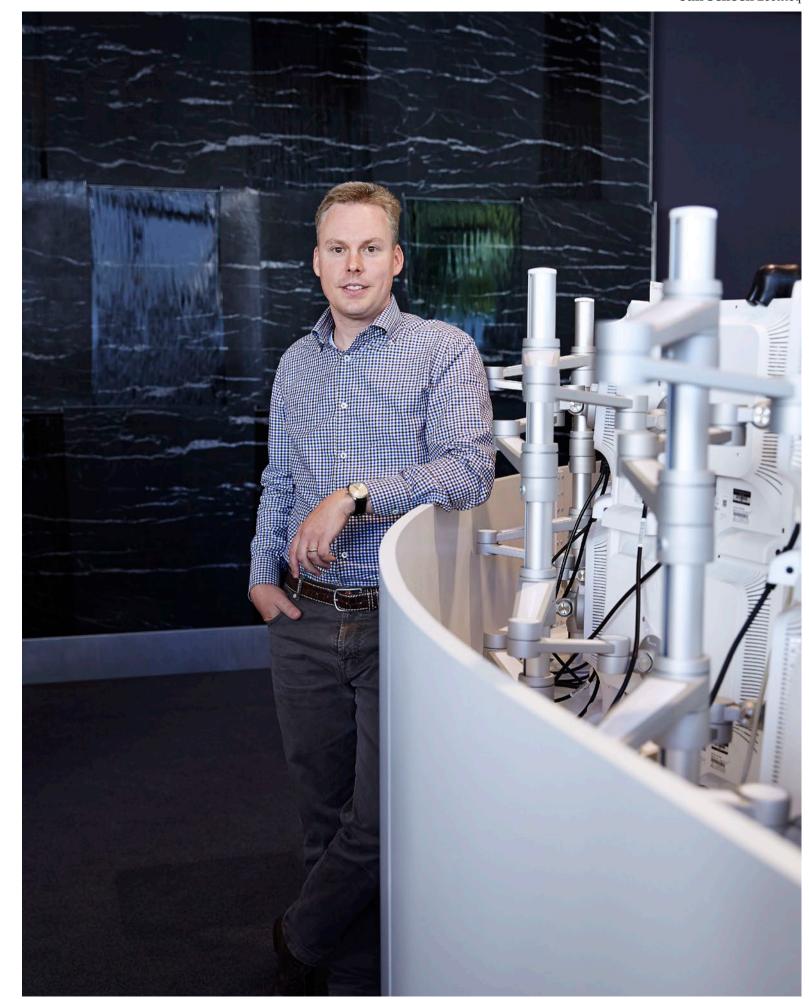
Leonteq CEO Jan Schoch (37) lives his own little piece of diversity every day. It starts among the cowbells of rustic Appenzell, which after a 90-minute drive give way to an ultramodern office in the heart of Zurich. Why live in the sticks? Because that's where he and his family were and still are from. Although Schoch's family has Swiss roots dating back for centuries, his pedigree is not that of a banker. Unlike his telecommanager father and coiffeuse mother, he studied finance and capital markets. After internships at the Switzerland's stock exchange and JP Morgan, he worked in SIPs for two prominent finance houses before taking the plunge to start what now is Leonteq.

That Jan Schoch is a super salesman should surprise no one. He's the kind who could sell refrigerators to Inuit. With optimism and enthusiasm that fill a large room, he is well-presented, attentive, charming, and he seems convinced that his product is the best thing since sliced bread.

Come to think of it, maybe he's right. Clearly, the company he co-founded in 2007 has a compelling story. Its elevator pitch is that banking, like so many other sectors before it, is industrialising. Processes that used to be done ad hoc, by hand, are being standardised and automated. As has happened in every kind of manufacturing from automobiles to zippers, banking now is being taken over by assembly lines and robots. In the sub-sector of structured investment products (SIPs), sometimes called derivatives, his company Leonteq is both.

Already over 500 clients have bought into the idea. Other Banks offer so-called 'white label' SIPs, which carry their branding but have 'Leonteq inside'. They outsource the entire process of creation, distribution and administration to the Zurich-headquartered firm, which now boasts locations in six other European financial centres as well as two in Asia

The service is entirely 'scalable', i.e., it can be used by any number of financial institutions, large and small. Better still, adding customers adds just slightly to costs. Schoch proudly points out that 2013's 24% increase in revenue was accompanied by only an 8% hike in expenses. The result: a whopping 89% jump in profits. No wonder equity analysts are drooling over Leonteq's shares, which since the company went public in late 2012 have nearly quadrupled.



24 *ceo* 25

As is typical with successful start-ups, Leonteq's rapid rise sounds predestined in its retelling. History, as Winston Churchill once said, is written by the winners. Yet when Schoch teamed up with Michael Hartweg, Sandro Dorigo and Lukas Ruflin to found the firm, the future looked a whole lot hazier. Keenly aware of the risks, he even asked his then-fiancée (now wife) if she could accept living in a small, shabby flat if the venture didn't pan out.

Only two things were clear. First, her unwavering support for him to have a go, come what may. Second, that the key to success would be in IT.

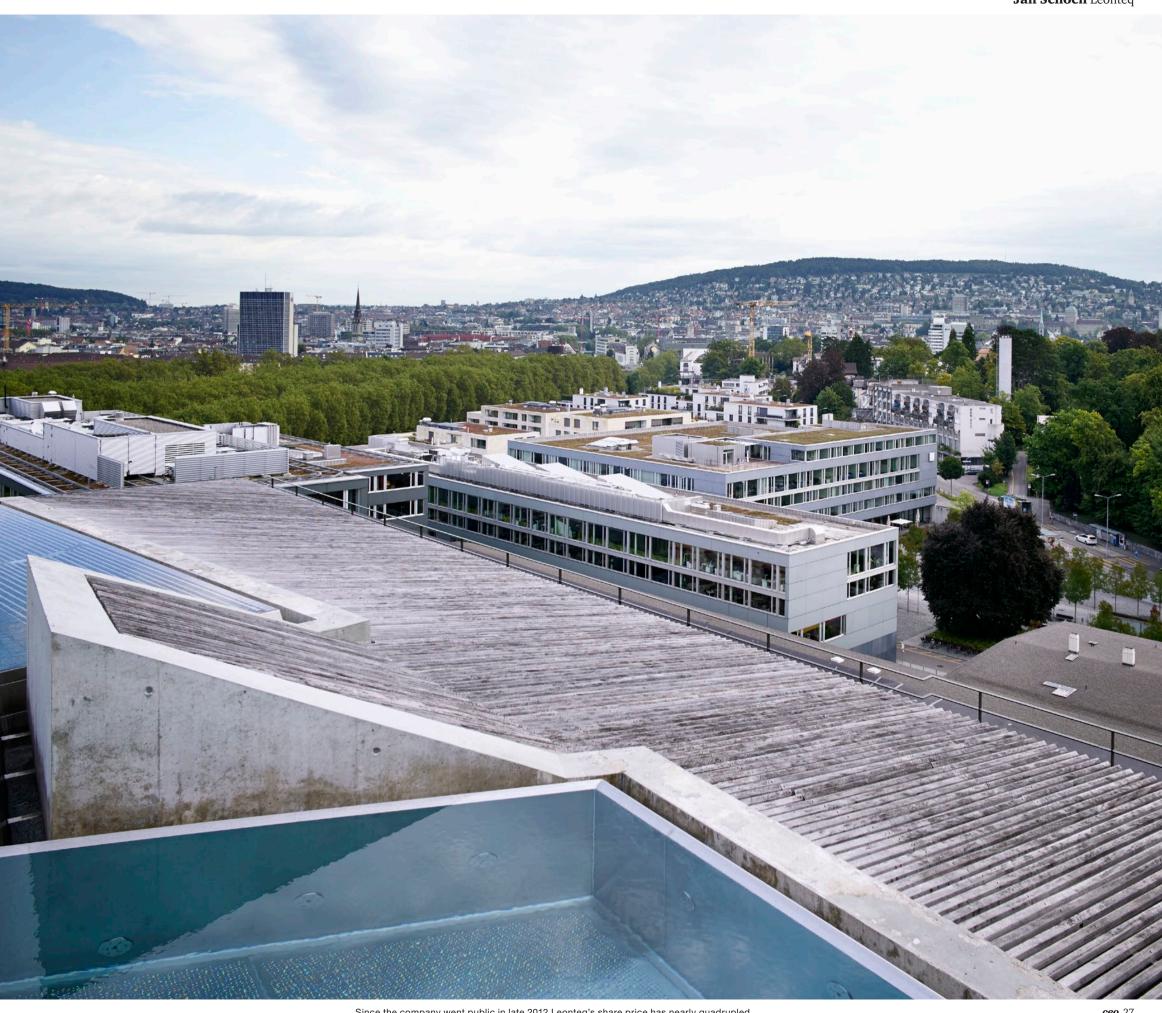
We have the technology

At that point, after seven years of experience in the SIPs business (where he met and worked with Hartweg and Dorigo), Schoch already saw the need for a platform that could handle all aspects of SIPs. The market had expanded nearly ten-fold in 2000–2007, yet major players still were running operations on a motley collection of Excel files. This clearly was inadequate. Without mentioning names, Schoch recalls that certain banks were incurring up to 2,000 administrative errors – per day!

There had to be a better way, but it wasn't the usual one of rehashing the existing mess. "We started with a clean sheet of paper, because that was the only way to make things work properly", he recalls. "We built the right kind of system, from the ground up." Seven years and 300 million CHF of investment later, he is certain that Leonteg's platform is just the job for busy bankers selling SIPs. They can outsource the entire SIP operation to Leonteq, who can manage it – at a rate – far below what it would cost for them to do it themselves.

This industrialisation of SIPs is not so different to what Henry Ford did in automobiles standardization and automation. And there is another 'ation' in it, the one starting with democratise. Leonteq has brought SIPs to the common man (well, at least the common investor). A decade ago, only institutions had pockets deep enough to do derivatives. Today, the market has been de-mystified and split into manageable pieces: buyers can now get their own tailor-made security.

"We are a global firm providing a global service, there's no way we could do what we do with a collection of only Swiss people."





Leonteq is a technology and service partner for investment solutions. Originally called EFG Financial Products, the 2007-founded firm went public in 2012 and now counts some 300 employees in offices across Europe as well as Singapore and Hong Kong. For the first half of 2014, the company reported a net profit of 26.8 million CHF on turnover of 9.4 billion

leonteq.com

"You could hardly find a greater diversity between where I live, Appenzell, and where I work. Going back and forth from one world to the other keeps my head clear."

A derivative on every desk

Democracy also happens to be a key element of Leonteq's management philosophy.

To begin with, the four founders were a case study in diversity. "We were quite different people, and we all had different strengths to bring to the table", Schoch recalls. This spread immediately into hiring policy.

The firm's current headcount of above 330 represents 38 nationalities. About half are non-Swiss, there is a wide range of ages and a relatively high number of women, considering the male-domination common to finance and IT.

Then again, non-diversity was never an option. "We are a global firm providing a global service", Schoch states. "There's no way we could do what we do with a collection of only Swiss people." Additional benefits to diversity, he notes, are a cando spirit where people are inspired to pitch in with ideas, no matter what their rank or status. Diversity breeds innovation.

But it doesn't come automatically, he warns. One of the biggest investments is of time spent to integrate newcomers and by doing so, to build a common culture into the firm. One of the main integration areas is off-the-job, in helping newbies adjust to life in Switzerland, finding homes, schools, insurance – and all the other trappings of life. Leonteq even introduces incomers to local traditions such as Zurich's 'Säächsilüüte' and Basel's 'Morgestraich'. "Not that they feel any pressure to adopt local customs", Schoch notes, "but so they can get used to where they are and what Swiss people are like."

Ultimately, the aim is to square a circle. On the one hand, diversity is entirely welcome, but on the other hand, Leonteq aims to create a common culture, a 'Leonteq Way' of respect, openness and cooperation that subsumes all the rest. "In the long run, diversity and corporate culture are not matters of strategy", Schoch contends. "They are things you need to live out. That's exactly what we're trying to do."

To date, surely that approach is working. In 2014, Leonteq once again turned in a brilliant first half, with further increase of +25% of Group net profit. And in June, Swiss business newspaper *Handelszeitung* honoured Schoch as its Banking and Insurance CEO of the Year. Full-blooded entrepreneur or not, that is a fine acknowledgement.



Don't start too early with diversification

Know when to say "no" – this is especially critical for start-ups. Only after reaching its core goals did Passengertv begin to branch out.

Text: Eric Johnson Images: Markus Bertschi

Olivier Chuard, Entrepreneur 2.0

Back in the go-go days of the Internet bubble, technology entrepreneurs were usually 20-something-years-old geeks/slackers/ singletons, in T-shirts and jeans, thumbing their noses at conventional wisdom. Companies proudly sported jokey names such as Babelfish, Click Mango and Yahoo. Olivier Chuard shows that such habits were ohso-1990s. Passengerty's president is relatively young (late 30s), but dressed smartly and full of enthusiasm about his wife and chil dren. Although he studied computer science, he wears it lightly. As for thumbing his nose at business sense: no way. Chuard's entrepreneurship runs in his blood both his father and brother have launched successful ventures. Already during his student days, he started a small company in a niche area of computing, which he says taught him many business skills and how to take risks - calculated ones.

Fittingly, given the nature of the company, its genesis was aboard a bus – more precisely, a bus that was not moving. Passengertv's eventual founders, then-students Olivier Chuard and Yves Kilchenmann, were travelling within Berne when suddenly a protest demonstration broke out. Although these are relatively common and generally tolerated as part of life in Switzerland's political capital, one side-effect is not-so-well-tolerated: a paralysis of local traffic.

Amidst the rising anger and helplessness of stuck vehicles and people, the two concluded that there must be a better way. What about an on-board information screen? It could inform passengers about what is going on, how long the disruption might take, and what alternate ways might be available to make their destinations.

And so the seeds of a business were sown: offering news, weather and connection details on screens across the entire network of Swiss public transport, of buses, trains and trams. Of course, this sort of Aha! event is neither as easy nor as obvious as

it sounds in the retelling. For one, Chuard and Kilchenmann soon realised they would have to think broader and to rethink their initial business model.

Transport companies would not pay for such information, especially if offered by relatively inexperienced students.

They quickly migrated to the advertising-sponsored model, pioneered by the likes of Google. Capturing even a fraction of Switzerland's annual 5 billion CHF ad spend would generate plentiful revenues. At the same time they realised that while advertising driven, the product would need to be mostly news and information, at least 75% of the content, to win reader loyalty.

ultimate key to success: an economy of scale. Major advertisers want to reach at least 500,000 readers; they want a full offering, tracking where, when and preferably to whom their ads are playing; they want standardisation and a minimum of fuss. Ideally, after a few mouse clicks, they have booked a campaign running the length and breadth of Switzerland.

Moreover, they began to see the

To achieve that, Chuard and Kilchenmann realised, would take a few years and a relatively large pile of capital. They were prepared to work hard, to wait on success, and they found 1.3 million CHF in funding, mainly from friends and family. Who could possibly hold them

Distraction calling

Their own potential customers turned out to be a challenge.

More than one pitch to retailers, aimed at securing advertising in vehicles, ended with a request to Passengerty to develop in-store TVs and shop-window displays – for the retailer. Likewise, several institutes of higher education asked for entertainment to be piped into their student lounges.

Then came distraction from a key business partner, a supplier of video monitors. Passengertv had given them free demo-software to use when they were presenting their screens to potential customers. "Before we knew it, they had sold screens – with our software as content – to 15 local-

transport companies in Germany", recalls Chuard. "We hadn't really done anything, and we had picked up 15 new customers."

Unfortunately, while these occurrences could sound like progress, they were not. "They were interesting, but not money-makers", Chuard remembers. They were getting in the way of what we really needed to do." So he, Kilchenmann and the company's third employee, Christian Imhof, just said no. They simply could not afford to try to run before they could walk; they had to stay focused on executing their core

Sometimes it took a lot of explaining. And "there were times that people didn't understand", Chuard says. "We could only hope they would get over it." As for the German business, Passengertv's management knew that they did not have the financial might to reach economy-of-scale in that much larger market. Instead of being distracted, they franchised the entire operation to a similar company based in Germany.

Now, where was I?

In retrospect, their focus seems to have been justified. Passengerty broke into the black after four years – longer, says Chuard, than most start-ups would be able to survive. The company now boasts 900,000 daily readers, topping the 750,000 captured by giveaway evening newspaper Blick am Abend, and chasing the 2.2 million readers of morning freebie 20 Minuten.

As the boxes of success have been ticked, the company has started to consider diversification. The first step-out, though, will be close to home. Rather

Diversification has also come on the personnel side. In a bit more than two years, the company has sprouted from three to nearly forty, with five offices in addition to its home base in Berne.

Adding staff is always a calculated risk (see box), says Chuard. While he and Kilchenmann recognised early that hiring clones of themselves (in terms of background, outlook and approach) was impossible, they are careful not to take on too much too fast. Both are still personally involved in hiring decisions, and they expect to remain so until the workforce hits about 100.

"We simply could not afford to try to run before we could walk; we had to stay focused on executing our core concept."

than offering TV only on fixed screens, the company is planning to offer it, via wireless-networks, to travellers carrying smart phones or other Wifi-enabled devices. For competitive reasons, the company is cagey about details, but allows that an expanded partnership with Swisscom is in the works.

The workplace itself has diversified, too. From a purely functional space in central Berne, headquarters have moved to an airy, bright office further out, right next to a major Swisscom building. Fittingly, it is easy to reach by public transport, not least by bus – a proven incubator of good thinking.

Passengerty

The name says it. Passengertv provides televisions (and the programming inside them) that inform and entertain riders on public



Olivier Chuard Passengerty



"Mankind is infinitely multifaceted."

Entrepreneurialism and social engagement are not polar opposites, as is evidenced by the success story of the Jacobs Foundation which, in the spring of 2014, celebrated its 25-year anniversary. In our conversation with *Johann Christian Jacobs*, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, he talks about how important diversity is for the work the Foundation does – and what Auma Obama has to do with it all.

Text: Andrea Ostermeyer **Images:** Markus Bertschi

Dr. Johann Christian Jacobs

has chaired the Board of Trustees of the Jacobs Foundation since 2004. Born in 1962 in Bremen and today an attorney, he is a scion of the Jacobs Coffee dynasty and studied law as well as business administration in Freiburg, Munich and Aix-en-Provence. After graduating, he gained international experience by working for the European Commission in Brussels and then in Tokyo for a major management consulting company. For two decades, Johann Christian Jacobs was a partner at leading law firms and advised companies in matters relating to corporate law. Today, he is an opportunistic investor and devotes his efforts to the philanthropic dimension of entrepreneurialism as well as to the education of children and youths. The father of three children lives in Hamburg.

What can your foundation do to help society?

We want to make it possible for individuals to successfully develop themselves in a world that is becoming ever more complex. "Selfefficacy", in other words the awareness that you can actually get things moving, is pivotal in this regard. For that reason, many of our projects are aimed at giving children and teenagers the opportunity to gain that awareness at the earliest age possible. And that's why extracurricular education is so important – because 80 per cent of a kid's knowledge is absorbed outside the classroom.

By collaborating with the University of Zurich, you're apparently looking to tie this in with science.

Precisely. The Jacobs Center at the University of Zurich stands for innovative, trailblazing research in the field of child and youth development. For example, with a representative long-term study – the Swiss Survey of Children and Youth – the Jacobs Center looked into how the coming generations can gain social skills despite the enormous challenges posed by rapid changes in family structures, school systems, leisure-time activities and society as a whole. Over the next two dec-

ades, the Jacobs Foundation and University of Zurich will expand the Jacobs Center to become a global hub of enlightenment in terms of the development of children and teenagers from the psychological, sociological, economic and medical perspectives. To that purpose, we will jointly invest 70 million Swiss francs.

You're also engaged in other areas of academia: for instance, your financial support of the Jacobs University Bremen ...

It's an investment – entirely in the spirit of our family's entrepreneurial tradition. Here, it pertains to the furtherance of private university studies. The financial means for education in Europe are becoming increasingly sparse. We need to have model projects that spur innovation. And that's what the Jacobs University stands for, as the only private polytechnic university in Germany.

What are the distinguishing aspects of the Jacobs University?

Interdisciplinarity and internationality. Students of the various academic disciplines work closely together and are focused on three main subjects: health, mobility and diversity. Building a bridge between fundamental research and applied R&D in collaboration with companies from the industrial sector plays an especially important role in this regard. It makes the students' entry into the business world more attractive. And the university's international orientation attracts scholars from all across the world who want to live and learn in one place, on an English-speaking campus, what the true sense of "Universitas" is.

Back to the Jacobs Foundation itself: What role does diversity play in terms of recruiting new staff for the Foundation?

We intentionally see to it that we have people from various academic fields on board. Most of our employees are multilingual and bring a broad range of experiences to the table: from the private economy, NGOs or politics. This is a pivotal building block for the success of our work. The Jacobs Foundation, as well as the entire Jacobs Group, perceives itself as a talent pool of outstandingly qualified people. Many opportunities are open to those people – for instance, they can advance to Partner level within the Group.

"As an entrepreneur, I need to have a keen sense of where the capabilities of the organisation have reached their limits and whether at that point a cooperative venture makes sense."

How many nations are represented at Jacobs University?

Currently, 112 countries. In keeping with the University's vision, the aim is to offer a wide variety of subject areas and cultures. For that reason, the proportion of students from Germany is limited to 25 per cent. Those who come from abroad add their different experiences and cultural perspectives to the mix. The common denominator here is their zeal for higher learning and resolute commitment to society. That's the only way the business model of Jacobs University can function.

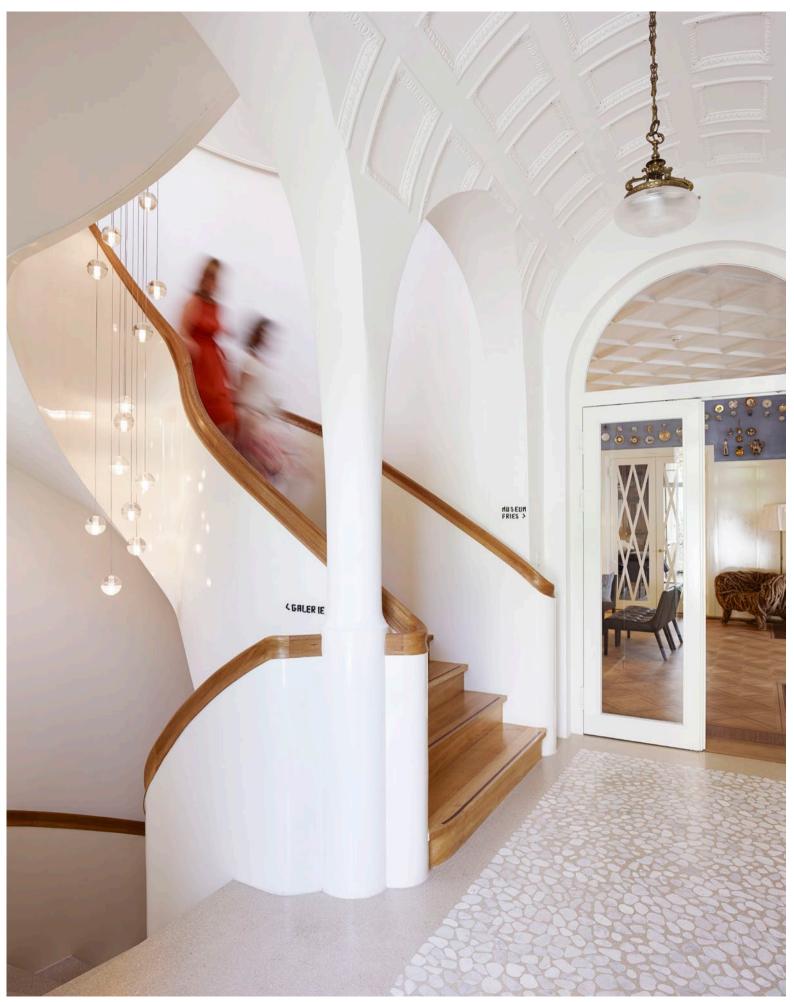
Which requirements must a potential employee fulfil in order to work for the Foundation?

We have very clear expectations in this regard: he or she needs to have an entrepreneurial mindset, as well as demonstrate social engagement and a sincere interest in the topics we address. Zurich, as the head-quarters of the Foundation, is an important factor in our ability to attract the best minds. The "Little Big City" offers a high standard of living and has great allure for many international employment candidates.

Auma Obama, half-sister of US President Barack Obama, is perhaps the most prominent member of the Board of Trustees over which you preside. Is arriving at a decision in such a diverse panel of personalities easier or more difficult?

Not exactly easier, I must admit. But the decisions are more balanced and better.





"The projects of the Jacobs Foundation combine the most diverse perspectives from science, actual practice, the business world and politics."

The Jacobs Foundation, domiciled in Zurich, is one of Europe's largest private trusts. It is committed to the furtherance of children and youths across the globe. With an annual budget of 40 million CHF, it supports research projects, science institutions and practical intervention programmes on a worldwide scale. The Foundation was established in 1989 by German/Swiss entrepreneur Klaus J. Jacobs, the father of Johann Christian Jacobs. In 2001, Klaus Jacobs ceded to the Foundation all shares of Jacobs Holding AG, which at the time had a market value of 1.43 billion CHF. At the end of 2013, the assets of the Foundation had already trebled to stand at 4.55 billion CHF.

jacobsfoundation.org

You have five siblings, and together all of you carry on with the charitable work of your father. With so many different mentalities, how do you manage to avoid conflicts?

Our shared goal is to combine, or perhaps I should say harmonise entrepreneurialism with philanthropy. The entire family stands squarely behind that philosophy. And in this regard, diversity is the key to success: each family member plays a specific role that corresponds to their personal background and individual capabilities.

In the early '90s you worked for a management consulting company in Tokyo and these days spend a considerable amount of time in Singapore. What can Europe learn from Asia?

I've come to know that Far Eastern societies are frequently very disciplined. The one-child policy in China has led to the fact that middle-class families in particular not only attach great value to education, but they also invest in it. I find it difficult to pass any judgment on that – but I'm very convinced of one thing: mankind is infinitely multifaceted, and precisely this needs to be taken into account in the realm of education.

From your day-to-day professional experience, can you give me an example of an outstanding result that was attributable mainly to the diversity of the team involved?

As an attorney, I've spent many years all around the world advising companies on the ins-and-outs of major projects. The goal of those projects can be expressed in a nutshell: it's a matter of creating structures which ensure that the right people in the right positions are taking the right decisions. And here it's important to have a keen sense of where the organisation reaches its limits and whether at that point it's necessary to enter into cooperative ventures in order to achieve your goals. That also applies to the work of our Foundation. And naturally to the motivation of people – the development of children and youths to the point where they can do their own thing, stand proudly on their own two feet. The same way an entrepreneur deals with his or her company.

The dilettante who never was

At first glance, the polymath *Dieter Meier* comes off as a superficial dabbler who got lucky in the lottery of life. A closer look reveals he's anything but.

Text: Eric Johnson **Images:** Markus Bertschi

If you're not Swiss, you've probably never heard of Dieter Meier, except that you actually have. Remember the iconic 1980s film 'Ferris Bueller's Day Off'? It was Meier who co-wrote and sang the iconic song that soundtracked the iconic 'introduction of the red Ferrari' scene. 'Oh Yeah' repeated eleven times over the course of the track – went on to anchor another 1980s flick, 'The Secret of My Success', and after that countless television spots, episodes of 'The Simpsons' and even the score of video game 'Gran Turismo 4'. His band, Yello, charted a few other hits, including 'The Race', which was picked up as a theme song by the Eurosport TV channel and a musicvideo show called 'Formel Eins'.

Iconic, yes; ironic, too. Following the footsteps of Dadaism, also born in his hometown of Zurich, Meier never hesitated to celebrate the banal or absurd. 'Bostitch', Yello's first hit dating from 1980, is named after the German word for stapler (oh

yeah, the kind you use in an office). About a decade earlier, Meier put on a 'performance art' show on the streets of New York City, where he offered passers-by a dollar to say "yes" or "no". Not long thereafter, he displayed 100,000 pieces of metal on a Zurich public square and for five days, eight hours a day, he counted them into bags of a thousand.

Even more ironic was his life

beyond avant-gardism. It's as if Picasso had secretly worked as a chartered accountant. While his public face was that of a hep bohemian, behind the scenes Meier was busy golfing for the Swiss national team (he still has a handicap of around 7), playing poker semi-professionally and founding or funding a variety of ventures, most of them based around some kind of breakthrough technology. One was in electronics, another in organic farming, another in chronometers, yet another (in progress) in top-drawer chocolate ... to name a few.

How can such diversity and irony be summarised? As Meier nears his seventh decade (apparently in rude health), tributes have been rolling in for a few years now. Whether in TV talk shows, newspaper profiles or award ceremonies, he is consistently characterised as a lightweight. His virtuosity cannot be real, they imply, nobody could be so prolific across so many pursuits. That the long-married father of five makes all of them look so easy ... well, that's seen as proof that he is a dandy, a dilettante who stayed up all night and got

The thing is, the reviews are wrong. They have mistaken Meier's unpretentiousness for naiveté. They have confused his obvious lack of obfuscation for an apparent lack of comprehension. They have taken his irony far too literally. So, here's some backstory.

Berlin's the one

Ok, Dieter Meier's life isn't that peripatetic, but he does have a lot of abodes. Regular hangouts include: his birth city of Zurich; Los Angeles, home to two of his four daughters; the Spanish island of Ibiza; and several ranches in Argentina where he does organic agriculture and breeds cattle.

Ask this well-travelled man where

he finds the most diversity, and

the answer is none of the above. Instead, it is Berlin. The mashup evident in Germany's capital, he says, outdoes anywhere else. Rich, poor, famous, unknown - all walks of life are mixed together all over. "In a bar, you'll see a man who can hardly afford his beer, next to a media tycoon", Meier says, "and they'll spend the whole evening talking. The place truly has no snobbery." It's also a place where he intends to spend more time. Berlin is home to the producers of Meier's new band, Out of Chaos.

dietermeier.com



40 *ceo* 41

The power of idiocv

Dieter Meier, as Americans would say, is dumb as a fox. His word is 'idiot', which he insists is not meant pejoratively. "An idiot is someone who doesn't pretend to know things he doesn't know", he contends. "An idiot asks questions, listens and learns. You can learn so much by asking the right questions."

One idea he has uncovered through his 'idiocy' is the industrialisation of so-called 'civet coffee'. This brew is made from Indonesian beans that have been picked, swallowed and defecated by the palm civet, a cat-like creature that roams the jungles of Southeast Asia. Meier points out that this java from Java tastes special not because it's been through a cat's gut, but because the cat chooses only the ripest berries with the best flavour. "Did you ever see birds flocking to un-ripened fruit?" So, he reasons, the current fad of mechanically harvesting berries and feeding them to captive civits will not work, because much of the crop will not be ripe.

Makes sense, but how did he know that? It turns out he asked a lot of 'idiotic' questions when he co-founded a venture in the Dominican Republic. He learned the basic truth that harvest timing – selecting only the ripe berries – is critical to quality.

Emperors without clothes

Ignoring basic truths, Meier concludes, is a key failure factor in business, in the arts, in life in general. "Too many managers

are forever changing, and that progress is usually an issue of learning to master anarchy. As he puts it, "to succeed, we need to learn to live with chaos."

So convinced is Meier of this, he named his latest musical venture 'Out of Chaos'. A solo album was released in the spring, followed by a live tour of northern Europe and New York City. Critics and audiences have responded favourably.

'Unique selling principle' is not the phrase he actually uses; instead he makes an analogy to poker, a metier where he logged much time as a young man. "In life", he says, "the cards in your hand are only valuable in relation to those in the other players' hands." As a song Meier probably never sang puts it: know when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em.

Like many a card-sharp, Meier insists that poker is not gam-

"In life, the cards in your hand are only valuable in relation to those in the other players' hands."

think their job is to pretend to know what is going on. If they would admit that they are idiots, that they don't know everything, and then look for answers, they would be a lot more successful."

What managers at all levels need to learn, he continues, is how to get comfortable with being idiotic. They must focus first on basics, then recognise that these

Life is poker, poker is life

Aside from idiocy, Meier recommends three general rules in approaching the chaos of business and life:

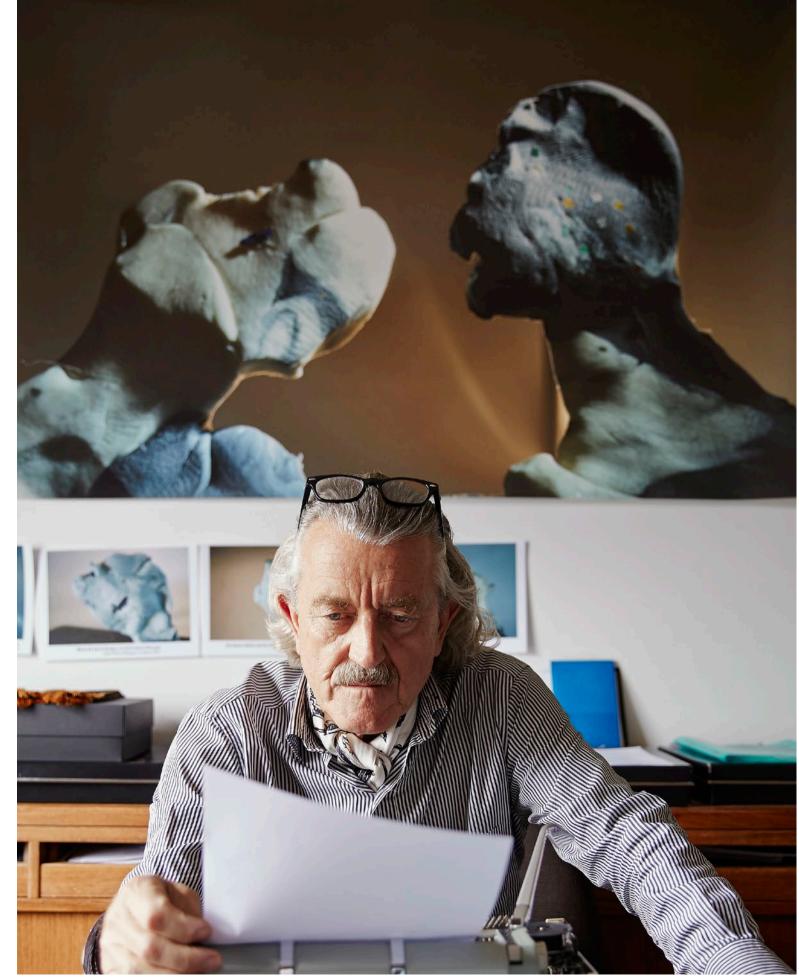
Find the right people: Can I personally contribute something? Who else can contribute? There is a lot of expertise out there, waiting to be called upon.

Be ready for hard times: Do I really like what I'm doing? That can keep you going when times get rough, which occasionally they almost certainly will.

Discover your unique selling principle: What can I do that is different to what others are doing?

bling, that results over time will reflect a player's skill. Life, too, clearly is not just a game of luck. Meier is no dilettante; he has widely diverse skills that he has freely used, with a lot of thought involved. As interesting lives go, he definitely has hit the jackpot.





"What managers at all levels need to learn, is how to get comfortable with being idiotic. They would then be much more successful.", says Dieter Meier.



Diversity: My privilege

It's curiosity that drives him: *Rudolf Hug* is a tinkerer and a technician, a board member and a publisher – plus a photographer, family father, politician and chairman all in one. This Axpo board member considers diversity within a company to be a crucial factor.

Rudolf Hug and his activities

Rudolf Hug, born 1950 in Romanshorn, Switzerland, initially completed his apprenticeship as a telecom/electro/appliance technician (FEAM) at Contraves in Zurich. Following jobs as a service technician and manager, he struck out on his own in 1983 and founded several companies in the fields of electronics and microprocessor technology, amongst them MPL AG Elektronikunternehmung and AOS Technologies AG. From 1999 to 2013, Rudolf Hug was a board member of Swissmem (formerly VSM); between 2007 and 2013 he was also on the board of economiesuisse and presided over the permanent "Energy and Environment Commission". Since 2003, he holds a seat on the board of Axpo as representative of industry and commerce for the canton of Aargau. A seasoned FDP politician, Rudolf Hug spent years as a labour law arbitrator as well as an amateur stage actor and has published a number of photo books. He lives in the canton of Aargau, is married and has five adult sons.

rudolf-hug.ch

Text: Madeleine Stäubli-Roduner **Images:** Rudolf Hug

Long before Steve Jobs started tinkering in his own garage, young Rudolf Hug set up a test laboratory at his parents' house in Romanshorn. The son of a postman, he transformed the basement into a darkroom, installed a fully functional telephone system and cobbled together a radio. The pivotal "Aha" experience that spawned all of these unusual activities was a book presented to him by his parents: "A Workbook for Youths" – a do-it-yourself manual. After that, there were hardly any boundaries to his fantasy – at age 14, he constructed a box that allowed lights to be remotely controlled. And he was actually able to sell the devices. At 20, he won the first prize in the "Swiss Youth in Science" contest for his work on digital computers.

"Routine work always bored me", says the 64-year-old as he reflects on his apprenticeship and gadgetry years. School and studies interested him little. Emblematic of his personal preferences is the phase when he packed all of his electronics equipment into a crate, shoved it under the table, and started a correspondence course. After just one year he threw in the towel, got his crate out from under the table and started to tinker again. Vocational training was the end of his formal education but not the end of the continuing education that ultimately led to his future political and presidential posts, board memberships, as well as the founding of various technology companies.

Dedication, not prestige

"I translated my talents into reality; developed electronic devices and brought them to market by means of various channels." During the pioneering days of electronic data processing, Rudolf Hug gained inspiration from educators in the United States, completed their courses in no time flat (mostly at night) and then actually ended up training those instructors. Right from the start, the prestige of an academic title never meant anything to him – in his mind, it's the dedication that counts. "Either I do something properly or I don't do it at all", is the motto of this multifaceted entrepreneur who also cooks on a regular basis, plays various roles as an amateur actor, and enthusiastically photographs everything that comes in front of his lens.

Yes, photography. This particular passion resurfaced in 2004 when Hug decided to experience the world not merely in connection with his business travels. From South Africa to Lapland, Machu Picchu to Myanmar, Hug's journeys have been indeed diverse. "I wanted to experience people, regions, landscapes; owing to my curiosity, I was open to just about anything." When travelling, he tries to avoid crowds, preferring instead to be alone, accompanied by a local guide, exploring the most remote corners of the world. He once happened upon a polar bear mother in the far north of Canada and then spent days in the cold until he finally was able to photograph the frolicking cubs. These arctic inhabitants, along with many other animals, now populate the pages of his photo book "Eagle, Bear and Co.", which he compiled, designed and published all on his own. Here, too, diversity means more for him than artistic perfection; experiences are more important than literary pretentions.



at times? "No", he laughs. Here, his rapid rience give him a helping hand. But if he glances at his agenda and sees there are practically no openings anymore, that's time, he bid adieu to politics, Swissmem

Eye-to-eye encounters Hug's photo books not only offer images of animals, but also portraits of people from around the globe. A gleeful lad in the Himalayas, the hospitable Russian lady with a deeply wrinkled face, the Chinese farmer – they attest to his widely diverse eve-to-eve encounters. "I get along easily with people because I treat them with respect; I want to see where and how they live, learn what their joys and concerns are", says Hug. Frequently just a gesture, a look, suffices to indicate whether a snapshot is desired or, to the contrary, the closeness is inappropriate. With the respect that he demonstrates, Hug gains access to fantastic experiences. "You need to ask people for their permission", is the way he explains how doors can be opened. For him, diversity means respecting people.

The greatest realisation from his world travels? He doesn't hesitate for one moment: "It doesn't take wealth to be happy. We tend to define happiness mostly in monetary terms, but many people on God's green Earth live very, very simply and are still happy because they have a much greater appreciation of the few things they have." On his journeys, Hug seeks simplicity, not comfort; just like at home where he doesn't focus on prestige and status symbols. For him, his travel adventures and day-to-day business life are not worlds apart: from his encounters with animals, Hug has produced on his own a multimedia show that highlights the parallels between entrepreneurialism and the animal kingdom. His thrilling pictorial chronicles, spiced with a touch of adventure, have great appeal amongst the broad public. And that pleases Hug.

Founding companies, travelling, fulfilling mandates – is Rudolf Hug's personal diversity never a burden; doesn't he get bogged down grasp, broad expertise and decades of expewhen he steps down from an engagement. "Sometimes it's necessary to close one door so you can open a new one." And precisely that was the case when, at the appropriate and economiesuisse in order to make room for other things.

If he holds a mandate, he executes it conscientiously. In doing so, he perceives himself as a tenacious, constructive-critical thought contributor who searches for new solutions even when things appear to be falling apart. For Rudolf Hug, it is unquestionable today that companies should be shepherded by an array of personalities and mentalities. But he frequently encounters the same old uniform profile in executive offices: big-name titles, military experience, service clubs. However, a board of directors needs to include people with various perspectives and a critical view. "If top management hammers in the followthe-leader mindset and all those down the line timidly adapt their career accordingly, then the all-important culture of debate is lacking", Hug stresses. Thanks to his independence, he can draw attention to irregularities – and most of the time, he receives thanks at some later date.



What advice does a current-day entrepreneur offer? The complexity of daily corporate business has become mind-boggling, so a CEO needs to draw on additional brains in order to obtain the relevant expert knowhow. But the boss can't just rely on external advisors; he or she should be personally up to speed on the diverse aspects of each crucial issue. With that attitude, Hug advises today a number of young entrepreneurs. "I feel at home in many business fields, even in the financial world, and for that reason I can offer a wide array of tips." His thematic diversity is something he views as an "incredible addition to my quality of life" and a true privilege. And he wants to enjoy that further, for example in his next book project which for once will be staged right here in the neighbourhood: it centres on traditional Appenzeller rites and rituals.

"Sometimes it's necessary to close one door so you can open a new one."



"One of Switzerland's competitive advantages on AR is joint creativity."

Joiz has reinvented television. The broadcaster's primary audience comprises teens and twens who contribute to the programming from all four corners of the world. Diversity in its truest sense: both in front of and behind the camera.

Text: Sandra Willmeroth **Images:** Markus Bertschi

After receiving a degree in construction engineering, Alexander Mazzara completed post-graduate studies in journalism at the Luzern Media Education Center (MAZ). He began his career in the media as an editor for broadcaster Viva and as a reporter for RTL/ProSieben (Switzerland). In 2000 he switched to Swiss Television, where he held a number of different posts. After a sabbatical in the USA, during which time he came to know the new Internet companies in Silicon Valley, the thought struck him: Why not combine the Internet and traditional television? Joiz AG came into being as a result. Mazzara was born in 1975 and

lives in Zurich.

How many nationalities are to be found in Joiz's workforce?

I never thought of counting them all! But just their names alone show you how international we are. One of our star moderators is Gülsha Adilji. In my mind, she's one of the best examples of integration: she personifies an array of cultures. Her mother is a Turk who grew up in Kosovo, and her father is an Albanian who grew up in Serbia. We've got many second-generation immigrants on our team, as well as people who simply came to Joiz because of what we are – amongst them Germans, Turks, Americans, Israelis and Romanians.

Isn't it difficult to integrate employees who come to Zurich-Oerlikon from places like New York, Tel Aviv, Istanbul and Bucharest?

In the widest sense, we all have a similar cultural background. But that's not key to our company's success. Much more crucial is the ability to find people who bring along experience and nevertheless have a healthy portion of fantasy. I believe it was Einstein who once said, "Experience is the end of fantasy." And I strongly believe that. So for us, it's important that we don't lose the fanta-

sy when doing what we do. We need to find people who have that kind of openness, and that's not a question of nationality but instead one of attitude and the given person.

What do you mean by a similar cultural background?

All of us grew up in the Western world and are acquainted with Western norms. For Swiss Television, I travelled a lot throughout the world. The culture to be found in Japan, Africa or the Arabian world is vastly different than ours. That's not a value judgment on my part; but the various cultures are indeed worlds apart, and that poses considerable challenges when it comes to international collaboration.

Is that even a topic amongst your young, open and international employees?

No, it really doesn't matter much where someone has his or her cultural roots. And that also syncs with our basic mindset as a broadcaster: we're very openminded, we report on local and global topics, all of our people speak English and are just as focused on the Zurich sub-culture as they are on global trends.

When it comes to integration, how do you help?

The best method, of course, is when our young team members simply take newcomers out for a night on the town. Then they immediately become part of the group and are connected, so to speak. For everyone involved, that's the more fun and interesting way and it certainly fosters more social integration than, say, when expats are attended to by an agency that merely helps them to find reasonable living quarters.

Do you have specific mentoring or integration programmes?

Those are specific mentoring programmes! (laughs) But we also do other things. For instance, before going on air for the first time, all new employees in Berlin must spend at least one to four weeks in Zurich and work with the people here who do what the newbies will ultimately be doing in Berlin. Some of the future moderators have even gone live with us as a warm-up.



50 **ceo**



So those moderators were actually speaking High German on local Swiss television? At SRF, that has caused a bit of an uproar upon occasion ...

We received a lot of positive reactions. Viewers liked the German moderators, perhaps precisely because they were new and a bit shaky. But the most important thing is that the people in Zurich got to know the people in Berlin and had the opportunity to share experiences. Ever since the first trial run, we offer everyone the chance for job rotation. Just a short while ago, the two makeup artists from Berlin and Zurich swapped workplaces for a couple of weeks.

Diversity, of course, also applies to age categories. How do things look at Joiz in this regard?

We're a broadcaster for a young audience, but our operative people range in age from 20 to 50. Of course due to that young target group, our moderators are traditionally below the age of 30, but that by no means is hewn in stone because some of them have meanwhile already stepped

Joiz AG, headquartered in Zurich-Oerlikon, was co-founded in 2009 by Alexander Mazzara an today he is the company's CEO. Joiz is a prime example of interactive television: it uses new technology to link TV with the Internet, mobile apps and social media. By means of Joiz's proprie tary techniques, the public can personally participate in the TV programme and interact with each other. In August 2013, Joiz also went on the air in Germany. This move towards internationalisation is to be continued via franchises in other countries. In total, Joiz currently employs 130 individuals, 55 of whom are located in Berlin.

across the age threshold. That doesn't mean they have to take a walk today, but it's clear that they won't be moderating for another fifteen years with us. In the editorial area we often intentionally seek young people because they walk the walk and talk the talk of the young generation. I personally am no longer all that fresh from the vine, and if I wanted to cosy up

How do you do that actually?

If somebody has a really good idea, we're glad to turn it into reality, regardless of who came up with it – and if that person is a trainee, well great! But along with that openness, you also need to be allowed to make mistakes. In our company, there has to be a firmly anchored culture that accepts mistakes.

"This whole thing with age – actually, what does that matter?"

to the young crowd by using their lingo, it probably wouldn't go down very well! (laughs) But we also have many areas where the employees are older and also can, should or must be.

So you actually don't want to do entirely without the experience of older employees?

Our goal is to have a good mix. Experience is very important in the work we do, but openmindedness is the decisive factor. And this thing about age – what does that have to do with experience and a sense of responsibility? Despite all of the raised eyebrows, I regularly see how young people are very glad to take on responsibility. Many of our people are only in their early twenties when they start leading a team or are in charge of everything on the set. We encourage that wholeheartedly by passing responsibility as far as possible down the line, even to the level of the trainees.

How do you foster a culture like that at such a young company which has grown so fast?

Lots of little and bigger things.

Ever since the founding of Joiz, we have a Friday afternoon happy hour – paid for privately by management. Sometimes there are just three people who show up, sometimes 50; it's simply a matter of who's there and who wants to come and chat together about the week gone by. But we also hold a weekly meeting with all employees and take that opportunity to talk very openly and transparently about things that will become public only months later.

This meeting isn't just top-down, but also bottom-up: it includes a Q&A round, and each time a different employee stands up and talks about his or her daily work with us, hobbies and so forth. Understanding interdepartmentally and in detail what other colleagues actually do at work is enormously helpful in fostering holistic thinking.

Television, of course, also reflects a little bit of real life. To what extent is diversity a leitmotif in your broadcasts?

One avenue is something we call JoiZone: Every day we have a half-hour talk show with guests who address topics as diverse as politics, social issues, work, health and love. The show is very interactive; viewers can put in their two cents at any time and via various channels. And here, diversity is regularly a hot-button topic that is discussed inside and out and from many different vantage points.

Do you think companies that actively demonstrate and encourage diversity have a competitive advantage?

Yes, definitely. Companies need to react to the accelerating trend towards globalisation and the fact that their business relationships today are extraordinarily multifaceted. Diversity has become a critical success factor, seeing as how many different views, approaches, experiences and even gene pools make it possible to arrive at the best decisions on complex issues.

À la the classical Swiss compromise?

Switzerland does in fact have a competitive advantage in this regard because we've essentially been demonstrating that capability for something like 700 years now: each person can and should make a contribution to the common good. Regardless of the many stakeholder groups and a vast array of individual objectives, we've learned how to find the best route. And that's one of the competitive advantages Switzerland has - shared, networked collaboration and creativity. Nobody can copy that very quickly.

joiz.ch

"J.M. Keynes for coffee. Ludwig Erhard as an appetiser."

Peculiar idea: You read a book, boil the verbiage down to just a few pages and then evaluate the content, pertinence and style. Can you coin cash from doing that? getAbstract can. CEO *Thomas Bergen* reveals how and when diversity leads to success. And when not. And how he became a manager already as a youngster.

Text: Uwe Stolzmann **Images:** Markus Bertschi

Thomas Bergen, born 1966 in Lucerne, studied business administration at the University of St. Gallen where he majored in Operations Research. He is cofounder and CEO of getAbstract. Bergen's wife, Maria Salvador, comes from Ecuador. "En mi casa se habla español", he says with a smile. The two have been married for more than 20 years and have three children.

Lucerne; a lakeside office building; bright blues and greens.
getAbstract leases offices on the first floor. What does a visitor notice first upon walking in? A relaxed atmosphere. Peace. Quiet. And books: tonnes of them in boxes and shelves. CEO Thomas Bergen – athletically slim; glasses; buzzcut hair – sits at a PC in a sunny office, he too surrounded by books: a smattering of Keynes, here and there a Heine and Highsmith, Chekhov and Chandler.

"Diversity", Mr Bergen: When did you first sense the thrill of how multifaceted this world is?

As a child, actually. When another kid on the playground asked, "What can we play today?" my answer was: "I got an idea." I dreamed up hundreds of games. I wanted to figure out how the rules needed to look in order for a game to be attractive. And I ultimately realised that just small changes can turn pabulum into perhaps the most thrilling thing on the block.

Can you give me an example of one of your game ideas?

In the mid-'70s, I figured out special ways to trade Panini cards. It was a success: in Pratteln, where we lived at the time, everyone today swaps cards according to those rules! Later in Interlaken we had a small garden. So what can you do with a garden? I put together an obstacle course with hurdles and three-times-around-the-tree rules. At the end of the day, there were 20 of us competing on a regular basis.

Three "Goldvreneli" as an initial investment

Already at the age of ten, you wanted to know: How does a company function in real life, in the real economy?

I had 200 francs in my piggybank, so I took the money to Swiss Bank Corp. My first investment was in three "Goldvreneli" – bought for 80 francs, sold for 170. Yayho! As a 14-year-old, it was clear to me: I'm going to become an attorney – so how do you go about setting up and interpreting the rules for society? Or perhaps an entrepreneur – so again: how does that work and what makes a company successful?

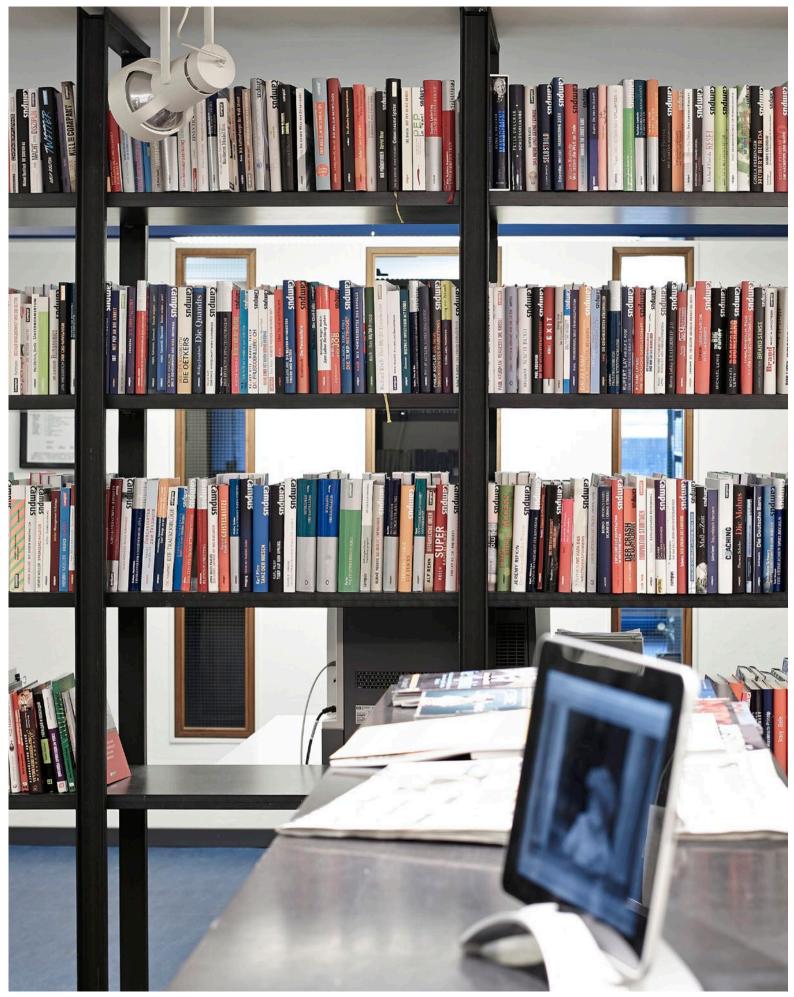
Bergen studied at the HSG in St. Gallen. In a student group, he and his colleagues dreamed up entrepreneurial ideas. One of those colleagues was Rolf Dobelli, who Bergen already knew from his high school days.

We wrote dozens of business plans. Because there were dozens of ideas: for instance, how about exclusive stationery? A love letter written on cheap paper is not exactly a heartwarmer. In 1998, Rolf had another idea: "We'll summarise books". I said, "Go for it – write a business plan!" On the day after Christmas 1998, I had the plan in my hands. "Okay, let's run with it."

What was the first book you synopsised?

Bill Gates' "Speed of ..." oh, what's it called? *Bergen types, the PC keys chatter*. Got it: "Business @ the Speed of Thought". And then Tom Peters' "In Search of Excellence".





16 years after its inception, the company today has a workforce of 100 employees and 200 free-lancers, offices almost world-wide and a subsidiary company in the USA. The latter is domiciled in Florida. To be precise in Aventura – sounds almost like a predilection.

3000 books from close to 500 publishing houses land on the desks at getAbstract each year. The employees decide: Which one fits in terms of pertinence, innovation and style? The abstracts are fed into a database, where subscribers – be they private or corporate customers – can download them.

"The Merchant of Venice" on eight pages.

The company's first corporate clients were from Switzerland, SMI companies. They use synopses of business-related books for internal schooling purposes. The motto: "More knowledge in less time."

Since 2005, getAbstract has also been condensing literary works, classics. But Mr Bergen, who even needs a synopsis of "The Merchant of Venice"?

Schools and universities. And of course students – but those kids get the abstracts under the table, so to speak.

What has been your most successful title?

The Bible. By far. Since 2002 it's been downloaded ten to twenty million times and it remains a really hot item to this very day.

How are your revenues developing?

They're growing [chuckles]. Something like 15 to 30 per cent a year. We're a great SME and make it possible for 200 families to earn a living.

And the bottom line?

[Laughs again] Stable. We turn a profit every year – and reinvest it.

At Daimler, people think differently.

The decision to go for belleslettres represented a step in the direction of more diversity. Once in a while, getAbstract opens up a new field. One of its latest products is called "Compressed finance". Meant in this regard are reports from the US Federal Reserve, the ECB and the World Bank – in a more concise (read: non-convoluted) form. In addition to the original two language versions of the abstracts (G man and English), there are now five more. And at one point, the company expanded abroad.

What's the biggest challenge in a new market?

The different culture. We made assumptions about our target markets, and it turned out that they didn't reflect reality. For instance: What do we mean when we say "a year" – and what does a South American think it means?

Alone the sleft between Switzerland and Germany is underestimated. When we ventured into Germany – at the time, already twenty major Swiss companies were working with getAbstract – we thought, "Hey, this will take us about three months' time." Wrong. It ultimately took two years before we attracted the first big account. Right from the start, we had to learn and understand how people think there. Differently!

What do you mean by "the people think differently"? Swiss companies are adventure-

some: they stick their toes into the water; test if it's okay. At large German companies, a product has to have proven already that it generates value. In Germany, nothing is bought that hasn't established a firm foothold in the marketplace. But once we got a green light from our first client, the entire German market came knocking at our door.

And in North America?

It's all about return on investment.

Say "no", again and again "no".

Some key accounts of getAbstract in the USA are General Motors, IBM, Microsoft and Google. The only "big name" still missing is Apple, says Bergen. After all the experiences gained in recent years – what does "diversity" mean to him today?

Multiplicity through simplicity. Before we diversify, we need to know: what's our core competency? What should we never cease doing?

And – what remains as your core competency?

Finding relevant knowledge, condensing it and passing it on. By means of smartphones, the Internet, iPads, throughout the world.

When you build up a company, there are always a bevy of new possibilities. You think: "Whoa, the money's just lying there on the street!" In earlier days, you could put together a construction company right beside your bakery. Because you had some cash and some interesting contacts. But in the age of the Internet, that's no longer viable: compa-

nies that are too broadly diversified can't defend their markets any more.

For an entrepreneur, this means that you also need to say "no", again and again "no"; you need to stop projects that broaden the diversity but cripple the unity. With an Internet-based SME, you've got just one chance – and you need to focus. But within this focal range you can diversify as much as you want.

Can you give me an example of what you had to say "no" to in the past?

We set up a B2B operation. It functioned fine and grew. But then came the need to put new products on this channel. Competitors in the e-learning area offer for example virtual training courses. We were asked whether we could offer something similar. But we realised that, no, that's not our bag.

Those who diversify too much can fall on their nose. Have you fallen on your nose at some point? Did something really hurt?

We tried three times to get a

foothold in America. And eight or nine years ago failed spectacularly those three times. In our fourth attempt I said, "OK, gotta do it yourself." I still recall how, while sunning on the Lido in Venice, a reseller gave me a call: "We'd like to put your product on the market, but there's no one here to make decisions on your behalf." My response: "If you sign on the dotted line, I'll come and live in America for three months." And to my wife, I said: "Pack the bags, honey!" Co-founders Patrick Brigger and Thomas Bergen moved with their wives and three children respectively to Miami for five years. Today, North America is by far the largest and fastest growing market.

Which rules of the game did you change under these new circumstances?

The task was: focus! Not: diversify. We absolutely needed to be successful in this market; otherwise, somebody else would have come onto the playing field and then at the end of the day attack us on our home ground in Europe.

Fair, honest and direct

Susanne Schettler, "Marketing Manager Europe", comes into the office and quietly takes a seat in front of a whiteboard full of diagrams, numbers, wild scribbles. "Mr Bergen, how is diversity evidenced in terms of your workforce?" Bergen ponders for a moment, mentions a fifty percent proportion of women – for many, that already sounds like diversity – and Ms Schettler chuckles in the background. "I never spent the time to calculate that", she says. "But something else comes to mind: at our headquarters here in Lucerne, we have people from ten different countries."

Bergen continues:

When someone's good, we do everything we can to keep that person. We figure out work models that suit everybody. Diversity also means that not just one doctrine rules the roost, but instead an array of values. Firstly: We do something that makes sense. Secondly: If we do something, we do it at a world-class level. Thirdly: We're fair, honest and direct. Fourthly: We want to earn money. And last but not least, we want to have fun doing it.

For Bergen, "diversity" also means accepting the opinion of others. An editorial staff exists for each language. And those people decide independently which books will be worked on. Does the CEO sneak some of his own favourite literature into the programme?

No. The more I put my two pennies worth in, the worse the editorial filter works. The people get the feeling they're being policed.

So as CEO you clearly restrain yourself?

Yes. At times, this leads to a lengthy discussion – how do we do it now? But when that's over, things move ahead rapidly. Each team should be strong enough to tackle the relevant tasks on its own. I watch out for that and play a part in setting the ground rules. And, of course, if something lies within my realm of responsibility, I get involved.

And if you're outvoted ...

... then I'm outvoted. That happens regularly at Management Board meetings.

Bergen turns to Ms Schettler in the background: "Susanne, have you ever experienced anything to the contrary?" "Nope", she answers dryly.

For new joiners at our company, the start is rather rocky: OMG – self-responsibility! You can run, but you cannot hide from it.

That sounds like an editorial statute at big-name newspapers.

We're set up like the Neue Zürcher Zeitung [laughs]. We just grow faster. Look, the people at getAbstract are extraordinarily talented. If I want to attract them, I need to give them leeway. Otherwise, they're not happy campers.

Table tennis and a hammock

Thomas Bergen suggests a tour around the offices. The visitor immediately senses: Wow, even in day-to-day business the employees are mindful of diversity, variety. The feeling is like being on a corporate campus in Silicon Valley – the boundaries between work and relaxation blur. Bergen says:

Employees spend nine or ten hours a day in an office. Lots of time. And when they get tired? It's the same with me: I don't want to work in an office where I can't take a power nap. Thomas Bergen gets a blanket from a corner – cuddly red and green – and lays it on the blue-carpeted floor, red side up. That's my bed. At my first job, I had to sleep on the loo. A catastrophe! Many employees travel a lot and are constantly jetlagged. It's important that they can catch some Zs ...

The tour takes us past catchphrases on the wall: "J.M. Keynes for coffee. Ludwig Erhard as an appetiser". Past the kitchen and rooms for the number crunchers and IT cowboys, as well as offices with a view of the lake.

In front of the library, there's a sign: "Quiet, study area." Between walls and walls of books, the visitor sees a ping pong table, around the corner even a hammock.

We also have a foosball table and a massage chair. Early on, everyone was a bit timid: Can I actually use this stuff? Yes! Won't it be recorded how many minutes I spend on that chair there? No!

Advice to entrepreneurs

Mr Bergen, if you were at a convention and had the opportunity to give advice to other entrepreneurs on the topic of diversity, what would you tell them?

Firstly: Diversity is a make-orbreak factor. At your company, you need to map the complexity of the marketplace. And of course, for your international business, having a variety of cultures in-house is indispensable. But there's more: You also have to live and breathe that diversity! And secondly, in such a patchwork family environment, you may never lose sight of one thing: What makes me to that which I am? Diversify wherever it works, but never lose track of vour roots!

getAbstract is an online information service that was established in 1999 and is wholly owned by its co-founders Thomas Bergen (CEO) and Patrick Brigger (Chairman of the Board). Headquartered in Lucerne, the company has offices throughout the world. getAbstract offers summaries of business books and classics of world literature on just a few pages and in seven different languages. In terms of the former, the company is the global number 1 with more than 10,000 abstracts in its database. getAbstract caters to the wishes of private individuals (B2C) as well as corporate customers (B2B) and has already sold several million licences – 60 per cent in America, 35 per cent to readers in Europe.

The idea behind getAbstract:
Business leaders are faced with
a dilemma – on one hand the
constantly growing quantity of information and, on the other, the
limited amount of time to absorb
it all. The solution: "Compressed
Knowledge" – abstracts of important literary works ... short and
comprehensible.

getabstract.com



"Diversify – but never lose track of your roots."

"To succeed, we need to learn to live with chaos."

PwC Switzerland

62 nationalities

14 locations in Switzerland

Headcount 2,653 (60% male, 40% female)

372 part-time employees (13,8%)

40 apprentices

Average age: 34 years

Almost **13,000** clients, 8,000 of which are SMEs, PwC's clients include 102 companies (45%) listed on the SIX Swiss Exchange



Publisher: PwC Switzerland, Birchstrasse 160, 8050 Zurich, Switzerland

Layout: Leo Burnett Switzerland AG, Aemtlerstrasse 201, 8040 Zurich

Lithography/print: Linkgroup, Mühlebachstrasse 52, 8008 Zurich © 2014 PricewaterhouseCoopers AG. All rights reserved.

The opinions expressed by the interviewees may vary with those of the publisher.

This issue of our "ceo" magazine is available in German, French and English. Circulation: 17,000.

The next issue of "ceo" will appear in June 2015 and centre on the topic of "Energy".

Read about how the various types of "energy" influence our life – from turning on the lights in the morning, to the enjoyable energy we get at lunchtime, right through to the kind of energy that comes from sports activities like an early-evening jog in the woods.



Don't want to miss any upcoming issue of "ceo"?

Then subscribe now at ceo.magazine@ch.pwc.com