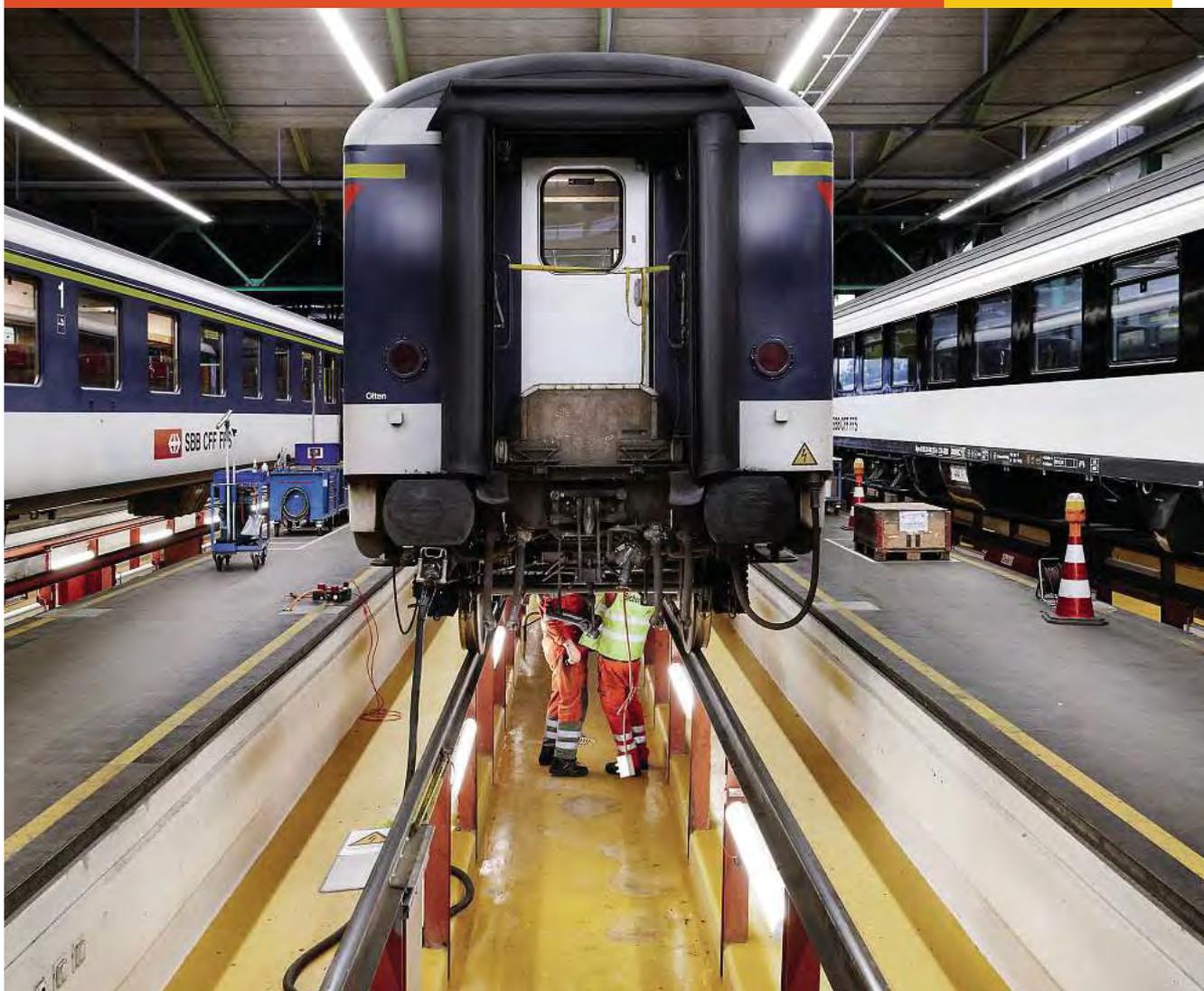


ceo

The magazine for decision makers

Living values

How to respond to change? What goals and ideals will outlast tomorrow? Leading personalities from the Swiss business community – entrepreneurs, networkers and the next generation of executives – provide answers.



A platform for the leaders of tomorrow

The Stein am Rhein Symposium (stars) is aimed at the next generation of top managers. The international participants – a handpicked professional elite with proven experience – are given the chance to swap stories with the decision makers of today. A top-notch networking event – and a future laboratory for global solution finding.

Stein am Rhein is amazing. The Old Town appears to have withstood the transition from the Middle Ages to the present unscathed. The gates and towers of the town church, St George's Monastery, look as if they were painted by the old masters. In the alleyways stand historic patrician houses with original painted façades, ornate half-timbered structures, steep stepped gables and striking oriels. These wonderfully preserved and maintained reminders of the past are the reason why up to a million visitors flock to the town every year.

But the future, too, is at home in Stein am Rhein. In the town's cultural centre, the "Bürgerasyl", some 80 international managers of the next generation will meet up with today's decision makers in business and social matters for the fourth time in September to exchange experiences. The stars symposium makes this high-calibre exchange of opinions possible – with speakers like Sergio Marchionne and Josef Ackermann as well as many other renowned CEOs, politicians and scientists from all over the world. This year, the chairman and CEO of Bertelsmann, Hartmut Ostrowski, and the president and CEO of Airbus, Thomas Enders, will be leading the

discussions with participants. This year's list of speakers on the topic "Fit for the Future – Challenges and Choices 2020" also features a remarkable number of guests from the Far East.

stars is financed by sponsors from business and, to the tune of roughly 50 per cent, by the Jakob and Emma Windler Foundation – a private organisation that shines like a lucky star over Stein am Rhein. The Foundation has invested more than CHF 34 million alone in the renovation of the historical Old Town, plus another CHF 12.7 million in the conversion of the former Holy Spirit hospital into the "Bürgerasyl" cultural centre in which the symposium is held.

Sights on the future

Toni Schönenberger, who holds a doctorate in history and political science, is the chairman of the foundation board of stars and also the chairman of the foundation board of Think Tank Thurgau (TTT). The TTT Foundation



Toni Schönenberger,
foundation board chairman,
stars – the symposium for
leaders of the next generation

was established in Weinfelden as part of the 200-year anniversary celebrations of the canton in 2003. Its declared goal is to "initiate and accompany projects that deal with political, commercial, scientific and cultural changes and developments and can be of importance in the medium and long term for the canton and region". To fulfil this task, it is necessary by definition to seek "collabor-

ation with figures or similar organisations and institutions at home and abroad". The idea of the symposium is to develop next-generation leaders. "It seemed obvious," says Schönenberger, "to look to the future and set our sights on young managers around the globe who will soon have a say in international companies, business, politics and society." Between 35 and 40 years old, with an outstanding education and already with professional experience under their belts, these leaders of the next generation are an

interesting target group and an intelligent group of listeners for speakers.

Exclusive group of participants

As the CEO of the UBS Wolfsberg continuing education and conference centre in Ermatingen, Schönenberger – just like the other members of stars – has an outstanding network of contacts. In addition to a high-calibre foundation board, it has also been possible to recruit an advisory board for stars that is of equally high standing. "It has developed an astonishing dynamic of its own," says Schönenberger with delight. Which is probably due to the fact that the basic idea for participation in the symposium was born of a genuine need – "the need of top managers to groom a suitable successor".

The 80 to 100 participants at the symposium are selected with the greatest of care – by their own bosses. "We want to give the leaders of today the opportunity to appoint the leaders of tomorrow," says Schönenberger. "We invite the CEOs of major companies to reward people they see as having genuine management potential with a participation in stars." The young managers of the next generation in turn are offered a superb opportunity to establish their own international network of contacts by participating in the symposium. "And so that they really do that," says Schönenberger, smiling, "we leave nothing to chance." By that he means the symposium is perfectly organised with presentations, workshops and podium discussions from morning to evening. Even during the meal together, a carefully drawn-up seating plan prevents the formation of national, linguistic or industry-specific clusters. "We want to enable the participants to get the most out of the event so that they have a real chance of broadening their horizons."

Topics of tomorrow

The restriction to a small group of hand-picked participants who have already been successful professionally is the basis for the success of stars. More and more interested companies want to send their young talents to the symposium; an increasing number of successful CEOs and politicians are eager to discuss topics with the leaders of tomorrow. “Among the young managers and also among the speakers, we sense a strong need to exchange experiences and enter into discussions with like-minded people from all over the world,” says Schönerberger. “These are not people who want to implement the strategies of others; these are strong individuals who want to be in charge of things themselves.”

That can only be of benefit in the future. The topics of this year’s symposium alone indicate the changes that the leaders of the next generation will be confronted with: emerging countries and a new world order, social media and its influences, global risks. “This list could be extended infinitely,” says Schönerberger. “But the focus is on global challenges and megatrends such as demographic change, climate change, scarcity of resources and energy, migration.” New approaches and interdisciplinary, international solution-finding processes are required. “We want to make a contribution to this and help young managers gear up for the future.” In the meantime, stars has gained a fine international reputation. Just three years after it was established, the symposium expanded at the invitation of the Chinese Foreign Ministry to Penglai, an up-and-coming city, just one hour’s flight east of Beijing. Discussions are currently being held on a continuation of stars in China. Schönerberger does not want to push additional global sites – nor does he want to rule them out.

stars Stein am Rhein Symposium
www.the-stars.ch



stars participant
Juliana Sutanto

“I investigate what the market wants”

Name: Juliana Sutanto
Nationality: Indonesian
Position: Assistant professor at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich
Age: 31
Marital status: Married, 1 child
Invited participant, Stein am Rhein Symposium, September 2010

If you send Juliana Sutanto an e-mail, you’ll get a reply right back. Whether it is Sunday, during the



stars participant
Simon Teng

week, 8 o’clock in the morning or 10 o’clock at night – Sutanto always seems to be online. The Indonesian scientist does indeed have a strong affinity for bits and bytes. She is an assistant professor (tenure track) for management information systems at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich. As a teenager, she would never have believed that she would one day aspire to become a professor. In Indonesia, an academic career gets little recognition and even less support, and Sutanto admits that “it was not something I had my sights on”. It was fate, not planning, that led her to take this career path. A scholarship ultimately made it possible for Sutanto to study in Singapore, where a professor brought out her passion for academic research by encouraging her to write a specialist article about her work at the time. It was promptly published. This first success as an academic gave her life a new direc-

tion. “I noticed that I had an aptitude for it,” says Sutanto. After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in IT, she stayed on at university in Singapore. She became an instructor at the Department of Information Systems at the School of Computing and wrote her thesis concurrently with her work. She finished it in 2008 and successfully applied for a job at ETH Zurich. She has worked as an assistant professor there ever since. “I am happy that things have turned out this way,” says Sutanto. “Working in an academic environment has many benefits because the freedom to define my research topics myself means a great deal to me.” The corporate world is very interested in her research. The young researcher studies which IT systems are successful with users for which rea-

sons and which ones are flops although they are high performance and technologically sophisticated. “I investigate what the market wants,” says Sutanto, “and from that perspective, it is not the best technology that counts but whether it is accepted by users or not.” She has close ties with the corporate world, particularly in the field of IT. Together with companies, she develops information systems, drafts experiments and implements them with the companies. From the data gained, she analyses user behaviour with reference to the applications and sends her insights back to the appropriate decision makers. She likes what she does and it keeps her fit. When a visitor mentions the catch phrase “work-life balance”, she laughs. “Well, the older I get the more I try to reach a better balance,” the 31-year-old says. “But I don’t manage it particularly well.” That may well be because the goal she has set herself takes a rather special effort: a professorship at the ETH in Zurich. —

“My career is developing in the right direction”

Name: Simon Teng
Nationality: Malaysian
Position: COO, BT EMEA
Age: 42
Marital status: Married, 1 child
Invited participant, Stein am Rhein Symposium, September 2010

For Simon Teng, last September’s stars symposium was a welcome break from his day-to-day routine; he was able to “think about the big picture for a change”. At the time, he was still unaware that he was about to take the biggest step of his career to date. In February this year, Teng – COO of BT Global Services – was offered the job of COO for the Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) economic region. He jumped at the chance. The promotion was nothing less than Teng deserved; he had been outstanding in the market development of BT in Switzerland. And the 42-year-old is pleased at the step up the career ladder: it means more room to manoeuvre, more responsibility, more influence and more challenges. The best, however, is something else altogether: “I can work from Switzerland and remain here with my family.” It soon becomes clear that Switzerland is the country of Teng’s dreams. He left his home twelve years ago and settled here with his Malaysian wife and daughter, working as a product manager at Worldcom/UUNET. He had been honing his skills for the job since 1992. Back then, freshly graduated in politics from the National University of Malaysia, he joined his country’s up-and-coming telecoms industry and then worked his

way up the career ladder, step by step. In 1999, two offers from abroad landed on his desk: one from Phoenix, Arizona, the other from Zurich, Switzerland. “I was more interested in the job than the location,” he says, explaining why he opted for Switzerland. “I would never have believed that I would love it so much in Switzerland.”

His new position is a daunting one – “a great challenge for me” – that involves long working days, frequent travel and cancelled holidays. “I am from Asia,” says Teng, with a wave of his hand. “I always adapt to the situation whenever possible.” He is also extremely satisfied with the course of things: “My career is developing in the right direction,” he says. “I have always worked at an international level.” He is now doing that even more: as the COO EMEA for the British IT and telecoms giant, Teng is responsible for its Operations and Business Management divisions in 106 countries, which, in addition to Switzerland, include Scandinavia, Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, the Middle East and Africa.

Changeing jobs is not of course something that Teng is considering at the current time. But he does not rule out one day working for another company in another country. “When the time is right and you are given the opportunity, you have to seize it.” In particular, he likes the idea of changing industries one day; he has spent all of his career in the IT and telecoms industry. However, the biggest incentive that a future employer could offer him is neither a monetary nor a hierarchical one. “He would have to guarantee that I can come back again,” says Teng. “I would like to spend my retirement in Switzerland.”

“I am dependent on the network for my entrepreneurial future”

Name: Badir A. Almusharrekh
Nationality: Emirati
Position: Director and representative of the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Trade at the WTO in Geneva and trade attaché to Switzerland
Age: 36
Marital status: Married, 3 children
Speaker, Stein am Rhein Symposium, September 2010

When Badir A. Almusharrekh was appointed to his position at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva just under two years ago, the move was announced as part of a United Arab Emirates (UAE) strategy to increase efficiency among the government’s institutions. Almusharrekh was experienced and competent enough to fit the bill. Almusharrekh is familiar with both theory and practice. Between



Photo: Cédric Widmer

stars participant
Badir A. Almusharrekh

1996 and 2006, he worked as head of external planning at the Emirates Telecommunications Corporation and then held a similar position in the mega-project Dubai Maritime City for three years. He also has a master’s degree in global business administration from London Metropolitan University, a bachelor’s in business administration from the University of Dubai and is currently writing his doctoral thesis. His current job is ideal for this. As the trade attaché of the UAE to Switzerland and his country’s representative at the WTO in Geneva, Almusharrekh has the time and energy for his PhD work at the end of the day. He wants to submit it to his professor at the

renowned Bradford School of Management in the UK by 2014. Then he wants to embark on a new career. Once he has his PhD in business administration, he wants to set up his own management consultancy for companies and investors who want to establish themselves in the UAE and those who want to branch out from the UAE abroad. “As one of the locals, I know my own country very well; I have direct contact to decision makers and many doors



Photo: Cédric Widmer

stars participant
Christina Oberli

open to me.” Events like the stars symposium in the autumn of 2010, where he was a speaker, are vital for Almusharrekh’s ambitions: “I am dependent on a global network for my entrepreneurial future,” he says. “In Stein am Rhein, I was able to make valuable contacts.” Almusharrekh doesn’t seem to be ruffled by much. It is only when he is asked about the motivation behind his career plans that there is a note of vehemence in his voice: “It is not about money!” he says. “I want to give my country and its people something, and I can do that a lot better as a businessman than I can as an employee.” Consequently, in his CV he states that it is his personal goal “to be of value”. Almusharrekh follows up by saying: “I don’t want to die without having been a valuable member of society.”

“Leaders have to be aware of the impact their decisions have”

Name: Christina Oberli
Nationality: Swiss/Canadian
Position: Deputy Head of ICRC Operations in Europe
Age: 39
Marital status: Single
Invited participant, Stein am Rhein Symposium, September 2010

Most alumni credit the stars symposium with having broadened their horizons. Christina Oberli does too – but from a different perspective. Whilst most “young leaders” from business praise the symposium

predominantly for honing their awareness of the “big picture”, the 39-year-old gained an insight here into the mindset and activities of success-hungry decision makers in this sector. As a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Oberli is confronted with major international issues on a continual basis and is therefore very familiar with them. The world of business, however, is largely unknown to her. “For me, the days spent at the symposium offered a stark contrast to my everyday work,” says Oberli. “I realised how important dialogue with private industry is to ensure that its leaders become aware of their role and the impact their decisions have on people’s situation, their rights and their environment.” Oberli, the daughter of Swiss farmers who emigrated to Canada at the end of the 1970s, studied international relations in Quebec and started her career at the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal. “I was interested in social, societal and humanitarian topics even at university,” she explains. Her decision to work for an international organisation was therefore no coincidence. Since joining the ICRC in 1998, she has visited many poverty-stricken countries and seen many destitute people. She has lived in Columbia, Iraq, Ethiopia and in the Congo, and experienced first-hand how the ICRC can help to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population in war-torn areas: “We are not the only organisation to help those in need, but we offer shelter and aid in very isolated areas.” She is currently working at the headquarters of the ICRC in Geneva as the interface between diplomacy, coordination and management of all operations in Europe. Oberli makes no secret of the fact that she looks forward to having more operational responsibility again at some time in the future. Nevertheless, “it is important to also be familiar with the work of our organisation’s headquarters,” she says. “That will be very useful to me later on.” With all her experience at the ICRC, today Oberli is ready for her next career step in the future – as head of a delegation abroad. She will then be responsible for all operations in a country somewhere in the world – in a place that probably no other stars alumnus would want to visit. Could she also imagine working for another employer? Oberli thinks for a few moments before answering: “I wouldn’t ever rule it out, but at the moment I couldn’t imagine it.” She identifies closely with the institution, and there is a strong team spirit at the ICRC. “It is not easy to join the ICRC,” she says, “and it is just as difficult to leave it.”

“I would like to work for the big picture”

Name: Richard Burger
Position: Partner at PwC
Age: 42
Marital status: Married
Invited participant, Stein am Rhein Symposium, September 2010

Ask Richard Burger about the importance of work-life balance in his day-to-day business, and he replies: “I like doing what I do. I don’t feel as if I am missing out on anything when I work.” For him, the catchphrase “work-life balance” means “work-life choice”. Burger wants to climb the career ladder – and is prepared for the commitment and dedication that it requires.

Last autumn, Burger participated in the Stein am Rhein Symposium – which was a real privilege: PwC, a sponsor of stars whose CEO Markus Neuhaus is member of the foundation board, sends one employee to each stars symposium in the canton of Schaffhausen as part of its key talent programme. For Burger, a young partner with an international outlook, participating in the symposium was “a highlight”. Dealing with topics far removed from his day-to-day business, such as impending energy and food shortages, hearing from experts how they assess developments in China or learning from the top manager of an Indian industrial corporation where he

sees the challenges for the future, was a real broadening of his horizons, says Burger. Many weeks have passed since then. And Burger, who as a partner is responsible for auditing a global insurance company, has devoted himself in that time to his usual work and crunched mountains of numbers with his team. Nevertheless, the 42-year-old can still clearly recall individual presentations and speakers – for instance, a British medical scientist and professor who spoke about ever-increasing life expectancy and its impact on medicine, the labour market and old-age pensions.

As is the norm at such events, networking plays an important role at the meeting in Stein am Rhein. “I am still in contact with some people today,” says Burger, citing as one example a scientist from New York who is working on a doctoral thesis on team coaching. “I provide her with the practitioner’s perspective,” says Burger, “and report on the challenges that arise when you manage a high-performance team.” For the academic, the discussions with Burger are a reality check for the theory that she is following and for the thesis she is drawing up. For his part, Burger gets suggestions for his management activities from the researcher, who is in contact with countless other leaders: “Her questions have given me many ideas,” says Burger, specifying further: “She asked, for example, how we show appreciation here and how we ensure that the employees are happy. Good points!” Burger discussed these points as part of the Global People Survey, an annual feedback programme that PwC carries out, and undertook to ensure in particular “instant feedback”, “show appreciation” and “positive atmosphere”. He plastered his desktop with stickies bearing these phrases. They

are the first thing he sees when he switches on his computer in the morning and the last thing he sees when he turns it off in the evening. He has undertaken to show his staff his appreciation and not just to be quick with criticism, but also to give praise promptly when it is due.

stars brings together ambitious young leaders hungry for success. Burger was especially impressed with participants from upcoming countries like India and China. For him, these meetings serve the same function as his discussions with the PhD student from New York: a reality check. At stars, Burger found himself surrounded by like-minded people: “They want to achieve something and to progress, and they are willing to do what it takes.” Burger, too, has a long road ahead of him before he gets where he wants to be. “One day, I would like to hold a management position,” he says, “and work more for the big picture.” The big picture is PwC. This is where he has worked since graduating from the University of Zurich 15 years ago. He is not thinking of moving. “Why should I move to another company when I like it so much here?” he asks. “When I don’t like something, I don’t give up. I try and change it.” —

Photo: Noë Flum

