

Women in sports journalism: attacking a male domain

DOMMO

Ringier

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How Andres Büchi sees Switzerland. Where the know-it-alls are. How in-justice is created. And why he is against quotas for women. Taking stock after 13 years as Beobachter's editor-in-chief.

Shrewd Observer



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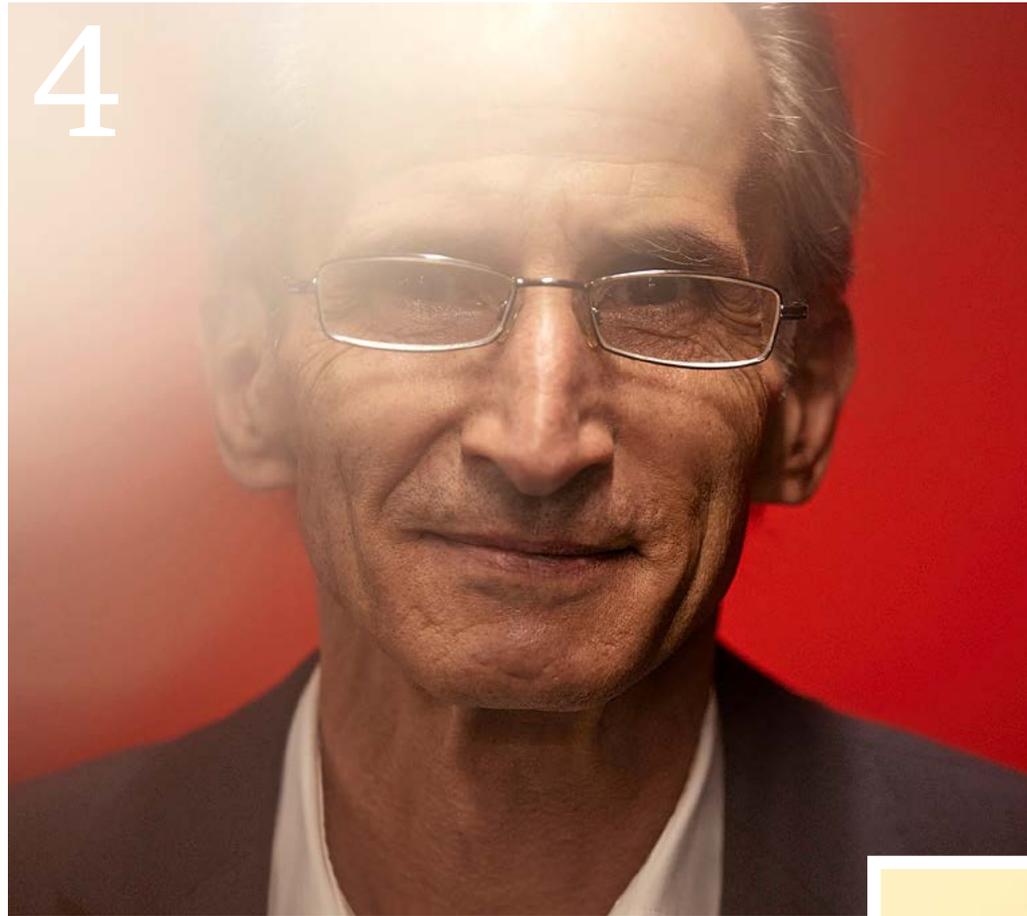
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«There is fighting tooth and nail.»

For thirteen years, Andres Büchi was editor-in-chief of Beobachter magazine. To him, the magazine is like a loyal partner that guides people through life. A conversation about know-it-alls, rifts in society, women's quotas and his travels after retirement.

Interview: Alejandro Velert Photos: Maurice Haas

Andres Büchi, how do you explain Beobachter magazine to people outside Switzerland?

The Beobachter is a hybrid product. On one hand, we are a news magazine, which means that the importance of a topic is the decisive criterion. On the other, we are a magazine that is very close to its readers and their problems. Our readers should gain a better understanding of current law in Switzerland. And where readers need further concrete advice, we offer it.

You ran the Beobachter extremely successfully for almost 13 years. And yet, readership has fallen from 933,000 to 726,000 during that period. Is there simply no way to buck the general trend of the market?

You're forgetting that we have gained a substantial readership online. Having said that, it's unfortunately true that subscriber magazines are struggling nowadays. The way people get information has changed enormously. Newspapers of record that used to be beacons have faded or can no longer live up to that claim to fame.

Which beacons are you talking about?

In the past, you just had to read a few major titles to be well-informed. For example, the dailies Neue Zürcher Zeitung and the Tages Anzeiger, plus maybe magazines

like Spiegel, Beobachter, our tabloid Blick and possibly other foreign titles. Each publication's position was also clear. Instead of these beacons, we all have cell phones. And instead of orienting ourselves by way of these beacons, we are swimming in a sea of information and flickering cell phone displays.

Eventually, people may get tired of cat videos and the ten funniest vacation pictures of the summer - and start looking for beacons again.

That's what I'm hoping for. However, we find that people's attention span is decreasing because everyone is suffering from an information tsunami. Many people now only read the titles and form their opinion based on that! The reliable prioritization of important news over irrelevant items about lifestyle messages has dwindled. Instead, media serve up a little bit of everything and mix a lot of things together. But this is hardly the way to get a good overview of the whole.

An industry trend that the Beobachter can counter?

Yes, I hope so. Our approach is based on wide-ranging investigation regarding issues that affect people. Issues that people should be able to talk about, because they are important to the future of Switzerland and to understanding.

The Beobachter keeps a watchful eye on Switzerland, but it is never moralizing or preachy. How do you manage this balancing act?

That is probably our biggest difficulty. It is essential to represent all sides adequately and to offer readers the most important information so they can form their own opinions. But this balancing act is becoming harder, and it does not always work.

How come?

The diversity of opinions has increased and so has a certain know-it-all attitude in society. Many people simply want us to confirm the opinions they already have. Facts to the contrary are met with rejection or even hostility. The Corona pandemic is the best example for this. The camps of supporters and opponents of the measures against the virus partly find themselves irreconcilably at loggerheads. Beobachter, too, has repeatedly been accused of being a government mouthpiece on this issue.

Journalists often want to make a difference. Should they also be activists?

Absolutely not. Of course, everyone has their priorities, and there is no such thing as completely objective journalism, if only because of the choice of topics. But the goal ▶



Andres Büchi was born in Winterthur in 1956. After dropping out of law school, he began working as a journalist at a local newspaper in Horgen. In the early 1980s, he joined Roger Schawinski's pirate radio station Radio 24. In the following years, he worked as a reporter, correspondent at the federal parliament building, head of department and managing editor at SonntagsZeitung and the daily Tages-Anzeiger. From June 2008 to April 2021, he was editor-in-chief of Beobachter magazine. Büchi lives with his partner in Oberengstringen, near Zurich.

INTERVIEW BEOBACHTER

must be to get as close to the truth as possible. And if you don't have the answers, you should discuss your search for them. Editorials and columns are the proper vehicles to express personal opinion. But here, too, it is important not to appear preachy or know-all, but to provide arguments as well as food for thought.

How do you run a newsroom?

For me and for our management team, playing to our employees' strengths has always been a central theme. To show them how they can improve the structure and realization of their story or what other aspects they might consider. To do that, you need to take people and their views seriously. This automatically generates pluralism.

In other words, leadership based on grass-roots democracy with maximum participation?

An editorial team that always has to dance to the boss's tune won't work for long. Nevertheless, a boss must also be able to make decisions against the majority. But they should be well justified. At the end of the day, the best arguments should win.

How do you keep journalists from extrapolating from the greater Zurich area to the entire country?

By actively and seriously checking information and reports from outside the Zurich bubble. And by making sure these facts are reflected in the magazine. That's not easy, because the rifts and mutual reservations between urban and rural Switzerland have tended to grow in recent years.

Are there more rifts in general?

Yes. And I think it's a sign of a very pluralistic society that has become highly fragmented. Worries and fears about the future are growing, and everyone is realizing that you can never live up to the noble goal of pleasing everyone. People are increasingly putting their own concerns first, so there is more fighting tooth and nail.

Is trust in the media also suffering as a result?

Declining trust is a symptom of transience, and everyone is struggling with it. Doctors, lawyers,



politicians and even journalists automatically used to be granted a certain authority. Today, these authorities need to prove themselves much more.

Trust is the ultimate currency.

Exactly. In any business, in any relationship. It must be painstakingly earned and can be squandered incredibly quickly. Just ask the car manufacturers how much credibility they have squandered by cheating on exhaust emissions.

What does this mean in terms of Beobachter magazine?

Whatever you do, your intentions must be honest, your commitment must be genuine. Anything else is not trustworthy. People have a nose for whether you mean it and are authentic. Beobachter magazine, I think, can claim to be very trustworthy. But we're also aware that we can never drop the ball.

How has Beobachter magazine changed over the past 13 years?

We used to focus more on highlighting individual cases or issues or exposing grievances. In recent years, we have tried to make the Beobachter even more of a loyal partner. A companion that helps

«We should try to think backwards from the future. Think about where things are going or where they should go. And, starting from that point, ask ourselves how we need to act today to achieve those goals.» says Andres Büchi.

readers make their way through life, explaining how Switzerland works and offering answers to important questions. Where individual consulting is needed, we offer our assistance if you can't get by on your own.

How does Switzerland work? Is there such a thing as one Switzerland?

No. But there is a Switzerland in which certain values have been agreed upon. Such as our commitment to federalism or to high quality in work, to reliable structures and to preserving our wonderful natural environment as much as possible. We need to take care of all these things.

That sounds socially conservative. In political terms, are these concerns more left-wing or right-wing?

The left-right scheme is overrated. I'm very environmentally conscious, which is why I don't own a car. And I'm convinced that we, as a society, are living way beyond our means. If that's a left-wing position, then I'm left-wing. But I'm also critical of unchecked immigration to Switzerland and short-sighted growth targets. That, in turn, is a right-wing position, and I have been blamed for that.



«An editorial team that always has to dance to the boss's tune won't work for long.» Andres Büchi

So, how do you get your bearings?

We should try to think backwards from the future. Think about where things are going or where they should go. And, starting from that point, ask ourselves how we need to act today to achieve those goals. I sometimes find it amazing how zealously people pick at details while losing sight of the big picture.

Can you give us examples?

There are so many huge tasks at hand! How do we generate sustainable growth? How do we deal with

limited space? How do we make sure that social rifts do not deepen? If, however, the focus is too ideologically focused on addressing everyone in a politically correct way, I think that is not only excessive but also dangerous. After the recent cantonal elections in Solothurn and Neuchâtel, almost every report I read was about women having won majorities there. That is fine. But politics should be about content first and foremost.

Gender issues are currently the subject of intense debate. In 2012, you wrote an editorial entitled «Women don't need quotas», stating that it was women's own fault if they were underrepresented on the executive floor, because they prioritized things differently from men in many areas of life. Would you still write something like that today?

You've sharpened my statements quite a bit, but that's okay (laughs). My position has not changed. Women are strong enough, and they are desperately wanted in many positions today. Quotas won't get you anywhere. They only create new injustices. I don't think we'll achieve a fairer society that way.

The Beobachter is not so much concerned with the happy side of life. Has that rubbed off on you personally?

A critical journalist may go through life more seriously. But there are many professions in which you are confronted with problems. On the upside, as a journalist you have your finger on the pulse of the time, and you can sometimes contribute to improving things. That is a very nice job.

There is one last point we need to verify. We've been told you used to be a hippie.

A hippie? Where did that come from (laughs)? At the age of 22, after a few semesters of law school and military training school, I spent close to a year traveling around the world with the money I had earned as a taxi driver on night shifts. After that, university life was no longer my thing. I then spent one summer working in a surf school and boat rental in Corsica and lived in a caravan in Propriano the southwest of Corsica for half a year. Those were my wild times, with everything that implies, but I never thought of myself as a hippie.

Now that you've retired, are you feeling the itch to travel again?

A little different from before. In my third stage of life, I will hopefully find a little more time for the big questions of the meaning of life. But these journeys into my inner self I can take at home on my couch. 🌍



«Education is everything»

Almost twenty years ago, Thomas Trüb created the Dariu Foundation – with support from Ringier. Year by year, it allows disadvantaged children in Vietnam and Myanmar to receive training in digital skills.

Interview: Nina Huber Photo: Paul Seewer

Thomas Trüb, the Dariu Foundation will have helped one million people by the end of 2021. What does this figure mean to you?

The figure itself is abstract, but it means that we are on course. We had hoped to meet the one-million mark by 2025. This means that our organization is performing effectively. Now, we're working in our second million.

What deadline are you giving yourself?

Our objective is to train 2.5 million children and teenagers by the end of 2024.

The foundation will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2022. How did you come to create it twenty years ago?

Our family has always had a sense of social responsibility. Instead of handing out alms, I wanted to

«We do everything to ensure professionalism and efficiency at Dariu,» says Thomas Trüb, who created the foundation nearly 20 years ago.

create something sustainable. I was certain that education is everything when it comes to delivering children from poverty. The choice of Vietnam was a matter of the heart. In the nineties, we'd already gone there with Ringier to open up new business opportunities in Asia. I love the country, the people, the culture – and the cuisine, of course. We started out building kindergartens and soon went on to introduce

grants for tuition and microcredits. Everything was intended to enable parents from disadvantaged backgrounds to send their kids to school.

You have since abandoned the system of microcredits. Why?

First of all, Vietnam's banking system has improved enormously. Second, the women who were our clients no longer need to rely on us because our support has improved their situation. We have made ourselves superfluous. That needs to be the ultimate goal of everything we do with our foundation: One day, we should no longer be needed.

What is Ringier's role in the Dariu Foundation?

Ringier helped us get off the ground and supported us from the very beginning, not only financially but also by contributing a lot of expertise. Especially in terms of funding, legal aspects and administration. And there's a great deal of Ringier DNA inside me, as well (laughs), so it's a perfect symbiosis.

You were in the first class of the Ringier School of Journalism together with publisher Michael Ringier. How did that come about?

In 1973, I traveled to Cuba for eight weeks because I was enthusiastic about the socialist revolution. We allowed them to inculcate us with their ideology because on Fridays we'd get all the rum, salsa and cigars we could want. My life took a different turn there: I met my wife, who is Corsican. I knew that if I wanted this relationship to work, I would have to take up a proper profession. So, I became a journalist, and it was the best decision of my life.

I was told that you earned your living playing cards when you were a young man. Is that true?

Well, I did practice various card games such as poker or Swiss jass, and I got by okay.

I'm guessing that you don't play for high stakes at the foundation.

Of course not, the matter is far too serious for that. At the foundation, we do everything we can to ensure professionalism and efficiency. Major international tech companies

such as Google, Microsoft, Qualcomm and Intel work with us. Which is a sign that we're getting a lot of things right. In our area of expertise, we want to establish ourselves in the big leagues and stay there.

You're banking entirely on digitalization.

I'm convinced that coding will become a mandatory subject at schools around the world. In the future, it will be as important as reading, writing and arithmetic. Children should at least have a grasp of what coding is about. Whatever their professional career will be, algorithms and applications will be a part of it.

How did the corona pandemic affect the Dariu Foundation?

In Vietnam, the schools also shut down for several months. We boosted our own digitalization and trained the teachers, which was something we could do online. By the time schools reopened, we had a bigger team of trained teachers, which enabled us to reach more children. Last year, we even set a new record of 316,000 kids. For this year, we have set a goal of 400,000 trained children, and we are currently on course.

Ever since you created the foundation, you made sure of training as many girls as boys. How well do the locals accept this policy?

That is a crucial part of our DNA, and we're proud of having succeeded at this. When it comes to schooling, there is no systemic discrimination against girls. There is, at worst, the risk that girls drop out of school sooner. That is where we try to compensate with our development program. Basically, however, the country's culture is such that parents do everything they can for their children's education.

Apart from the brick-and-mortar schools, you have also introduced mobile schools. What exactly does that mean?

We collaborate with some five hundred schools and on top of that, we operate some one hundred mobile schools in Vietnam and Myanmar, in remote areas. Thanks

to these mobile schools, we can reach teenagers who would otherwise never have access to this kind of training.

What are your next ideas and objectives?

Our most ambitious project is called «Impossible». Its objective: Giving disadvantaged but gifted teenagers from remote rural areas the opportunity to set up their own company someday. Apart from basic training, we currently also run some 150 Coding Clubs with 30 teenagers each, where we intensively train the biggest talents. There, they work in small groups and develop their own applications, which they then enter in national and international competitions. We currently have 4,000 teens enrolled in these programs. The best students get 24 months of intensive coaching, by the end of which they should be capable of developing their own business plan. We are confident that a number of successful start-ups will emerge from that.

What does it mean to you when you meet people who have been helped by Dariu?

I'm very cautious about that. Whenever we come to visit, the schools are prepared. They let the kids with the best English tell us a story. Sometimes, that feels a bit staged. But when I take a bird's eye view of what we have accomplished, I am, of course, delighted. 🌍

Personal information

Thomas Trüb, born in Lucerne in 1952, was a high-school dropout who earned his living playing cards when he was young. In 1974, he graduated from the first class of the School of Journalism and began working as a business and political journalist at Blick before becoming an investigative journalist for the financial monthly Bilanz. After working for four years as the editor-in-chief of the daily Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten, he went freelance again in 1984 and developed various media concepts, among them the financial weekly Cash for Ringier. As of 1989, he rejoined Ringier as editor-in-chief of Cash, and in the subsequent twenty years, he was a major influence on the company's expansion into Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia and Africa.

Dariu provides perspectives

Young people from remote areas and poor circumstances have little hope of education in Vietnam. The Swiss Dariu Foundation, supported by Ringier, gives them the opportunity to improve their lives.



Hao Pham -

From care-home case to cosmetics company employee

Hao Pham was born into a family with four children in poor circumstances in a village in the highlands of Gia Lai province. When she was in high school, she was diagnosed with a spinal cord problem and underwent emergency surgery at a local hospital. However, the operation failed - when she woke up from the surgery, she was paralyzed. She had to quit school and spent the next two years in hospitals in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. Even so, she had to resign herself to being confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. All those treatments and traveling between two hospitals in different cities cost her family all their money. Hao Pham wound up at the orphanage «Maison Chance» in Ho Chi Minh City, which takes in street children and orphans as well as young people with disabilities. There, she was introduced to some vocational training programs, but none of them really interested her. «I love art and I'm interested in computer skills, but they only taught me handicraft

and outdated skills,» Hao Pham says. While at Maison Chance, she spotted an ad for Dariu. And indeed, she went on to receive a scholarship and completed her training with honors at the end of 2020. Today, the 22-year-old works at a cosmetics company in Ho Chi Minh City. «Dariu's scholarship program has given a poor person with disabilities like me a perspective that was previously unattainable. The foundation enabled me to go to school and learn job-related skills just like a person without disabilities. This opened up a path for me and boosted my self-confidence. Now, I am very happy to earn my own living, with passion.»



Phu Nguyen -

From fisherman to software developer

Just four years ago, Phu Nguyen, 22, had to go out to sea early in the morning by boat from a coastal village in Binh Dinh province to catch fish. This was actually the job of his father, the breadwinner of

their family of five. But when his mother fell seriously ill, his father had to stay home to take care of her. Phu Nguyen was fifteen years old at the time, and when the family faced economic hardship, he dropped out of school and went fishing in his father's place. In 2018, his mother's health improved and his father was able to return to fishing. Phu, now 18, wanted to continue his education. He found employment as a junior technical assistant at a solar energy solutions factory in Ho Chi Minh City. While there, he became interested in technology and started looking for vocational training that would be suitable for post-secondary students. In the process, he came across the vocational training program for disadvantaged students supported by Dariu. Following a selection process, Phu received a scholarship offer for 18 months of vocational training. While still in his final months at the school, Phu was offered a part-time job to help cover his living expenses in the city. Phu completed the training in December 2020 and received job offers from three companies. He accepted an offer from a software company with a starting salary of \$372 per month, which is an above average starting salary for employees with comparable training in Vietnam. At the age of 22, he now has a clear goal in mind: «After three months with this company, I am more confident at work. I will combine my technological portfolio with hands-on experience and back-end developer skills so I can become a senior full-stack developer in the next five years.»

«The Dariu Foundation starts with education - the key to fighting poverty. To date, thanks to Dariu, 750,000 disadvantaged youths have been taught digital skills and programming and 22,000 scholarships have been awarded. It is a great pleasure for me henceforth to support the foundation in its further development in my capacity as a board member.»

Dr. Manuel Liatowitsch, Group General Counsel, Head Corporate Center and Member of the Group Executive Board at Ringier.



Michael Ringier, Verleger

Artificial Ignorance

«If your content marketing is for everybody, it's for nobody.» Joe Pulizzi, best-selling author and one of the most renowned marketing experts in the US, puts the problem in a nutshell. The wrong advertising in the wrong place for the wrong target audience is something we all encounter every day - whether as readers or as users. But help is on the way. At least that's what an article in the German business daily Handelsblatt promises: «Advertising at the perfect moment - how artificial intelligence is changing an entire industry.» AI is supposed to control advertising so it will reach us the second we are most receptive to it.

What could be more logical than to plop down in a deck chair on the first sunny Saturday at the end of May to check whether artificial intelligence has already tracked down my ad-susceptible moments?

The first thing I do is scroll through the app of a very well-known Swiss tabloid and, as an occasional watcher of trash TV, I click on the story of a recently deceased reality-TV star and singer, whose widow does not want to accept his inheritance. Her reasons, however, are of far less interest to me than the advertising placed around this post for my sake.

At the top, I see several jackets and pants from a mail-order company on whose site I had looked at a fleece jacket a few hours earlier. The fact that I will certainly not buy any of these clothes because of their embarrassing colors and that I do not plan to search for other articles on this website any time soon must have completely escaped the AI. And having an ad on the right-hand side of the page offering me a size-4 Birkenstock shoe borders on artificial impertinence. Because with shoe size 12, there is no way for me to wear this fashion atrocity even for a moment - no matter how intensely the AI searches for it.

The hope that I might be more accurately targeted by a very successful free daily from Switzerland is dashed at the very first click. There's that unspeakable fleece jacket again, and I'll probably find some other way to invest those 34.90 francs for an EasyJet flight to Lisbon. The fact that they try to lure me, a co-owner of the platform Autoscout, to «Carfor-you» probably qualifies as evidence of artificial ignorance. And I would not visit the Billie Eilish concert on July 2nd of next year even if they offered seats for senior citizens. Nevertheless, the ad follows me doggedly, wherever I scroll on the page.

A quick glance at a transregional newspaper from Zurich and at a paper with a claim to national relevance from the neighborhood of our Pressehaus do not provide any additional insights with respect to advertising. In the case of the former, I find almost no advertising at all apart from «Paid Post», and in the case of the neighboring paper, intelligence seems to be limited to the editorial staff. Because neither the Zurich Landbank nor the NGO Caritas find me at an advertising-susceptible moment.

My last hope is Instagram, which is owned by the tech giant Facebook. But even there, you've missed the mark by miles, dear advertisers. A health-insurance company tells me «Just what you need», even though I completely disagree. And according to my doctor, I should not drink «Swissmilk» any more than any other milk. And for me, the ear-cleaning device that can be hooked up to a cell phone falls into the category of «artificial idiocy» at best. The only conclusion that remains is that it will take a great deal more natural intelligence to raise the IQ of artificial intelligence to a usable level for advertising.

Michael Ringier

FOCUS ON RINGIER

RINGIER'S BEST PHOTOS OF THE LAST QUARTER



L'ILLUSTRÉ Photography: Flora Borsi, Photo editor: Julie Body.
Hungarian photographer Flora Borsi has created a series of self-portraits in which she digitally merges her face with images of animals, for example this puffin. A self-taught artist, she wants to represent the beauty of animals and their close relationship with humans.



CAMINADA. DAS MAGAZIN Photography: Gaudenz Danuser, Photo editor: Susanne Märki.
To boldly go where no chef has gone before! Andreas Caminada is one of Switzerland's best and coolest restaurateurs. Now, this top chef is publishing his own magazine, together with Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz. The topics are Chefs, Art, Architecture, Design, Lifestyle. And of course, there are great recipes. The first issue even features a rocket popsicle for kids.





SCHWEIZER ILLUSTRIERTE Photography: Dan Leung , Photo editor: Nicole Spiess. Uli Sigg is standing in the inner courtyard of Hong Kong's M+ Museum designed by the Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron. The centerpiece of this huge building devoted to culture, due to open at the end of 2021, will be Swiss-born Sigg's collection: He has donated almost 1,500 works of contemporary Chinese art to the museum.

FOCUS ON RINGIER



BOLERO Photography: Eva Baales, Photo editor: Studio September, Production: Susanne Märki

On the last sunny day before a long and chilly spell of rain, Lake Walen in eastern Switzerland looked like a picture postcard – a perfect backdrop for a pictorial summer fashion feature. The wisps of fog on the set came from a machine that weighed a ton – to those who had to shlep it. The result was worth a few sore muscles.



L'ILLUSTRÉ Photography: Niels Ackermann, Photo editor: Julie Body.

A visit to the ghost town of Prypjat, two miles from Chernobyl. The two founders of the Geneva start-up Exlterra are deploying a novel technology to decontaminate this region, which could remain polluted with radioactivity for several millennia, within fifteen years.

In this feature, DOMO regularly presents the best photographs published by Ringier titles in the past quarter.



UNICA Photography: George Pruteanu, Photo editor: Irina Hartia

Bridal fashion – with a twist. That was the concept for this pictorial feature on wedding dresses in the Romanian magazine Unica. And so, the bridal fashions – as presented by model Dorina in a dress by M. Marquise – were staged in a starkly urban setting. The photograph was shot in downtown Bucharest on the famous Victory Avenue with lighting courtesy of the setting sun.

Copy cat

Clubhouse is currently the object of the biggest hype and proof that having a brilliant idea in the digital media economy is the first step to your own undoing. Because your idea will almost certainly be ripped off. An analysis by DOMO author Vinzenz Greiner.

A minor news item published today on industry news sites would have been a lousy April Fool's joke only six years ago: «Periscope will shut down on April 1.» For many people in 2015, Periscope was not just another new app. Periscope, numerous pundits agreed, was going to change the world.

This app, which allowed any cellphone user to morph into a live reporter for a global audience at a tap of the screen, would put traditional TV broadcasters on the spot, Richard Gutjahr was sure. For this influential digital and media blogger, one thing was clear: «The smartphone beats the outside broadcasting van.» Live streaming, people said at the time, was the Next Big Thing. Or, as Gutjahr put it: «The future is live.»

Social media titan Twitter felt the same way. It snapped up the app for a paltry few million dollars even before it was launched and went live with it in March 2015. Within four months, the app already numbered ten million users. Facebook had tak-

en some two years to achieve this user base. The hype had begun.

Roger Federer took thousands of fans through Wimbledon via Periscope. Kai Diekmann, then head of the Bild tabloid and therefore Germany's most powerful editor-in-chief, streamed the signing of a contract with a columnist and had reporters report live via Periscope - for example, from a bomb threat against the finals of a modelling show. The organizers of the Golf US Open banned Periscope to protect their media partners.

In short: It ran like clockwork. And today, in 2021, we get this side note about the app's shutdown. What happened in between might be described as the inevitable logic of Silicon Valley: idea theft.

Nowadays, live video streaming is part of the feature portfolio of all major social platforms: Whether - in limited form - on Snapchat or on Tiktok or Discord. Facebook began rolling out «Facebook live» less than half a year after the launch of Peri-

In Silicon Valley, good ideas are imitated, copied, stolen. «We've always been shameless about stealing great ideas,» Apple CEO Steve Jobs said back in 1996.

Photo: Getty Images



scope. Instagram followed in the fall of 2016, after which Periscope's download numbers, which had been decreasing since February 2016, plummeted once again.

Periscope had previously witnessed a similar development - from the winner's perspective.

Flashback: In February 2015, the mobile live streaming app Meerkat pops up in the app download stores. At the U.S. nerd festival «South by Southwest», a hype breaks out - not least because after logging in to Meerkat, you are automatically connected to your own Twitter network. And it is precisely this access to the so-called social graph that Twitter blocks just days later. Shortly thereafter, Periscope goes live.

Meerkat will continue to vegetate until 2016, but the brains behind the app, Israeli entrepreneur Ben Rubin, does not sit on his hands. That year, he and his company launch «Houseparty»: a social network focused on video chats. The following year, Facebook tests what the influ-

ential tech news platform Techcrunch calls a «blatant clone of Houseparty».

Even though Facebook discontinues this test project called «Bonfire» in 2019, this idea hijack shows two things. On the one hand, it is easy for giants like Google, Facebook or Apple to extensively test a cribbed or stolen idea only to shut it down. On the other hand, it shows the bitter irony inherent in the digital economy: it is based on breakthrough ideas, while the mantra «ideas are cheap» is equally true. And the overall imperative is: «Expect to have your idea stolen!»

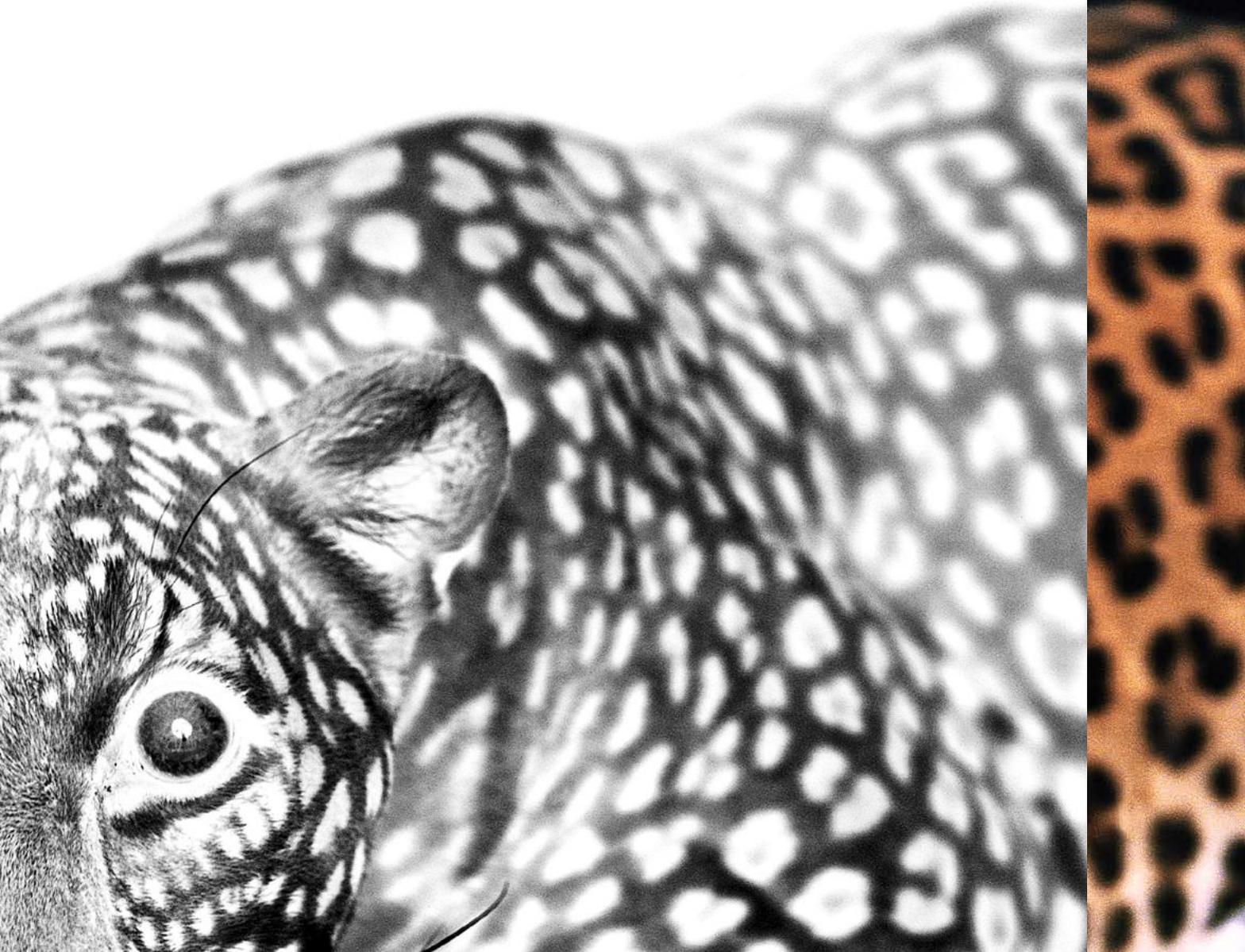
This is how Aquiles La Grave, founder of the U.S. digital marketing service provider Brandzooka, puts it drastically on the website Entrepreneur.com with respect to the Houseparty Bonfire episode. The guest post is titled, «What to do when Facebook or Google wants to steal your idea.» In it, La Grave fatalistically warns, «If they can't buy your idea, they are going to take it anyway.»

«They» is the big copycats, the big predators.

And they're not shy about it. «If there is something good in the world, then we copy with pride,» Anssi Vanjoki, senior vice president at Nokia, said laconically in 2007 when the company introduced a cell phone that looked suspiciously like the iPhone.

Apple, on the other hand, drew a lot of inspiration from the streaming provider Netflix for its own Apple TV+ product. And Disney Plus even looks like a copy of Netflix. Amazon, too, has long since built up its own online film library. Facebook has also been in talks with Hollywood studios. Entertaining listicles, which increased BuzzFeed's reach by millions in the noughties, have been copied worldwide - at Ringier under the «Blick am Abend» brand.

In 2013, the app Snapchat introduced a feature that made pictures and videos available for only 24 hours. Instagram copied the basic idea of «Stories» three years later. Twitter and LinkedIn also offer ►



such a feature by now. Even Spotify has already tested a Stories feature.

Many are pleased with themselves in the role of copycats. As Apple mastermind Steve Jobs said in the 1996 documentary «Triumph of the Nerds»: «We have always been shameless about stealing great ideas.» Jobs gushes in the documentary about how he was shown a graphical user interface for computers at U.S. copy machine manufacturer Xerox. Apple later launched the Macintosh with this groundbreaking interface. Xerox sued - and failed because the time-limit for bringing an action had expired. Jobs biographer Walter Isaacson called it «one of the biggest heists in the chronicles of industry».

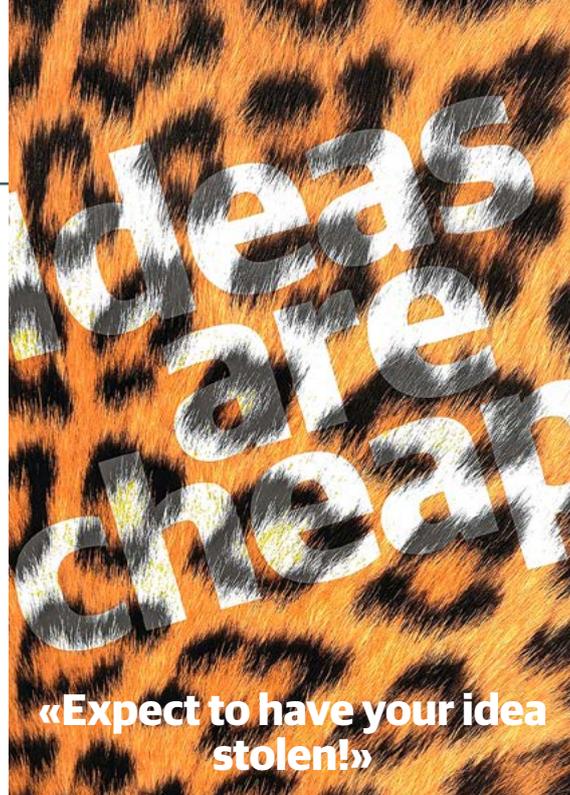
But even thieves are not safe from other robbers. Time and again, major corporations in the digital and tech industry quarrel with each other over patents. Whether it's Yahoo or BlackBerry versus Facebook, or IBM versus Amazon. Taiwan's HTC brings an action against Apple, then the Americans turn the tables in a new patent dispute the following year. Audio gadget manufacturer Sonos sues Google several times for patent infringement, and Google in turn files a patent counterclaim against Sonos.

This almost kindergarten-style bickering is a manifestation of a question that is becoming increasingly explosive in the digital economy: Who had an idea first - and what constitutes an idea anyway?

Was Meerkat's live-streaming idea really new and unique? Or had the developers simply cribbed the live-streaming concepts from Twitch or YouTube, where users could watch the first live video way back in 2008, and expanded it to the smartphone?

Was TikTok's predecessor Musical.ly really a world first when it was launched as a prototype in 2014? Was the Berlin lip-sync app Dubsmash, which came onto the market in the same year and was called the «coolest app» of that year by many gadget journalists in the German-speaking region, really original? Or hadn't it all started with the short-form video app «Vine» back in 2013? Was Myspace, once the largest social network, so different from Facebook? What exactly constituted the social-media idea that Google Plus unsuccessfully imitated?

In a world where pretty much everything is memeable, it sometimes becomes difficult to track down



the original. Where is the creative hen? Who laid the egg?

The American Gary «Vee» Vaynerchuk, one of the world's most important voices in online marketing, social media and digitalization, wrote a blog post about this in 2015. The days of patenting ideas are over, Vaynerchuk said. «There is no original or unique idea. No idea is original.»

The German Samwer brothers, who founded Rocket Internet, an investment company, in Berlin in 2007, have taken this principle to its logical conclusion. They even ripped off the idea of stealing ideas from the American West Coast and built it up into a powerhouse in Germany. Their business model: find ideas from digital start-ups, copy-paste, create your own start-up, scale. Millions in turnover. Done.

But what if you, as a small business owner, want to protect yourself from such idea heists? In his guest article on Entrepreneur.com, La Grave advises against costly and lengthy legal proceedings - and instead, above all, against speed. You have to come out of nowhere and rush the marketplace «before anybody else knows what happened,» he says. It's vital, he says, to use that head start as an advantage. In business textbook language: use first-mover advantage.

The problem is that it doesn't always exist. In fact, it is often just the opposite, as William Boulding of Duke University and Markus Christen of Insead in Fontainebleau pointed out in the Harvard Business Review in 2001. Their study of companies in

«New rules: All social networks will eventually do what all social networks do,» Jeff Jarvis comments on the development in the digital media industry.

the consumer and industrial goods sector revealed: First movers are considerably less profitable in the long term than companies that enter the market later. Primarily because of high costs. And: «Followers can frequently adopt new and more efficient processes and technologies» and they can «learn from the mistakes and successes of their predecessors.»

And that's exactly what Clubhouse is currently experiencing. This audio drop-in app, the first to link audio and social media on a grand scale, was launched in 2020. At the onset of the year, a huge, almost worldwide hype arose - mainly because of the artificial scarcity of access and the app's restriction to iPhone users. Anyone who didn't have a Clubhouse Invite wasn't cool.

But by March, Twitter already began to roll out its own audio drop-in product, Spaces, which looks quite similar to Clubhouse. Jeff Jarvis, who has been commenting on the evolution of the digital media industry for years, tweeted, «New rule: All social networks do what all social networks do.» In fact, Facebook is already rolling out its Clubhouse clone: Live Audio Rooms. Spotify launched its audio drop-in app «Greenroom» back in mid-June. Even the software «Slack», which many companies use as a communications tool, wants to build its own Clubhouse. This was announced by Slack CEO Stewart Butterfield in a Clubhouse talk in which Clubhouse boss Paul Davison himself participated as a speaker. Talk about a copycat. 🌐



Get out of the offside position!

Women in sports journalism are a minority – even now. If you google «female sports journalists», the Internet search engine starts off by suggesting: «Did you mean: sports journalists?» Nevertheless, there are women who have managed to make their mark in this male domain.

Text: Rene Haenig

When the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens in 1896, there was not a single woman among the athletes. The founder of the modern games, the Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin, a historian and sports official, had only one role for women in mind: their applause was to be a reward for the men.

Today, the Olympics would be unthinkable without top female athletes. Likewise, women now have a permanent place as reporters, commentators and presenters in sports newsrooms. But there is still a wide gap between women and men in terms of numbers. Compared to other

Interview date with one of the greats: Eva Breitenstein, Schweizer Illustrierte, with the 100m world record holder, Jamaican Usain Bolt.

specialist departments, women are significantly underrepresented in sports journalism. According to the Association of German Sports Journalists, the ratio of women in Germany is currently «between 10 and 15 percent.» In Switzerland, the situation is similar. Even at Ringier, ►

WOMEN IN SPORTS JOURNALISM



Journalist Janine Geigele with Roger Federer and tennis legend Björn Borg (r.)

which is committed to increasing the visibility of women in the media, the Blick sports desk looks rather meager: Its team of 34 employees numbers only four women. At least, the sports team is led by Steffi Buchli. Things are better at Schweizer Illustrierte, where two female sports journalists write with only one male colleague.

Many Swiss sports fans remember Janine Geigele, 47. Born in Biel, she hosted the program «Sport aktuell» on Swiss TV from 1999 to 2002. At the time, she was the youngest sports



Anne Will, formerly the first «Sportschau» host, now host of Germany's best-known political talk show.



presenter on TV and only the second woman to host this sports show. Geigele was considered a huge talent at Leutschenbach but had to leave in 2002 due to cost-cutting measures. Looking back today, she says: «In my time in sports journalism, I was always the lone woman. No other women were interested in sports and journalism.» Geigele, who now runs her own communications agency, has remained true to her passion for sports. What's more, she became the first female president of the Association of Swiss Sports Journalists in 2014. «As a woman in sports journalism, you have to prove yourself even more than your male colleagues,» she

From one pro to another: Sarah van Berkel, (r.) former European figure skating champion and now journalist at Schweizer Illustrierte, together with triathlete and Ironman world champion Daniela Ryf,

women and a little less with our ability.»

There is hardly a man who would doubt the ability of Germany's talk-show queen Anne Will. Yet most people might be surprised to learn that Will had started out as a journalist in sports before she got to host her own political talk show on Germany's national public network ARD. She began her career at the regional Berlin broadcaster SFB (now RBB), hosting «Sportpalast» in 1992. Then, in 1999, she became the first woman to host the «Sportschau» on ARD. The «Sportschau» is considered the flagship show in the TV sports sector, reaching millions of viewers. In 2000,

is convinced. But the situation also has to do with women's interest in the subject, she concedes.

Geigele herself is the best example of this. «I knew from the age of six that I wanted to be a sports journalist.» Regardless of the fact that she had no role models in her parents' home or in her immediate environment. But even as a child, she would run around her parents' house with a microphone made from a cardboard toilet roll core topped by a tennis ball and «interview» her family. At the same time, she took up athletics. She became interested in sports and journalism at a tender age. In 1999, she beat out about 100 competitors for a job at Swiss TV. Legendary Swiss sports reporter Beni Thurnheer tested her chops as a presenter. «He also supported me during my years with Swiss TV,» says Geigele. She was always aware that «people are more concerned with the appearance of us

WOMEN IN SPORTS JOURNALISM



Sabine Töpperwien in 1994 with soccer star Jürgen Klinsmann. «They see us women as alien elements,» she says.

Will reported from the Summer Olympics in Sydney, followed by an unprecedented career.

Former Swiss figure skating European champion Sarah van Berkel, 37, came to sports journalism by a different path from that of her compatriot Janine Geigele. «I never felt that I wanted to be a journalist after I ended my career as a figure skater.» Her then manager and erstwhile head of sports at Schweizer Illustrierte, Marc Lindegger, set up an internship for his protégé with his former employer. This stimulated van Berkel's curiosity and appetite for journalism. «As my interests were already sports-oriented and I also clearly see that this is what I know about, it soon became obvious to me that I wanted to work in the sports department.»

Would she personally recommend her profession? Van Berkel has no doubts about it. And she has already done so. To a female acquaintance, whom she invited to «get a taste» of work at the Swiss magazine, and to a female prosecutor who was interested in the profession. One thing is of particular importance to van Berkel: «It's essential for potentially interested people to get trimedial training.» That is, for radio, television and the Internet. This applies not only to female sports journalists, but to the industry in general, she says. «Nowadays, you can't get anywhere in our profession without digital know-how.»

In addition to personal enthusiasm for the profession, other factors also



play a role in determining women's interest in becoming sports journalists. In the «Worlds of Journalism» study, over 27,500 female journalists worldwide were surveyed between 2012 and 2016. While mentioning journalists' autonomy in choosing topics as a plus, the women named the keyword «deadline pressure» as a negative factor making the profession less attractive. Deadline pressure is

The first woman to commentate live on a soccer match in Germany: Sabine Töpperwien. Here in an interview with soccer coach Felix Magath.

part and parcel of everyday journalistic life, but too much pressure can cause stress. If the quality of the work suffers as a result, many journalists are dissatisfied. Michael Schaffrath, professor of sports communication, writes in his book «Traumberuf Sportjournalismus (Dream Job: Sports Journalism)» that exclusivity of content in sports journalism has become almost impossible to achieve. And that's why the time factor is growing increasingly important: you have to be in the thick of things, preferably live.

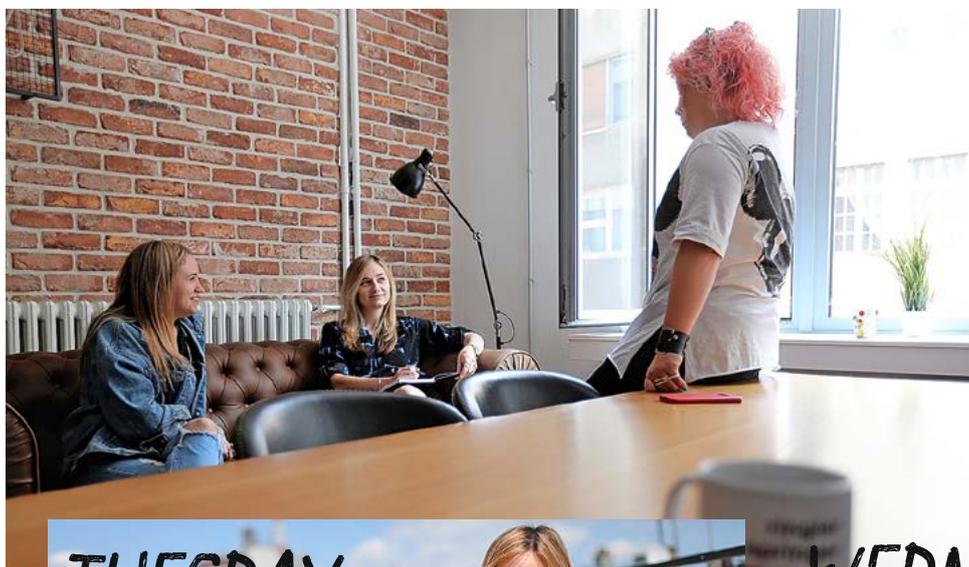
One woman who has shaped sports journalism in the German-speaking world like few others is Sabine Töpperwien, 60, iconic reporter and longtime sports director at the German TV channel WDR 2, who retired at the beginning of this year. She was the first woman in Germany to commentate live on a Bundesliga soccer match on the radio in 1989. Some macho men disapproved: «How can you do this to us? Send her home to her kitchen!» Coaches like Christoph Daum or Otto Rehhagel refused to give her interviews and made it clear that it was because she was a woman. Lucky for Töpperwien, her brother, legendary ZDF TV sports reporter Rolf Töpperwien, knew the protagonists. He clandestinely resolved the situation for his sister because her bosses at the time could not be bothered.

Töpperwien, who reported live on more than 700 soccer matches in 34 years, including almost 600 Bundesliga games, is convinced, despite her career and iconic status, «that men like to stay amongst themselves and still see us women as alien elements.» And so she appeals to the media: «More women in management positions, that would be great. If that became a matter of course, more young women would dare to do this.»

In Switzerland, too, Janine Geigele, as president of the national sports journalists' association, tries to show women «that we are there for them.» For the basic sports journalism courses on offer, she therefore makes a point of asking the editorial offices for interested women. Because what is paramount is that quality remains the highest priority, not the pressure simply to get more women into newsrooms or in front of the camera. In many journalism courses, the number of female graduates is rising steadily. The sports journalism industry just needs to care about attracting these young and well-educated women to its companies. 🌐

«Not without my smartphone»

Ana Ladjarevic hardly ever lets her cell phone out of her hands. It is her working tool on the roof terrace of the editorial office in Belgrade, comes along to a private pool party and on vacation to Greece. The editor-in-chief of Noizz Serbia has been with Ringier Axel Springer Serbia for fifteen years.



MONDAY

Mondays are what they are: First, a short review of the past week, then an outlook on the coming days. Here, I'm in a discussion with journalist Milana Petkovic (l.) and editor Vladana Jokic (r.). Despite the Corona pandemic and home office, we did quite well last year, and the crew of Noizz Serbia is ready to make even more noise. ☺



TUESDAY

I can't live without my smartphone - everyone who knows me will confirm that. Apart from our website, I also manage our social media channels. Sometimes I retreat to the roof terrace of our editorial office and do my work alfresco.



WEDNESDAY

My favorite day! And a good time for an assessment of the current situation and further brainstorming. Working as a team, you find the best topics and approaches. Here, I'm talking with photo editor Marko Jevtic.



THURSDAY

Apart from my duties as editor-in-chief, I am also in charge of the IT and technology department, not only for Noizz but also for Blic.sr. That means I'm always one of the first to try out new gadgets. That's cool if you're a geek like me; this week alone, I tested three new smartphones. Photo editor Mladen Surjanac takes pictures of me doing it.



FRIDAY

I knock off early: A friend of mine who lived in England for a while has now returned. Together with other friends, we surprised her with a pool party. It was the perfect day for it and a great opportunity to see lovely people and have fun together. This is exactly what I have been missing lately.



WEEKEND

The long-awaited weekend is here, and more importantly: holidays at last! Two weeks in Greece await me, my first long vacation since the beginning of the pandemic. My nephew Djordje really wanted me to come along. I am really looking forward to a break from news and work and having some time to myself on the beach, with nothing but a large cocktail in my hand. ☺

Interwoven with Ringier

Whether it is with her job, her choice of partner, her wedding or the care of her children: Cornelia Bär's life is inextricable from Ringier. And although she keeps close tabs on the company's finances, she says: «I don't care about money.»

Photos: Paul Seewer; private

For ten years, Cornelia Bär, 53, has been working for the accounts payable department at Ringier's Zofingen offices. However, she has in fact been with Ringier for much longer. And what's more: Her life has been interwoven with the company in various ways.

Martin Werfeli, who went on to become Ringier's CEO, hired 22-year-old Cornelia in 1990. Three years later, she married Jakob Bär, a truck driver for Ringier. At their wedding, Ringier's trucks lined up like a guard of honor! Years later, their two children went to the Ringier daycare in Zofingen. And where is her daughter Melanie, now 22 years old, working today? At Ringier, of course. While her mother manages the accounts payable, Melanie Bär handles the accounts receivable. «She had to apply for the job like everybody else, there was no cronyism involved,» says Cornelia Bär with a laugh.

For all of four years, Cornelia Bär did not work for Ringier. «My father's death in 2006 knocked me for a loop, and I stopped working.» Except for that, nothing kept her away from her job, neither the births of her children nor her struggle with breast cancer five years ago. «In the mornings, I'd go to work, and in the afternoons, I'd go in for radiotherapy.» In this digital world, you had to stay on the ball in your profession, or you'd soon be out of touch.

She does not care about money, says Cornelia Bär. «I like numbers and being precise in my work, that's why I wound up in accounting.» What she really loves above all is people. «I can relate to a marginalized person as well as to a CEO.» No wonder she finds Hamburg's Reeperbahn fascinating or dreams about opening a soup kitchen someday.

Working for Ringier in Zofingen is like being part of a large family, she says. «We have each other's backs and we get together with retired employees, too.» For a sociable person like her, the corona pandemic was dreadful. That's why she's planning to treat the department to dinner at her house as soon as it's permitted. «I like being generous and sharing what I have to give. Nobody will leave my house hungry, that's for sure!» Cornelia Bär says and laughs. **AV** 



Cornelia Bär at her workplace in Zofingen (top), where she has been employed since 1990 - apart from one break. Stately: At her wedding in 1993, Ringier's fleet of trucks is lined up by their drivers (center). Not one for cold feet: Once a year, Claudia Bär firewalks across hot embers.

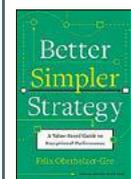


Editor's Choice
by Marc Walder

Ringier CEO Marc Walder talks about the books he reads and why they fascinate him.

Felix Oberholzer-Gee

BETTER, SIMPLER STRATEGY



What is the secret of successful companies? Felix Oberholzer-Gee, Andreas Andresen Professor of Business Administration

at the Strategic Unit of Harvard Business School and a member of Ringier's Board of Directors, explores this question in his book «Better, Simpler Strategy». He finds that at a time when rapid technological change and global competition are turning traditional business models upside down, successful companies are pursuing radically simplified strategies.

«Better, Simpler Strategy» provides its readers with a simple tool, the Value Stick. It allows any company to make its strategy more effective and easier to implement. The Value Stick provides a way to measure the two fundamental forces that lead to added value and increased financial success: customers' willingness to pay and employees' willingness to sell their services to the company. Successful companies, Oberholzer-Gee demonstrates, create value for customers by increasing their willingness to pay, and they create value for gifted employees by decreasing their willingness to sell.

Sounds complicated at first, but it's not. And that is exactly Felix Oberholzer-Gee's core message. The many illustrations and examples from various industries and regions are helpful. «Better, Simpler Strategy» is a book that will change the way we think about strategy and competition.

„Gut zu wissen,
wer die wichtigen Dinge
genau beobachtet.“

Romana B., Beobachter-Abonnentin



Warum Beobachter-Abonnenten die spannenden Reportagen und Geschichten aus dem wahren Leben so schätzen? Vielleicht liegt es am direkten Nutzwert durch Tipps, Ratschläge und Hilfestellungen, der ihnen mit dem Inhalt jeder Ausgabe und darüber hinaus ins Haus geliefert wird. Nützliches sollte man haben. Mehr zum Abo, mehr zu allen anderen Vorteilen auf beobachter.ch/abo

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